

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
January 30, 2012**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, January 30, 2012, at 2:00 p.m. in the School Administration Office, Chatham, Virginia.

Nineteen (19) schools were represented. Also present were Mr. James E. McDaniel, Division Superintendent, Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, and Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology. ABSENT: Dr. Jeff Early, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services.

The Superintendent called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. Introductions followed.

The following Council topics were discussed:

1. A question was raised about the supplement paid for Masters Degrees being cut from the proposed budget.
At this time, there are no proposals to cut any supplement payment for advanced degrees.
2. A question was raised about assistant superintendents receiving an automatic pay raise.
No individual in the school system has received a pay raise in the last four (4) years. Should there be additional questions, individuals may request information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
3. A concern was expressed about teachers being marked down on evaluations for the number of absences during a school year.
Teachers earn ten (10) days of sick leave and three (3) days of personal leave each year. There should be no issue with teachers using these days; however, if additional days are used or a pattern of absences develops, the principal may denote this on the evaluation. The teacher does have the right to appeal the evaluation. A reminder of this process will be provided to the principals at their next meeting.
4. The timing of the 18-week assessments was discussed. The date of the assessments was changed to occur before the Winter Break because it was requested by teachers. However, if the assessment is given prior to the end of the 18-week period, all of the material may not have been covered.

Additional information will be discussed with the individual teacher to address any specific questions.

5. Suggestions and concerns relative to the budget were discussed. These suggestions and concerns included the following:
 - a. Allow employees to miss PTO meetings in order to save gas on vehicles and money for childcare
(Afternoon and evening meetings are at the discretion of the principal. It was noted the unproductive and useless meetings that waste time should not be held.)
 - b. The school day for teachers could be from 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
 - c. Allow teachers to ride school buses to reduce cost of transportation
(It is uncertain that this would be allowed.)
 - d. Charge teachers the same amount for lunch as students
(Student lunches are subsidized by the federal government; adult prices are higher because there is no federal subsidy. By charging less, the cafeteria would lose more money.)
 - e. Provide a survey to employees to obtain any suggestions regarding ways to save
 - f. Is there a possibility of closing any schools to realize budget savings?
(This may be part of the budget discussions if necessary.)
 - g. Concern about having furlough days for 2012-2013 and if employees could use personal leave or sick leave for these days
(Employees would not be allowed to use any accumulated leave days for the furlough days)
 - h. Suggested that changes be made in the advanced placement classes, Governor's School, the gifted program (put gifted teachers back in the classroom) and reduce some 11-month employees (such as exploratory, middle school guidance counselors and band instructors) to 10-months rather than using furlough days
 - i. Will ERIP continue?
(ERIP is not on the list of budget cuts.)
 - j. Which salary scale would be used to calculate the salary for an Information Technology Resource Teacher (ITRT) and the Information Technology (IT) classified staff?
(The ITRT would be under the teacher salary schedule; the classified staff under the Classified Office Specialist schedule.)
 - k. A concern was expressed about the size the high school gyms.
(There were plans to expand the gyms and have an auxiliary gym; however, the Board of Supervisors did not allow enough bond funding to complete this work.)
 - l. A question was raised about broadcasting the School Board meetings.
(A recording was made of a principals' meeting to determine the feasibility. The lighting and sound was not conducive for recording purposes. The cost to make the necessary improvements

would be approximately \$25,000. The School Board was not interested in pursuing the recording at this time.)

- m. Will the school division implement a reduction in force (RIF) policy?
(At the current time, there is no RIF regulation. The School Board will review a proposal at its meeting on February 14, 2012.)
 - n. Who will fund the new proposed retirement plan by the Governor?
(The staff is unaware of any new proposed retirement plans by the Governor.)
 - o. Why do we contract with ReyChem for work that the maintenance department could handle?
(ReyChem is used to complete jobs that must be handled in a timely manner. There are not enough custodial workers to be able to handle all of the jobs required in the schools. When the budget is increased, the division may be able to hire additional workers to assist in these areas.)
 - p. Why is there no open house for the second semester?
(There are conference nights where parents may come and meet with teachers.)
 - q. Will computers be placed in the multi-purpose rooms in the high schools – if not, can the wires be removed?
(The wires would need to remain. This is a funding issue. Any problems with the wires should be discussed with Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology.)
 - r. A concern was expressed about the process for textbook adoption. The adoption committee reviews the textbooks; however, it appears that the cheaper series is being adopted.
(Teachers have an opportunity for input; however, it is the consensus of the textbook adoption committee using the process recommended by the State Department of Education to select appropriate textbooks for use in the classroom. All of the textbooks are from vendors that have been approved by the State. When students destroy books, the school would collect the money and keep it. The funding for the purchase of textbooks would be furnished through the Central Office.)
 - s. A concern was expressed about the virtual school students using the computers in the libraries. The teachers are unable to send students to the library to complete research because there are no available computers.
(The use of the computers and computer labs is based on availability. The Virtual Virginia classes were set up to be held in the libraries. This issue should be addressed to the school principal. The use of the Career-Technical Education lab is at the discretion of the principal.)
6. A question was raised about the lesson plan format for the school system.

The lesson plan format continues to be used, and teachers are following through with the plan. Each school is following the Madeline Hunter format; however, there may be differences among the schools. The principals are continuing to check on these plans. A concern was expressed by one of the representatives because there are three (3) grade levels in the classroom. It is taking 2-3 hours to write lesson plans using this format. It was noted that the school system may provide support for teachers in these circumstances.

Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, addressed the following items:

1. The School Board, at its January 10, 2012, meeting, approved the 2012-2013 school calendar. This calendar is very similar to the 2011-2012 school year. The school division has received a waiver to open schools prior to Labor Day for the 2012-2013 school year.
2. The Graduate of Merit program will be held on May 17, 2012. There are 119 candidates to receive the Graduate of Merit recognition. Over the last twelve years, over 1,300 students have been recognized as Graduates of Merit.
3. Information relative to the class sizes and teacher/pupil ratios for the 2011-2012 school year was provided. The Code of Virginia stipulates that the pupil/teacher ratio must not exceed an average of 24-1 for kindergarten classes; 24-1 for grades 1-3; 25-1 for grades 4-6; and 24-1 for English classes in grades 6-12. A trend analysis of the teacher/pupil ratio from 2006-2007 through the present was provided. The number of staff has been reduced over the past three (3) years.

Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, addressed the following item:

1. Information relative to the proposed 2012-2013 budget was provided and discussed. The school division has reduced the budget over \$13 million in the last four (4) years. Salary and benefits for employees have not been cut. The 2012-2013 budget proposal includes an increase in revenue of \$2.3 million; however, these funds are earmarked to be used for textbooks, pre-school programs and early reading intervention programs. The employer rate for the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) will also increase. There have been many items including the possibility of closing schools that have been considered in looking at the 2012-2013 budget. Items for budget consideration included: the Pension Enhancement Plan (PEP), which would provide eligible employee a \$5,000.00 incentive each year for seven (7) years or until they reach the age for full benefits from

Social Security (whichever may occur first); reduction of positions – Assistant Superintendent for Business and School Psychologist; furlough days for employees (possible days to use for 12 month employees would be in July and teachers to use conference nights), eliminate Stanford 10 tests, eliminate PSAT tests (to be paid by the Governor), Reports Online System (ROS) and eliminate the bus lease.

The following questions and concerns were discussed:

- Would the teachers see a reduction in their paycheck?
(If the furlough days were approved, there would be a reduction of two (2) days of pay.)
- How many employees would need to retire to realize a savings of \$2,500,000?
(The ERHIIP program provided a savings of approximately \$3.5 million. There are over 300 employees over 55 at this time. It is uncertain whether these individuals will qualify for the PEP/ERIP plan.)
- A concern was expressed about employees receiving no salary increase for four (4) years. It was noted that employees need to be compensated with additional time, being allowed to ride a bus, reduce the lunch prices or reduce the number of meetings after school. (Any requirements for attendance at after-school activities should be discussed with the principal)

The School Board Budget Committee will meet on March 8, 2012. The entire School Board will review the budget draft at its meeting on Monday, March 12, 2012 (please note change in meeting date) and will hold a public hearing on March 27, 2012, to hear comments relative to the 2012-2013 budget proposal. The Board will also take action on the budget at that time. The Superintendent plans to continue to keep employees up to date relative to budget matters by including information in the Superintendent's Minute each week.

Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, addressed the following items:

1. A copy of the 2011-2012 recruitment schedule was provided. In previous years, there were approximately 20 different recruitment trips scheduled; however, because of budget cuts and a decrease in the number of teachers, this number has dropped to seven (7). There are still several positions that are hard to fill, such as agriculture, foreign language and special education teachers. Recruitment is conducted at colleges offering teacher preparation programs and historically black colleges and universities to encourage minorities to apply for positions in the school division.

2. Currently there are nineteen (19) certified staff members who have indicated a desire to retire at the end of the 2011-2012 school session. There are only seven (7) classified staff members who plan to retire.
3. The State Department of Education is mandating a change in the teacher evaluation instrument. This change stipulates that the evaluation must clearly define student growth. There are seven (7) areas of evaluation. These areas include: professional knowledge, instruction planning, instructional diversity, assessment of and for student learning, learning environment, professionalism and student academic program. Meetings will be held with instructional staff to discuss and review the teacher evaluation instrument.

A concern was expressed about the evaluation tool for special education teachers. Teachers will be on a tier (Tier 1, 2 or 3). Tier 2 teachers would be support, which is where special education teachers may be classified. The State would be looking at the growth measure for students taking the Standards of Learning assessments. Staff will also need to develop a plan for physical education and career and technical education teachers. The changes in the teacher evaluation will become effective at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. All evaluation instruments will be updated to include the student growth measurements. Students will be compared to other students taking the same SOL. Merit pay may be part of the discussion as well as a reduction in salary if a certain score is not obtained. Parameters will be discussed with the teachers, and more information is expected to be discussed at the March meeting of the Advisory Council.

Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology, addressed the following item:

1. The Information Technology staff is looking at a product to assist with student homework. This product is called eBackpack. The Representatives were encouraged to visit the website at www.eBackpack.com. The staff will be submitting a request for e-rate approval that would bring the cost to \$.28 per child per year. The Information Technology Resource Teachers (ITRT) have completed training on this site. The site requires the teacher to have an ID and password in order to review the files from the students. The students would be able to drop homework in the file, and the teacher would be able to retrieve it, put a grade on it and repost it. The use of this program would eliminate the need for USB devices. A pilot program is being used at this time. Should any Representative have any questions or interest in reviewing the program, they were asked to contact the appropriate ITRT.

The Superintendent addressed the following items:

1. The December Special Education Child Care report has been completed. A chart was provided that showed the number of students served and the area of disability. The number of special education students in the school division has decreased for the 2011-2012 school year.
2. There have been no inclement weather days as of this date. Last year, the school system had missed six (6) days at this time. Should there be a need to close schools because of inclement weather, the specific make-up days were discussed.
3. A letter was written to Delegate Donald Merricks, Delegate Danny Marshall, and Senator Robert Hurt requesting that the General Assembly approve a three-year phase-in plan for the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) increase in employer rates. The school system also received notice recently that an additional amount of \$35,000.00 would be received from Stimulus funding.
4. The School Board members may visit the schools. The members may have questions for staff members and colleagues. It is the intent that these visits not disrupt the regular classroom setting.
5. The Superintendent is making school visits and provided feedback to the principals relative to commendations or needs improvement items.
6. A Republican Presidential Primary Election will be held on March 6, 2012; the Democratic Primary Election will be held on June 12, 2012. There are nine (9) elementary schools and three (3) high schools that serve as voting precincts. The turnout for these elections is expected to be very low. The location for the voters and the activities for the day have been discussed with principals. The students will not be in school on June 12, 2012. It is anticipated that the election on March 6, 2012, will have very little impact on the school activities and testing.
7. Information was provided about the proposed Pension Enhancement Plan (PEP). The School Board will discuss this plan at its February 14, 2012, meeting. If approved, four (4) regional informational sessions will be held on February 15, 2012, beginning at 3:30 p.m. Eligible employees will have the opportunity to apply to retire under ERIP and PEP beginning February 15, 2012, until March 2, 2012. No applications will be accepted after March 2, 2012. The PEP will provide the employee an incentive of \$5,000.00 per year for seven (7) year or until the individual reaches the age to receive full Social Security benefits, whichever may occur first. The three (3) goals for budget discussions have been saving jobs, maintaining quality instructional programs and ensuring the long-term viability of the organization. There may be individuals who retire at the end of the 2011-2012 with no replacement in order to balance the budget.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.