

**Minutes
Transylvania County Board of Education
February 3, 2020**

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Working Dinner

Topics for Discussion:

- Elementary School Themes
- Mental Health / Day Treatment / Resilience Training
- School Nutrition
- Budget
- Bus Service to TCH Magnet Program
- NCHSAA Realignment
- Educator Recruitment and Retention
- Report from NCSBA Training Events
- Attendance

The Transylvania County Board of Education met in special session at 5:30 p.m. on February 3, 2020 at the Morris Education Center for the annual planning retreat/work session. Chairman McCoy welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. In addition to one guest, the following board members, staff, and others were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Tawny McCoy, Chair
Ron Kiviniemi, Vice Chair
Courtney Domokur
Marty Griffin
Alice Wellborn

MEDIA:

John Lanier, Transylvania Times

STAFF:

Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent
Jenny Hunter, Administrative Assistant
Dr. Brian Weaver, Assistant Superintendent
Norris Barger, Director, Business Services
Missy Ellenberger, Director, Curriculum & Instruction
Kerry Putnam, Director, Exceptional Children
Kevin Smith, School-Community Relations Coordinator
Carolyn Barton, Director, School Nutrition
Carrie Norris, BES Principal
Tonya Treadway, PFES Principal
Bob Dinsdale, RES Principal
Audrey Reneau, TCH Principal
Jayson Rogers, School Resource Officer

Dr. McDaris thanked Office Rogers for attending the meeting and Carolyn Barton and the School Nutrition staff for providing the meal.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL THEMES

Principal Carrie Norris reported that Brevard Elementary School is in its third year of designation as an A+ School for North Carolina. The A+ program supports arts-centered education through individualized professional development (at no cost if 80% of staff participate), collaboration and networking, and a state liaison that meets with the principal twice a year to discuss progress, needs, etc. There are currently 64 A+ schools in the state. Mrs. Norris showed examples of students' arts projects and arts-focused campus improvements and discussed how the program connects core standards with arts standards. The school's next goal is to add a drama program.

Principal Tonya Treadway reported that Pisgah Forest Elementary School's focus is outdoor education. The "No Child Left Inside" initiative was established four years ago with a mission to provide active and engaging learning by giving students time outdoors to explore and learn

about the natural world. Partnerships with a number of organizations including Muddy Sneakers, NC Museum of Natural Sciences, and the WNC Nature Center, to name a few, provide curriculum-based programming for students and professional development training for staff. The school built an outdoor classroom “Ranger Station” in year one of the program. Mrs. Treadway noted that experiential outdoor learning is especially important for special populations. Not all classrooms have four walls.

Principal Bob Dinsdale reported that Rosman Elementary is transitioning from a “Leader in Me” program to a Whole Child concept. The school is focusing on more art, music, creative thinking, critical thinking, and outdoor education for a better balanced curriculum. They are working on improving the school visually for a more rounded aesthetic. The school has established some new student clubs and is working to establish an RES-centric soccer team. The goal is to give parents options for their children after school. The Muddy Sneakers program has been restarted at RES thanks to grant funds. Teachers are looking at third grade project-based learning. Older students are mentoring and working with younger children to help strengthen reading and social skills.

Principal Audrey Reneau reported that T. C. Henderson’s focus is STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). Being the smallest elementary school makes TCH a draw for many parents. The school has two outdoor classrooms, 17 acres, and two walking trails. They receive assistance from the NC Arboretum and other groups and provide hands-on outdoor learning for all students K-5. There is weekly STEM rotation and project-based learning. Afterschool clubs include chess, Spanish, robotics, track, and building bricks (LEGO). The school also offers a summer STEM camp. Parents are welcome to come in for “lunch and learn.” One of the most unique aspects of TCH is its tremendous level of community support. From volunteer tutors and mentors to financial gifts from the Burlingame Country Club and other groups, the school reaches out and the community reaches in. Mrs. Reneau reported that TCH could easily fill a second Pre-K classroom if they had the space because the demand is there.

MENTAL HEALTH / DAY TREATMENT / RESILIENCE TRAINING

Kerry Putnam gave a report on mental health and day treatment services. Due to procedural, staffing, and insurance issues, Meridian Health has had to cut back on the level of service it provides to our schools. The middle school day treatment program, which has been in place since 2011-2012, is not operating this year because there is no one to staff it. An elementary day treatment program is still operating at PFES with K-3 in the morning and 3-5 in the afternoon. Mr. Putnam noted that principals have been pleased with the quality of Meridian’s counseling, clinician, and therapist services. However, Meridian has yet to be able to confirm that they will remain in TCS and provide a product in our system grades K-8. Due to this uncertainty, Mr. Putnam proposed building our own social-emotional support program to address the increasing numbers of mental health issues among the student population. Such a program could provide more consistency, control, quality, and stability. Mr. Putnam presented two options for the board to consider:

Option 1

K-5 Social-Emotional Support Program - additional staffing needs:

- 1 LPC/LCSW for BES and PFES to share (half day at each site)
- 2 teacher assistants, 1 at each school

Continued support from existing staff (PRC 029, teacher assistants, EC staff, and psychologists) will be required to sustain this model. This would eliminate busing and allow each school to build capacity. The funds generated from Medicaid billing by TCS staff will support this program.

6-8 Social-Emotional Support Program - additional staffing needs:

- 1 LPC/LCSW

Continued support from existing staff (PRC 029, teacher assistants, EC staff, and psychologists) will be required to sustain this model. The funds generated from Medicaid billing by TCS staff will support this program.

Option 2

K-5 Social-Emotional Support Program - additional staffing needs:

- 2 LPC/LCSW - 1 for BES and 1 for PFES
- 2 teacher assistants, 1 at each school

LPC/LCSW would spend half the day working with students in the program and spend the other portion of the day providing individual counseling, which Meridian is currently doing. This option would provide more support for students throughout the school day and more opportunities for additional Medicaid billing, thus offsetting the cost of the additional LPC/LCSW.

Continued support from existing staff (PRC 029, teacher assistants, EC staff, and psychologists) will be required to sustain this model. This would eliminate busing and allow each school to build capacity. The funds generated from Medicaid billing by TCS staff will support this program.

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Mr. Putnam estimated that Option 1 would generate between \$6,000 and \$8,000 over the cost of staff. Option 2 would cost about \$5,000. He reported that our school board attorneys have been recommending a social-emotional program in the schools for years. Elementary principals discussed the need for these services in their schools. They reported that some parents have been resistant to services from an outside agency. Mr. Kiviniemi asked about services for high school students. Mr. Putnam reported that a social-emotional classroom has been established at BHS. Davidson River School is another option.

The board took a 15-minute recess from 7:30 to 7:45 p.m.

SCHOOL NUTRITION

Carolyn Barton gave an overview of procedures for unpaid meal charges. She reported that USDA regulations require that any outstanding charges at year's end are to be paid by the school by September 30 of the following year. Collection efforts for non-free/reduced students are usually handled by the school due to their familiarity with family circumstances. The numbers of unpaid charges have increased over the last 10 years. Free/reduced status automatically rolls over into the new school year for a 30-day grace period to ensure that students do not miss out as their applications are being turned in and processed. Lunch shaming is prohibited. If a child has exceeded the three-meal charge limit, they are still provided a reimbursable meal. No student will be denied food.

Mrs. Barton has talked with directors in other systems to see how they handle unpaid charges. Some require students who are over the charge limit to call home. Principals usually have a sense of which students are truly without funds and which kids simply neglect to bring funds. What does not work is letting charges build up. The online prepay option has been successful. Parents can be alerted via text when their child's account is getting low. Mrs. Barton is looking into vendor options to try and reduce software costs. Good Samaritans will sometimes come in before holidays to help pay off charges. Current lunch prices are \$2.50 for elementary; \$2.75 for middle/high; and \$4.00 for adults.

Mrs. Barton reported that her staff is already gearing up for summer feeding. This year they will roll out a new meal counting app that will help ease the paperwork burden. Transylvania currently provides about 230 backpacks a week (up to 275 at Christmas). Backpack Buddies operates throughout the school year and into the summer.

Mrs. Barton reviewed program funding. North Carolina is one of the few southeastern states that does not provide any money for school nutrition. Costs per plate are rising each year due to fixed cost increases. Mrs. Barton estimated that the program loses about 50 cents on every \$2.50 free/reduced meal. Federal reimbursement rates do not keep up with actual costs.

EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

This topic was postponed to a future meeting.

REPORT FROM NCSBA TRAINING EVENTS

This topic was postponed to a future meeting.

ATTENDANCE- SAVE FOR FUTURE MEETING

This topic was postponed to a future meeting.

BUDGET

Dr. McDaris reported it is very possible there will not be a state budget this year. Mr. Barger reported that he would be attending the state finance officers' conference next week and may get more information there. Dr. McDaris noted that state revenues are up and there is a growing fund balance in Raleigh that is unassigned.

BUS SERVICE TO TCH MAGNET PROGRAM

Dr. McDaris reported that he and Transportation Director Justice have been looking at running a bus from Pisgah Forest Elementary School and Brevard Elementary School to the magnet program at T. C. Henderson School of Science & Technology. The only obstacle is finding a bus driver. This would be a lengthy route and no teacher assistant could do it due to their limited hours. Dr. Weaver reported that we are not the only school system that struggles to find drivers. It is a challenge for all districts. School bus drivers must have CDLs, DOT physicals, clean driving records, and are subject to random drug testing. Dr. Weaver reported that whenever possible, he will combine bus driver duties with custodial duties in order to give drivers enough hours to qualify for benefits. The current starting rate for bus drivers is \$12.33 per hour. We continue to explore options.

NCHSAA REALIGNMENT

Dr. McDaris reported that the North Carolina High School Athletic Association recently took a vote on amending the bylaws to allow for considerations beyond the 1A-4A conference assignments. The results of the vote have not yet been released. Mr. Griffin noted that every 1A championship last year (except football) was won by a charter school. Dr. McDaris reported that he has reached out to members of the NCHSAA realignment committee because he believes it would be better if RHS were in another conference. If Rosman stays in the Smoky Mountain conference, some students would be leaving class as early as 10:30 a.m. on game days due to the distances that must be traveled. Being in a different conference would give Rosman athletes less travel time and better travel conditions. No decision has been made yet.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MRS. MCCOY, SECONDED BY MR. KIVINIEMI, the meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Secretary