

Minutes
Transylvania County Board of Education
February 4, 2013

Planning Retreat

Welcome / Call to Order / Agenda Review

Working Dinner

School Safety

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Wrap-up

The Transylvania County Board of Education held its annual planning retreat at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, February 4, 2013 at the Morris Education Center. Tawny McCoy, Chair; Cindy Petit, Vice Chair; Sue Fox; Ron Kiviniemi and Mike Rogers were present. Also present were Dr. Jeff McDaris; Jenny Hunter; Norris Barger; Dr. Scott Elliott; Dr. Kim Elliott; Dr. David Sutton, Alan Justice; Donys Merrill; School Resource Officer Greg Stroup; Sheriff David Mahoney; Principals Tony Meachum, Jeremy Gibbs, Greg Carter, Tammy Bellefeuil, Donna Wilde, Kerry Putnam, and Brian Weaver; Meredith Licht, TCAE; Jeremiah Reed, *Transylvania Times*; and BHS students, Katherine Lemel and Hannah Field.

Transylvania County Clerk of Superior Court, Rita Ashe, administered the Oath of Office to new Board of Education member, Mike Rogers. Chairman McCoy welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Dr. Jeff McDaris reviewed the agenda and thanked Daggie's Elite Catering for providing the meal.

School Safety

Alan Justice gave a report on school safety. He stated that he is confident that Transylvania County Schools are very safe. Even so, there are things we would like to be able to do with additional resources to make our system even safer. Mr. Justice noted that Transylvania is ahead of the curve in terms of having School Resource Officers (SROs), mobile communication systems and school safety plans—he reported many districts do not even have two-way radios for principals and bus drivers. He emphasized that our SROs provide invaluable service and do much more than provide physical security. They teach classes and serve as resources to many students and families. So far this year our eight SROs have made over 1,000 student contacts and well over 100 home visits. Sheriff David Mahoney echoed those sentiments and added that he gets calls weekly from other counties wanting to copy Transylvania's SRO program.

Dr. McDaris reported that while many in the community had concerns about school safety following the horrific shootings at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, he does not believe that having armed volunteers patrolling school campuses is the answer, as some have suggested. He believes that schools should be safe and inviting, not armed camps. He noted that each school has a comprehensive safe school and emergency response plan. In order for the plans to be effective, not all of the protocols and elements of the plans can be made public. The reason for this is to prevent an external force from possibly using that information to do harm.

Board members, principals and administrators discussed what they would like see done in the future to enhance safety. All were in agreement that an additional SRO position dedicated for TCH would be optimal. Currently, one SRO splits his duties between TCH and RES. Sheriff

Mahoney reported that he had already planned to put an additional SRO position in his budget request for FY14, and he feels that the county commissioners would be supportive of the request. Building improvements such as entrance buzzers, electronic key card systems, and more security cameras are already included in the TCS master plan. The challenge has been and continues to be funding for these improvements. The first priority is to get video cameras and access control on all front doors. Mr. Barger pointed out that the cost to do one school at a time has been prohibitive, but we do the best we can within current budget constraints.

Chairman McCoy asked principals if they feel their staffs are adequately trained and prepared for emergencies. Principals answered affirmatively, noting that they have practices and drills regularly. They reiterated that for security reasons they cannot always publicize what they are doing or the results.

Discussion also touched on the lack of mental health services and how this could impact safety within the community. All agreed that funding for mental health services is an issue that should be addressed.

School Calendar Options and Interest Inventory Results

Dr. David Sutton gave an update on the school calendar committee's study of a modified calendar versus a traditional calendar for the 2013-2014 school year. He reviewed the most recent school calendar legislative changes that will be in effect for 2013-2014 and beyond (or until the House implements yet another round of changes):

- A minimum of 185 instructional days or 1,025 hours of instruction covering at least nine calendar months.
- Authority to approve waiver requests revoked from the State Board of Education.
- Except for year-round schools, the opening date for students shall be no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26.
- Except for year-round schools, the closing date for students shall be no later than the Friday closest to June 11.
- On a showing of "good cause," the SBOE may waive the opening date requirement and allow the local board of education to set an opening date no earlier than the Monday closest to August 19. The term "good cause" means that schools in a county have been closed eight days per year during any four of the last 10 years because of severe weather conditions, energy shortages, power failures, or other emergency situations.
- Waivers from default opening and closing dates for an "educational purpose" are no longer permitted.

Dr. Sutton shared a comparison of a draft traditional and draft modified calendar for next year:

Feature	Traditional	Modified
First Teacher Workday	Aug. 15, 2013	July 23, 2013
First Student Day	Aug. 19, 2013	July 25, 2013
Last Student Day	May 30, 2014	May 29, 2014
Last Teacher Workday	June 4, 2014	June 2, 2014
Total Student Days	180	180
Total Teacher Workdays	9	9
Total Holidays	11	11
Total Annual Leave Days	10	10
Intersession Breaks	Dec. 21 - Jan. 1	Sept. 27 - Oct. 13 Dec. 21. - Jan. 1

		Mar. 12 - Mar. 25
Total Days Closed for Students	30	45
Total Days Closed for 10-Month Employees	21	36
First Semester High School EOC Test Dates	Jan. 7-9, 2014	Dec. 17-19, 2013

Dr. Sutton reported that the majority of calendar committee members preferred a modified calendar, with the strongest preference shown by instructional personnel. He noted that some educational research shows more instructional benefits with a modified calendar, provided that instructional or remedial services are provided to students during the intersession breaks. Dr. Sutton stated that the committee had also discussed that some parents would be resistant to changing from a traditional calendar.

Chairman McCoy reported that she has heard from several parents who oppose a modified calendar for next year. She stated that even though the interest inventory regarding calendar choices was communicated as broadly as possible to parents, many did not pay attention or did not seem to understand the implications of the survey.

Mrs. Fox reported that timing seems to be the issue. Most of the objections she has received came from families who have already made plans for the summer. She stated that the calls and letters directed to her ran about 50/50 in support of a modified calendar for 2013-2014 and 80/20 in support of having a modified calendar a year from now.

Mr. Kiviniemi stated that he supports a modified calendar as being in the best educational interests of children. He stated that he was excited about the possibility of offering inter-sessionary activities and what that could mean for lower socioeconomic students. Mr. Kiviniemi stated that he did not know whether postponing for a year would decrease resistance since change is always hard.

Mr. Rogers reported that timing was also the major concern he had heard. He suggested that the Board consider postponing implementation of a modified calendar for a year and in the meantime hold informational presentations at the schools in order to answer questions and better prepare parents for a change.

Principals spoke in favor of a modified calendar, although some felt that parents needed more time to get used to the idea.

Dr. Scott Elliott reported there are indications that some legislators are in favor of returning local control and flexibility on this issue to school boards. He stated that if this is true, Transylvania must be prepared to position itself as viable choice in a competitive market. A modified calendar could help with this goal.

Mr. Kiviniemi suggested that if a modified calendar were to be postponed for a year, the Board should consider adopting a two-year calendar. It was noted that this could be difficult to accomplish if legislators rewrite calendar laws again next year.

The Board reached consensus to adopt a traditional calendar for the 2013-2014 school year and consider a modified calendar for 2014-2015, with a final decision on whether or not to adopt a modified calendar to be made after community information sessions to be scheduled in the

spring, and no later than the end of the current school year. Dr. Sutton will present a draft traditional calendar for 2013-2014 as information at the Board's next regular meeting on February 18, with approval slated for the following meeting on March 4.

Attendance

Dr. McDaris reported that excessive tardies and absences are problems that school administrators must deal with and board members hear about every year, and this spring is shaping up to be worse than most. When a student passes teacher standards and the final exam, but still fails a course due to excessive absences, parents do not always understand. Dr. McDaris stated that principals bend over backwards to offer opportunities for students to make up time and salvage credits; nevertheless there are some every year who procrastinate and wind up in trouble. The group discussed that attendance is more than just physical presence; it is also important preparation for the workplace. Feedback from employers shows they want two main things on the job: 1) critical thinkers, and 2) *employees that show up*. Attendance problems are often a multi-generational issue. Tardies can be a real problem at the elementary level with students cumulatively missing hours of instruction. Young children should not be penalized for the parent's failure to get them to school on time. Dr. McDaris reported that the school system does attempt to press charges against parents for truancy issues, but historically that has not been a high priority for the courts and is not always handled in a timely manner due to other issues in the family. Board members received copies of the district's attendance policy. Dr. McDaris stated that the policy may need to be reviewed soon to try and address some of these concerns.

Budget

Norris Barger gave an overview of school financial operations, funding sources, and the budget development calendar. He presented a first look at the changes that are anticipated for FY14:

Retirement increase (14.23% to 14.59%)	\$17,001
Health insurance increase (6% to \$5,504)	28,962
SRO for T. C. Henderson (salary & benefits)	52,702
ADM drop from 3,555 to ?	unknown
Increase in state discretionary reduction	39,200
2% COLA increase	75,506
Appropriated fund balance (partially restore FY13 cut)	295,962
Assistant principal for BES (salary & benefits)	<u>71,903</u>
	<u>\$581,236</u>
Necessary increase in county appropriation	6.2%

Other items that could impact the budget include:

- Seven new State Board of Education members (a majority) could bring shifts in policies and positions of the State Board on various issues.
- The Governor may propose a 1-2% reduction across the board to fund the priorities of the new administration. It is not known what those priorities would be.
- Negative reserve is scheduled to increase by \$10.98 per ADM, back to the previous year's level. This would be approximately \$39,200 for TCS.
- No current information is available on the possible sequestration of federal funding.
- New health care legislation requiring a \$63 per employee contribution will depend upon which option the state chooses to take on the exchange system. If the state does not take any action, we would default to the federal system.

Mr. Barger gave a reminder that last year the commissioners cut the school system's local funding to the level of two years ago. All things being equal, the 6.2% increase in appropriation means that local funding would be still in the hole because of last year's decrease.

Mr. Rogers asked about teacher supplements. Mr. Sutton reported that teacher supplement levels have been stalled at 7.44 percent for the last four years. The original plan, before the economic recession hit, would have had local teacher supplements at 10% by now. Mr. Rogers requested a current comparison of TCS supplements with other counties.

Mr. Kiviniemi stated that as a former elementary principal, he strongly agrees with the need for an assistant principal position at Brevard Elementary School. He noted that BES has the most diverse student population and unique challenges.

Mr. Barger presented a draft FY14 capital outlay five-year plan. He noted that the draft includes a full restoration of funding for furniture and equipment at schools. Principals have stated loud and clear that they must be returned to a regular replacement schedule. Mr. Barger noted that the draft plan would only restore funding to the levels of five years ago. Dr. McDaris observed that the five-year capital outlay plan has devolved into a five-year maintenance "finger in the dyke" plan, not a true capital improvement plan. It is unsustainable. As an example, Mr. Barger pointed out that the plan includes a new HVAC system for Davidson River School. This is a must-have item because the current system is so old that they can no longer get replacement parts because no one makes them. There are similar situations all over the district. Mr. Barger stated that our students deserve better than to have toilets that do not have doors, leaking roofs, no heat, and poor athletic facilities. Our aging infrastructure needs significant help, and the urgency is growing every day.

Mr. Rogers stated that based on the construction activity he is seeing, now would be the last opportunity to save money on capital projects because labor and materials will be going up soon. Mrs. Petit agreed, reporting that there is more real estate activity in Transylvania County now than at any time over the last five years. Construction costs are about to rebound.

Chairman McCoy verified with Mr. Barger that the capital outlay plan includes some form of access control for every school. Mr. Barger confirmed that is does.

Mr. Barger gave a progress report on capital outlay projects for the year.

Educator Effectiveness Update

Dr. Scott Elliott gave brief overview and history of the new Educator Effectiveness model. Whereas previously North Carolina was trying to decrease the number of state tests, the new Common Exams will increase the number of state tests tenfold. New standardized assessments are being developed for every curriculum area.

Dr. Sutton reviewed the work of the local Educator Effectiveness work group. He presented a list of guiding questions that the group has developed and the answers that have been obtained so far. The end goal of the work group is to produce a local implementation guide for TCS. Some of the questions and answers are listed below:

1. What is the best method of delivery for the Common Exams? Online. We have found good software that will work on our Chromebooks.
2. When will we administer the Common Exams? At the end of the year. We have learned that the elementary EOGs may be sufficient, so we may be looking at just middle school and high school exams at this point.

3. Who will administer the Common Exams? Teachers will probably rotate with someone at their school to administer the tests. The goal is to de-escalate tension as much as possible.
4. Under what conditions will we elect to administer optional Common Exams? We will not administer a test if it is optional.
5. How will Common Exam scores be counted in student grades? At the middle school level, they would not count at all for the first year. At the high school level, they would be treated like EOCs and count 25% of a student's grade.

The committee will continue its work at its next meeting in February.

Board members asked about implications for teacher employability. Dr. Elliott stated it would be very unlikely to have an impact. The issue of how this might impact the public's perception of public education was discussed. Dr. McDaris stated that he feels that the overemphasis on testing takes away somewhat from the art and craft of teaching, but believes it ultimately will be just one more indicator of the high caliber of our school system.

Wrap-up

Dr. McDaris asked Board members to begin looking at possible dates for one or more joint meetings with the county commissioners.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MRS. FOX, SECONDED BY MR. KIVINIEMI, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Secretary