

Minutes
Transylvania County Board of Education
February 7, 2011

Planning Retreat

Welcome / Call to Order

1. Facility Needs Survey
2. Closed Session (*addition*)
3. Personnel Report
4. Personnel Policy and Practice
5. Suspension Policy
6. Budget
7. Naming Facilities
8. Districting
9. Curriculum
10. Technology

The Transylvania County Board of Education held its annual planning retreat at 4:30 p.m. on February 7, 2011 at the Morris Education Center. Present were Chris Whitmire, Chair; Tawny McCoy, Vice Chair; Sue Fox; Shelia Norman; and Cindy Petit. Also present were Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent; Jenny Hunter, Administrative Assistant; Chris Campbell, Board Attorney; and the following administrators: Norris Barger, Dr. Kim Elliott, Dr. Scott Elliott, Dr. Bo Williams, Donys Merrill, David Sutton, Donna Wilde, Brian Weaver and Doug Odom. Media representatives were Lenora Carver, *Transylvania Times*; and Leigh Kelley, *Hendersonville Times-News*. Chairman Whitmire called the meeting to order. Mrs. McCoy gave the invocation and Mrs. Norman led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Whitmire welcomed School Resource Officer, Mary Smith.

MRS. MCCOY MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MRS. FOX, to add a closed session to the meeting agenda after the personnel report. Mrs. Norman suggested that the closed session be held before the personnel report. MRS. MCCOY withdrew her first motion and made a new motion to add a closed session before the personnel report. MRS. FOX SECONDED. The motion was unanimously approved.

TCS Facility Needs Survey

Norris Barger presented the 2010-2011 Public School Facility Needs Survey for Transylvania County Schools. The survey is required by the Department of Public Instruction every five years. The survey must be signed as reviewed by the local Board of Education and the local Board of Commissioners. Mr. Barger pointed out that the survey differs in some aspects from the TCS master facilities plan because the DPI instrument does not report needs other than educational (e.g., central office facility). Mr. Whitmire requested clarification on some items on the report. Mrs. McCoy clarified that the survey is not a binding commitment for either board. ON A MOTION BY MRS. FOX, SECONDED BY MRS. PETIT, the Board approved the TCS Facility Needs Survey for 2010-2011. Mr. Barger left the meeting temporarily to deliver the report to the county commissioner meeting.

Closed Session

ON A MOTION BY MRS. MCCOY, SECONDED BY MRS. FOX, the Board went into closed session at 4:55 p.m. to discuss a confidential personnel matter, pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1) and 115C-319-321. Present in the closed session were Mr. Whitmire, Mrs. McCoy, Mrs. Norman, Mrs. Fox, Mrs. Petit, Dr. McDaris, Mr. Sutton, and Attorney Campbell. No action

was taken, and ON A MOTION BY MRS. FOX, SECONDED BY MRS. MCCOY, the Board reconvened in open session at 5:37 p.m.

Personnel Report

ON A MOTION BY MRS. FOX, SECONDED BY MRS. PETIT, the personnel report for February 7, 2011 was unanimously approved (see attached).

Personnel Policy and Practice

There was no discussion.

Suspension Policy

The group discussed long-term suspensions. Board members received copies of all TCS suspension policies. Dr. McDaris reported that most high school suspensions result from incidents of substance abuse. Most elementary-level suspensions result from students bringing pocketknives to school. Brevard High school has more suspensions than Rosman High due to its larger size. The C-STOP program at Davidson River and the first-time offenders' program are used regularly as alternatives to long-term suspension. Dr. Bo Williams reviewed the types of behaviors that can result in long-term suspension. Dr. McDaris reported that TCS administrators are consistent in following state law and local board policy for all suspensions.

David Williams reported that schools are seeing more drug-related activity, cyberbullying, and theft. Dr. Scott Elliott observed that some parents may think their child is being treated unfairly, when in fact the parents may not have full knowledge of the behaviors that led up to the suspension. Consequences for one student may not always be the same as consequences for another. Every situation is different, and administrators have to consider the individual circumstances in each case.

Donna Wilde reported that Davidson River School gives students the opportunity to start over. She reported that very few students have been put out of school for chronic disruptive behavior. Such a measure has been taken only after repeated second chances and after it had been determined that the student is unlikely to succeed in a school setting. She also emphasized that substance abuse is a very serious problem in this county.

Dr. McDaris asked whether any suspension policies should be revisited. It has been a number of years since the policies were revised. Mr. Weaver suggested review of the cell phone policy. He reported that conflicts often arise from a student having to surrender his/her cell phone when the cell phone is the only means of communication for the family. Dr. McDaris stated that rapid advances in technology have blurred the lines between devices, noting there is not much difference now between a smart phone and a notebook computer. Mr. Whitmire stated that he feels strongly that students should be allowed to have devices/phones on long bus rides.

Mr. Weaver also suggested more flexibility for assigning in-school suspension (ISS) versus out-of-school suspension (OSS). Mrs. Petit questioned whether OSS is really a punishment or an unsupervised vacation for some students. Mr. Odom pointed out that OSS is sometimes the best alternative when a student's continued presence on campus could be potentially disruptive or harmful. The C-STOP program at DRS can remove these students from an inflamed situation. He recommended that school administrators be allowed to use professional judgment in keeping with what is in the best interests of the entire student body.

Dr. Bo Williams remarked that all teachers react to student behaviors differently. Some teachers will send students to the office frequently, while others never do. Sometimes the teacher's reaction to the behavior can escalate the situation. Dr. Bo Williams noted that this is the reason

most administrators will err of the side of the child by assigning ISS. Even so, a student's actions sometimes leave no choice but OSS. He gave a reminder that state law requires an automatic 365-day suspension for certain offenses, and that is when parents can get surprised. Mrs. Norman recommended that parents be kept informed of all behavior incidents so that there are no surprises.

Mr. Odom reported that the scarcity of counseling and rehabilitation resources in the county is frustrating to parents who are seeking resources for their child.

The group discussed cyberbullying. Mr. Odom reported that cyber threats may be directed not only at the individual student but also at friends or parents. Cyberbullying can occur at any hour of the day or night via media that are not under the school's control (e.g., Facebook, cell phones, Twitter, etc.). Officer Smith reported that cyberbullying is being seen increasingly at the elementary level.

Attorney Campbell reported that every school district is grappling with the cell phone issue. He advises boards not to get caught up in the technology. He stated that the Board could consider building in exceptions for reasonable use, but strongly cautioned against allowing students to keep cell phones at school based on it being the family's only phone. He pointed out that relaxing the policy would only result in more violations. He recommended maintaining the prohibition against cell phone possession during stated hours. This maintains consistency and removes the burden of making judgment calls from the administrators' shoulders.

Regarding student discipline, Mr. Campbell advised keeping policies as simple as possible. He pointed out the impracticality of addressing every possible scenario within policy, and stated that the expectation for consistent enforcement should remain at the school level.

A question was asked about the degree of SRO involvement in questioning students. Mr. Campbell stated that there is a difference in probable cause and reasonable suspicion. As a law officer, the SRO should take over only when the student's behavior crosses the line and becomes a crime. Until then, the school administrator has the responsibility for initiating search and questioning.

It was suggested that the suspension letters currently included as policy exhibits be removed due to the need for frequent revision. It was agreed to direct the suspension policies and cell phone policy to the policy committee for review and possible updates.

Budget

SCHOOL FUNDING

Attorney Campbell reviewed the procedures for resolution of dispute between school boards and county commissioners. He reported that most disputes between boards occur over current expense funding. Resolution procedures range from mediation up to litigation. The most important factor in working out a budget dispute is to have a clear, targeted message that shows specific, identified needs. He stated it is important to realize that commissioners receive a large number of competing messages and demands. Communicating needs early and often can help to ensure the message is heard. Mr. Campbell reported that most budget disputes are resolved before reaching litigation.

SCHOOL CAPITAL FUND

Mr. Campbell gave a report on a 1983 local act to establish a school capital fund in Buncombe County. The act provided a designated amount to be set aside from county sales tax revenue for school capital needs. The resulting capital reserve fund allows the

Buncombe school board to plan capital improvements, perform regular maintenance rather than emergency repairs, and eliminates the need to fight with county commissioners over capital funding. Mr. Campbell pointed out that boards can do a better job maintaining facilities and planning for future needs when they can depend on a dedicated income stream. Local acts require 100 percent support of the local delegation. Both boards also must agree on how much a school system reasonably needs. Mr. Campbell reported that Buncombe County had established a commission to oversee the money in the event of a dispute; however, the commission has rarely needed to meet. He emphasized that this arrangement is not an additional tax, nor does it give a school board taxing authority. It is a legal agreement to set aside a portion of the sales tax revenue that is already generated within the county. There was much discussion, and Board members were generally in favor of exploring this possibility. Mr. Campbell reported that the first steps would be to determine what type of percentage to consider, and to schedule a joint work session with the commissioners to listen, ask questions, and have exploratory dialogue with no pressure to decide or commit to anything. Mr. Whitmire noted that this would be a progressive solution to a process that is inefficient, difficult, and time-consuming.

The Board took a five-minute recess.

FY10 ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Barger presented the annual financial report for the year ended June 30, 2010. Auditors reported no material weaknesses or deficiencies in procedures and full compliance with all state and federal regulations. Mr. Barger reported that the TCS fund balance is in good shape. He added that Child Nutrition is in a good position as well. Mrs. McCoy commended the Child Nutrition and Business Services departments for doing an excellent job.

MASTER FACILITIES PLAN

Mr. Barger reviewed the TCS master facilities plan. He reported that plan is largely unchanged since the Board's last review. Rosman High numbers have changed slightly to reflect the possibility of renovations to the CTE wing rather than a new building.

CONSOLIDATION

Mrs. Norman requested information on high school consolidation. Dr. McDaris stated that consolidating RHS and BHS would not save any money. The current BHS facility is too small to accommodate the addition of the RHS student body. Busing students from Rosman to Brevard would be prohibitive in terms of time. Some students would be on the bus for over two hours a day. To build a new 1000-student high school would cost around \$50 million. Buildable, centrally located land in this county would be an exorbitant expense. State requirements regarding class size and square footage would require the same number of teachers, administrators, classrooms, computer labs, science labs, etc., as we have now. In terms of quality of education, research shows that larger schools are not any better than small schools. Overall, the negatives simply outweigh the positives. Mrs. Norman asked whether Mr. Barger could prepare a consolidation study to present at the next joint meeting. Mrs. McCoy objected, saying that unless this is a specific request from the commissioners, the information that Dr. McDaris just summarized has not changed from previous presentations and would take an inordinate amount of Mr. Barger's time. Mr. Whitmire suggested that Mr. Barger prepare a bullet point summary instead.

CAPITAL OUTLAY STATUS REPORT

Mr. Barger presented a status report on capital projects. He reported that the Department of Transportation had lent assistance by patching holes on the BHS campus last week.

CTE RENOVATIONS

Mr. Barger presented the latest conceptual plan for renovations to the RHS CTE wing. The Board discussed the plans and possible changes. Mr. Barger reported that he and Dr. McDaris would be meeting with the RHS CTE staff later in the week to gather input.

BREVARD MEMORIAL STADIUM

Dr. McDaris reported that he would be meeting Dr. Van Horn of Brevard College next week to discuss the facilities use agreement for the BHS stadium. Dr. McDaris reported that he has proposed a rental fee of \$16,000 that would cover all games, locker rooms, cleanup, goal post adjustment, etc. The agreement would also address weather-related game cancellation procedures. In addition, he would like negotiate a separate agreement for the use of Brevard College facilities by the school system. Dr. McDaris also reported that some local businessmen may be willing to donate toward a fund to repair the BHS field. This idea is still in its infancy.

JOINT MEETING

Dr. McDaris gave an update on the joint meeting with commissioners. The county manager has reported that the Rogow Room is not available on the proposed date of February 22, and has suggested alternate dates of March 8 or 9. Mr. Whitmire reported that he would be away on military orders March 6-20. The Board agreed offered to host the meeting at a school location on February 22.

Naming Facilities

Mrs. Petit shared an e-mail she had received from one of the community members who had suggested naming the RHS gym floor in honor of Coach Jim Howell. She indicated that she did not feel the Board had enough substantive information at this time to move forward with the request. Dr. McDaris suggested that policy committee be directed to develop a policy on naming facilities for the Board's consideration. Dr. Scott Elliott reported that some districts have instituted a VIP Hall of Fame as an alternative to naming facilities for individuals. Members were in agreement that they would like to think more about this issue and revisit it again in the future. Mrs. Norman emphasized that having written procedures in place would be important no matter which option is selected.

Districting

Dr. McDaris reported that the unusually bad winter has led some people to ask about districting as a way to reduce school closures. On snow days, certain schools (Brevard and Pisgah Forest, for example) would open while others (Rosman and T. C. Henderson) would close. Dr. McDaris explained that this is not as simple a solution as it seems. He reported that conditions in Cedar Mountain and Little River (both in the Brevard district) frequently can be as bad or worse than conditions in the higher elevations. In addition, teachers and staff for all schools reside all over the county, and a large number of students attend schools out of their district of residence. He noted that some years ago, Buncombe County Schools implemented districting, and it was a very unpopular decision. It ended up costing the school system additional money because one district had to attend a number of extra Saturdays.

Mrs. Norman stated that districting had been suggested to her by some in the community. Mrs. McCoy stated that she believes Transylvania is too small to district. She believes the decision to not run buses on icy roads works well and is the wiser move. Mr. Whitmire stated that with high school intra-scheduling and open enrollment, he could not see districting working here. Mrs. Fox agreed that in a small county that is so closely interconnected, districting would not work.

Curriculum

YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL / EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR / FOUR-DAY WEEKS

Dr. Scott Elliott and Dr. Kim Elliott presented a report on the pros and cons of year-round school. They reported that the whole-school model is preferred over the school-within-a-school model. For year-round school to be successful, it is critical to have daycare available during “off” weeks. Year-round scheduling is easier to implement at the elementary level because middle and high school schedules are closely tied to the traditional athletic calendar. Members received sample year-round calendars from McDowell County and Henderson County Schools.

Dr. McDaris reported on extended school years and four-day weeks. He stated that North Carolina law currently requires 180 school days and 1000 hours of instruction. Were the school year to be extended past 180 days, there would be a corresponding increase in operating expenses and teacher payroll. Going to a four-day week could provide some cost savings, but it would mean going to school more weeks in order to achieve 180 days. Dr. McDaris reported that Wilkes County is experimenting with a 160-day calendar by increasing the number of school hours per day. Administrators expressed misgivings about the impact of longer days on children, noting that younger students are typically exhausted by 3:00 p.m.

Dr. McDaris stated there has been some talk at the state level of giving districts the flexibility of 180 days *or* 1000 hours. This option could provide more flexibility for make-up days. Dr. McDaris expressed hope that districts would be notified of any potential changes in time to make calendar adjustments.

LANGUAGE IMMERSION

Dr. Scott Elliott gave a report on *Splash*, a program which brings native-speaking teachers to the United States to provide high-quality language immersion in K-2 classrooms. *Splash* classrooms conduct all instruction and curriculum in the teacher’s native language. By grade 3, English instruction is blended into the mix. There are currently eight elementary schools in North Carolina using *Splash* programs. Funding for *Splash* is provided through grants.

OTHER

- Dr. Kim Elliott reported that schools have many exciting projects underway in connection with the Sesquicentennial celebration. Mrs. Fox commended the technology department for the support they are providing to this endeavor. She gave a reminder to everyone of the Sesquicentennial opening ceremony on February 15.
- Dr. Kim Elliott reported that Rtl in grades K-8 is going well. The high school Rtl model is on track to begin next month.
- Dr. Scott Elliott reported that TCS teachers will attend a three-day “train the trainer” event this summer on the new state curriculum changes. *Race to the Top* funds will be used to pay for the training.
- Dr. Scott Elliott reported that EOG testing could be scaled back for the elementary and middle grades, depending on what occurs in the state legislature. Dr. McDaris reported that superintendents’ reactions to this possibility have been mixed. Low-performing districts would favor reduced testing while high-performing systems would prefer no changes.
- Dr. Scott Elliott reported that the state is considering adopting a new funding formula for North Carolina Virtual Public Schools. Most systems would see a significant savings. Transylvania would experience a cost increase. Dr. McDaris reported he has communicated his concerns about the funding formula to DPI.

Technology

Dony's Merrill gave an update on the direction of technology in the classroom. She stated that the goal is no longer to have a ratio of 1:1 (one computer per student). The new goal is 2:1 (one laptop and one handheld device per student). Our current ratio is 1:2.45. The groundwork is being laid for gradual changes ("sustained gentle pressure") toward reaching these goals. Sustainability and affordability are the two major factors in all technology decisions. Mrs. Merrill gave a reminder that along with new technology comes a corresponding need for staff development.

Chairman Whitmire asked if any board members would be interested in serving on the NC Teaching Fellows interview panel at WCU on February 19.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MRS. FOX, SECONDED BY MRS. PETIT, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Secretary

PERSONNEL REPORT
February 7, 2011

- I. ACCEPT THE REPORT OF RESIGNATIONS/TERMINATIONS ACCEPTED/INITIATED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT FROM/FOR THE FOLLOWING PERSONS:

Licensed Personnel

Suzanne Bice, Teacher, BHS, effective June 16, 2011

Classified Personnel

None

- II. APPROVE THE EMPLOYMENT RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE SUPERINTENDENT FOR THE FOLLOWING PERSONS:

Licensed Personnel

Amanda Corn, Interim School Counselor, BES, effective January 19, 2011, through the end of the 2010-2011 school year

Chelsea Shew, Interim Part-Time Teacher, BHS & RHS, effective February 1, 2011, through the end of the 2010-11 school year

Classified Personnel

Chase Potts, Temporary Part-Time Student Worker, Building Futures Program, effective February 8, 2011 through June 16, 2011

Stephen Prichard, Bus Driver, TCS, effective February 8, 2011

Claire Slocum, Interim Teacher Assistant, DRS, effective February 25, 2011, through May 2, 2011

- III. ACCEPT THE REPORT OF TRANSFER OF ASSIGNMENT MADE BY THE SUPERINTENDENT FOR THE FOLLOWING PERSONS:

Licensed Personnel

None

Classified Personnel

Stephanie Breedlove, from Part-time Bus Driver, TCS, to Full-time Bus Driver, TCS, effective January 31, 2011

- IV. APPROVE THE LEAVES OF ABSENCE RECOMMENDED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT FOR THE FOLLOWING PERSONS:

Licensed Personnel

Meredith Guice, Teacher, BES, GCBDB Family Leave, effective March 3, 2011, through the end of the 2010-2011 school year

Classified Personnel

Shirley Raines, Bus Driver, BMS, Short-term Disability Leave, effective December 24, 2010, through December 23, 2011

- V. APPROVE THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION FOR THE FOLLOWING SUBSTITUTE EMPLOYEES:

Substitute Teachers

Yvonne Bowland

Sharon Briggs

Shane Galloway

Robert Green

Jean Holland

Bill Keenan

Joey Landreth

Teresa Lyday

Catherine Neff

Substitute Child Nutrition Workers

Jamie Smith