

**Minutes
Transylvania County Board of Education
March 10, 2009**

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

AGENDA

1. Purpose of meeting
2. Review of process in which data was received
3. Presentation of online survey results
4. Weighting and ranking of online survey results
5. Discussion of comments received through on-site visits and online surveys
6. Next steps

The Transylvania County Board of Education held a special work session at 6:00 p.m. on March 10, 2009 at the Morris Education Center. The purpose of the work session was to review results from the surveys and public input sessions regarding the superintendent search. Present were Mike Rogers, Chairman; Chris Whitmire, Vice Chairman; Tawny McCoy, Shelia Norman; and Cindy Petit. Also present were Jenny Hunter, Administrative Assistant; Lenora Moody, Reporter, *Transylvania Times*; and Mr. Norm Bossert. Chairman Rogers gave the invocation and Mrs. Norman led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Rogers welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

1. Purpose of Meeting

Mr. Whitmire reported that the Board had amassed between 80 and 100 pages of data analysis from the surveys and public input sessions. He expressed thanks to everyone who submitted surveys, comments and/or attended the forums. He stated that the selection of a new superintendent would be one of the most important personnel decisions for the county, impacting approximately 80-90% of residents for years to come.

Chairman Rogers stated that the Board would not discuss specific applicants during the meeting, but would discuss the qualities and characteristics desired in a superintendent as indicated from the surveys. He added that the data received would be very valuable in helping the Board to set expectations for the new person.

2. Review of Process

Mrs. Norman reported that the Board had held public input sessions for staff and community at each of the nine schools and the central office. Each forum was conducted by two Board members. The sessions were publicized via Cable Magazine, the district website, local newspapers and radio stations, ProActive notification system (phone and e-mail), flyers sent home with students, school newsletters, professional organizations, churches, and word of mouth. Surveys were available in online and paper format. Collection boxes for surveys and/or comments were available at schools and the central office. All surveys were anonymous.

Chairman Rogers reported that 38.7% of staff had participated in the online surveys. This rate is just above par for employee response rates to online surveys in general. Approximately 188 community surveys were received. Participation rates in the staff forums were very high. Mrs. Norman reported that school staffs were very appreciative of the opportunity for input, and had issued open invitations to Board members to visit schools in the future.

3. Presentation of Online Survey Results

Chairman Rogers presented breakdowns of the staff and community survey results. Data had been weighted, ranked and summarized. Responses showed a great deal of consistency in the characteristics desired. The top six qualities ranked as most important by staff and community were:

- Has strong human relations or “people” skills.
- Knows how to get staff, students, parents and community to work together to help children learn.
- Understands current school programs.
- Communicates well with all groups in the community.
- Should be accessible and respond to concerns in a timely fashion.
- Understands how to provide safe environments for students and staff.

Chairman Rogers noted that the qualities “having previously been a successful superintendent” and “being from Transylvania County,” had ranked near the bottom in overall importance on the surveys. This would seem to indicate that stakeholders want the best overall candidate, not simply the most experienced or the most “local” person. Results also showed that stakeholders would like a superintendent who has a strong education background, experience as a classroom teacher, and extensive knowledge of North Carolina education law.

4. Weighting and Ranking of Online Survey Results

See #3 above.

5. Discussion of Comments

Mrs. McCoy presented a summary of the comments received through the input sessions and surveys. Over 211 survey respondents provided comments. Comments were presented as received, with no editing except for the removal of specific names as required by law. In general, comments aligned closely with the survey results with one notable exception. While not reflected in the surveys, a significant number of comments showed a desire to hire someone from within the county, and some comments included the names of suggested candidates. Other trends indicated that the Board should 1) look for the best candidate overall, regardless of inside or outside the county, and 2) seek someone who would not use Transylvania County as a “stepping stone” to a larger district. It was noted that a number of respondents had used the comments section to vent concerns unrelated to the superintendent search process. In addition, many comments spoke positively about Dr. Lyda and her presence in the schools.

Chairman Rogers encouraged Board members to closely familiarize themselves with the comments and survey results as they move forward in the search process.

6. Next Steps

Mrs. Petit reviewed the following timeline:

March 16, 2009	Regular business meeting. Closed session with Board attorney to develop/review interview questions and begin review of applications
March 24, 2009	Special meeting with Board attorney to review applications and select candidates for interviews

April 20-24, 2009	Begin interviews
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Members compared calendars for the week of April 20-24. Tuesday and Thursday were selected as the best days for interviews, with Wednesday as a possible choice if needed. Chairman Rogers recommended that the Board allow 3-4 hours per interview. He also recommended that the Board attorney sit in on the interviews. The Board agreed upon the following tentative interview schedule:

Tuesday, April 21	One interview (morning); break; One interview (afternoon)
Wednesday, April 22 (if needed)	One interview (morning)
Thursday, April 23	One interview (morning); break; One interview (afternoon)

Mr. Whitmire asked the members to review those survey questions that address leadership qualities and to think about ways to incorporate those areas into the sample question template that was provided by the Board attorney.

Chairman Rogers wrapped up the work session by thanking everyone for their hard work thus far. He observed that there is much work still ahead. Member(s) will be visiting the locales and workplaces of the top candidates in order to gather face-to-face, firsthand knowledge from co-workers and community members. The Board hopes to name the new superintendent on or around June 1.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MRS. NORMAN, SECONDED BY MR. WHITIMRE, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Secretary