

DATE:	January 11, 2010	PRESENT:	Mary Grace Bright, Chair Jill Camnitz Michael Dixon Benjie Forrest Jennifer Little Ralph Love, Sr. Billy Peaden Roy Peaden Marcy Romary Dick Tolmie Mary Williams
TIME:	7:00 P.M.		
PLACE:	Pitt County Office Building	ABSENT:	Barbara Owens (Listened Via Conference Call)

Chair Mary Grace Bright called the Board of Education to order in Regular Session at 7:00 P.M.

Mr. Michael Dixon led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Bright then offered the Agenda for consideration. Mr. Michael Dixon, second by Mr. Dick Tolmie, moved the Agenda be accepted. Motion carried unanimously.

There was no one in the audience who wished to speak during Public Expression.

For Spotlight on Teaching and Learning, Clinical Associate Professor for East Carolina University Family Medicine Dr. Lauren Whetstone shared with the Board the “2009 Pitt County Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results”. Dr. Whetstone discussed two surveys, one was given to middle school students and the other to high school students which compared data for three years (2005, 2007, 2009) for percentages of respondents using alcohol, tobacco or marijuana. It was noted that of the three areas discussed, tobacco use has declined while alcohol and marijuana use have increased. Parental and peer disapproval for users was discussed, as well as sources for the three substances used by students. Binge drinking, use of inhalants, prescription drugs and steroids were briefly mentioned.

Ms. Jill Camnitz asked how did these results for Pitt County Schools students compare with the national trend? Dr. Whetstone stated our results for twelfth graders were higher in some areas than the national results.

Mr. Roy Peaden asked would these results be sent home to parents? Dr. Whetstone stated the results were sent to each principal and counselors who were asked to present the material at PTA meetings. She also stated the Pitt County Substance Abuse Coalition has tried to address this issue. Mr. Peaden felt the results should be sent to all parents and the media. Ms. Marcy Romary stated the results could be placed on the PCS website. Ms. Jennifer Little added the survey could be placed in the elementary and some middle schools student’s folder which is sent home weekly. Mr. Peaden felt prolonging life would be worth the cost of copying the report and a stamp.

Chair Bright remembered a survey done several years ago regarding happiness and suicide rates and wondered if these had been compared? Dr. Whetstone stated she had completed a comparison in the past, but not recently.

Under Consent Items, Ms. Jill Camnitz motioned, second by Mr. Michael Dixon, that the Board approve the November 12, 2009 and December 7, 2009 Minutes and the Personnel Report for January 2010. Motion carried unanimously.

Under New Business, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Delilah Harris discussed the results of the two options for the 2010-2011 Pitt County Schools Calendar. She reported that Option I was the overwhelming calendar of choice. Ms. Harris stated there were questions rendered and concern expressed regarding asking for a waiver for a change in school start date from the State so exams could be given before winter break. She also commented that there was positive response for reinstating the parent conference days and several comments regarding Easter break.

Ms. Jill Camnitz asked about spring break coming the week before Easter and remembered from a previous year that this decision made athletic scheduling very difficult as our opponents were out the week after Easter. Ms. Harris stated Athletic Director Ron Butler informed the committee that he did not think this would be an issue as spring break is very late this school year. Chair Bright stated she had received a phone call this afternoon from a parent expressing concern as one school in the conference was out the week after Easter; and also, several of our schools are in tournaments the week after Easter which serve as major fundraisers for the schools. Ms. Harris stated this problem was discussed during the decision making process, as was the continued response of not being out Good Friday by area churches. She commented that either way the committee chose, everyone could not be accommodated.

Mr. Billy Peaden commented that the second marking period was longer than the first. Ms. Harris stated this is true. Because of the start day for school and completing exams at appropriate time intervals, sometimes the marking periods did not have the same number of days. Mr. Peaden stated he heard many complaints about the students not taking exams before Christmas as they forgot subject details during the break. Dr. Reep stated a study was asked for by the NCAE, administrators and the NCSBA to collect data and prove that there is a significant impact on exam scores by waiting until after winter break before taking the EOC tests. Due to a change in standards for math and language arts courses, and EOC tests being changed twice, there would not be an equal baseline to make a comparison in the scores. Superintendent Reep stated almost everyone in education would like to start earlier, but apparently opinions of public school folks have not mattered.

Superintendent Reep remarked that during the first year the State/Legislature changed the start date, there was more flexibility when granting waivers. Now, we do not have a "special program" in place that would allow PCS to receive a waiver – a list of waiver options is in place in Raleigh (i.e. early college high school). Mr. Roy Peaden felt one of the most important waivers there is is to have the students take exams before Christmas as this would benefit the kids. Dr. Reep stated a very small percentage of school districts receive waivers. Mr. Dick Tolmie stated that a bill had been brought up by the Legislature to change the start date of schools leaving it up to

each individual district to decide, but this bill did not pass. He stated that public contact should be made to the Legislators to ask for support to have flexibility in individual school start dates. Ms. Harris stated that Ms. Barbara Owens has worked for and followed the bill for years, but it has not obtained sufficient support from higher up officials to have the bill changed. Ms. Jill Camnitz commented that changing the legislation that established the start date of August 25 is on the NCSBA Legislative Agenda every year, and they continue to work toward this goal. Dr. Reep stated that a change in legislative leadership has been rumored to be on the horizon which could mean changes in legislation in the near future.

Ms. Mary Williams stated that seniors had to have certain exams completed before taking the SAT and applying for scholarships throughout the county and other schools. She asked would the current exam schedule affect these students? Ms. Harris commented that she did not have this data available, but would investigate the question.

With this being considered as the First Reading for the 2010-2011 Pitt County Schools Calendar, Ms. Harris stated if changes are necessary between now and the Second Reading - now is the time to decide. Chair Bright felt further clarification from Athletic Director Ron Butler needed to be obtained regarding athletic schedules occurring during spring break. On this note, Dr. Reep felt the number of students involved for making a change as compared to the total 23,000 student population should be considered. Ms. Jill Camnitz also commented that checking the sports schedules for surrounding counties in our conference regarding the timing of Easter break would be valuable in knowing which week for spring break would be appropriate.

Associate Superintendent of Operations Aaron Beaulieu shared with the Board an update on the current four projects under construction - which have been affected by a very wet November stating that over a seven-week period, we have received 23 plus inches of rain. He stated the rain had delayed some of the progress in construction, but all sites were under way and still on schedule to his knowledge. Mr. Beaulieu mentioned that technology was a great asset as he receives construction updates daily including construction photos, work description, companies represented, etc. Most of the construction at this point is considered to be at the ground level - clearing sites, building building pads, putting in additional sewer lines, moving transformers, etc. He also commented on the great working relationship and professionalism of the contractors at all projects. After seeing an Editorial from County Manager Scott Elliott earlier this week, Mr. Beaulieu did state that all the projects he is updating the Board on are a direct result of the quarter cent sales tax and the Lottery funds to be used at our discretion.

Mr. Beaulieu stated we still face, as we begin considering the Phase 2 projects, student assignment, capacity of school sites, school configuration and size and how our Guiding Principles will be applied as far as attendance lines, feeder schools and other things of this magnitude. We need to have preliminary discussions regarding these factors as we start to move forward in creating criteria and scenarios for our student assignment. In discussing dates for a preliminary discussion of facilities, it was decided by the Board to meet February 1 with a start time of 5:30 p.m. and start the regular Board meeting at 7:30 p.m. with a planned light Agenda.

Under Old Business, Superintendent Beverly Reep updated the Board on the status of “Race to the Top”, the Federal grant monies that North Carolina will compete for in the spring of 2010. The folks in Raleigh feel that we as a state have a significant chance of getting these funds in the first round. The Federal Government is looking for a student accountability model that measures student growth, and North Carolina is one of eight states in the country that has, since the onset of ABC monies, measured growth as opposed to just a proficiency level. There are alignment issues with teacher, principal and superintendent evaluations that North Carolina is specifically poised to take advantage of. With both these factors in place, the State believes we are in good standing for these dollars. The money North Carolina could receive is about \$400 million a year over a four-year period – with Pitt County Schools receiving a little over \$900,000 a year. A statement from the guidelines requires at least 50% of the money has to go to school districts. Dr. Reep discussed further details associated with the Memorandum of Understanding for this grant with the Board. Some examples of how these grant monies could be spent are: instructional coaches, incentives for teachers to teach in low performing schools, running summer programs in high schools year-round to offer students a chance to pick up extra courses, etc. Another positive is that the 50% of the money the State will keep has clearly been dedicated to creating a system of formative assessment that is directly accessible to the classroom. Teachers will be able to get on-line and access data about their own student’s item analysis, benchmark data, diagnostic data and create a system of assessments for departments, grade levels and content areas that are not currently assessed. This will mean looking at hands-on types of observations and more qualitative views of how we assess student performance instead of just pencil and paper. A concern initially regarding this grant is that the Feds will not award grants to states that don’t look at tying student performance and teacher/principal performance together in an evaluation system. ESEA reauthorization of Title I dollars and Exceptional Children Title VI-B dollars are not coming in new funding without a component of districts tying student growth to evaluation of employees. Therefore the State’s position is to get some “Race to the Top” money and use this to figure out how to do this fairly and correctly instead of waiting until the Feds force it on us and we would have no money to figure it out.

Dr. Reep stated we are supposed to learn the end of April whether we received this grant and money would start flowing in September. Mr. Benjie Forrest asked was there a ceiling that each LEA could receive? Dr. Reep stated a formula using ADM had been put into place with all school districts participating – which is just an estimate of the amount. There may also be a pocket of money which could be used for piloting programs, creating assessments, etc. Ms. Jill Camnitz asked was there something in the wording of the grant for using this money that would prevent the State from spending the funding in areas that are already there to free up dollars to spend somewhere else. Dr. Reep stated there is actually a sheet of assurances that the Governor, Board Chairs and State Superintendent have to sign off on, and the Federal stabilization dollars would be compromised if this in fact did occur.

Chair Bright then began discussion of Election of Pitt County Board of Education members stating she conversed with Representative Marian McLawhorn over the Christmas holidays. She stated Representative McLawhorn’s recommendation stayed the same - that we not ask for this to be introduced this year with the reason being it’s a short session and controversial issues would not be discussed. Chair Bright also

stated it's an election year and nothing can change for the upcoming election as there is not time enough to make changes. The next election after 2010 is 2014. Representative McLawhorn's suggestion is to take this year for collecting data by talking to other school systems to see what they're doing, get input from the community and move forward in the long legislative session of 2011 if that is the desire of the Pitt County Board of Education at that time.

Ms. Jill Camnitz asked if the desired changes are presented in 2011 and passed, would there be enough time to structure an election in 2012 if we go to a four-year term? Chair Bright stated that the way she understood it, whoever was elected in 2008 was elected for six years. Therefore, there could not be an election in 2012 as these members would be in office until 2014. Their term could not be shortened as they were elected for a six-year term. Ms. Camnitz asked the Chair was she sure there was no way legislation could retroactively change the length of term for Board members elected in 2008. Chair Bright stated the only way that the term could be shortened is if all six people elected in 2008 would agree to shorten their term to four years, and she does not feel that is the case. Ms. Camnitz again asked was it absolutely firm that legislation could not shorten the term. Chair Bright stated that was her understanding, but told Ms. Camnitz that she was welcome to contact legislators if she so desired.

Superintendent Reep informed the board that support for students from Title IV Safe and Drug Free School money, which at one time was as high as \$120,000 – this year was down to \$80,000 – would not have funding provided next year per Mr. Travis Lewis. The dollars we have used from the grant to support programs like “Project Find” and opportunities to work with children who have substance abuse issues will thus be “zero”, and we will be looking at how to continue funding some of those programs to help and support our students.

Dr. Reep also stated that former Daily Reflector Reporter Brock Letchworth has been hired as a language arts teacher at Farmville Middle School. His principal is also anticipating help with coaching, starting a school newspaper and is excited to have Brock on board. We do wish him “good wishes” in his new job!!

Dr. Reep also thanked all Board members for their participation in judging Senior Projects. She informed the Board that 18 seniors completed their projects in Second Life with virtually no cost as they entered everything electronically into a portfolio and completed an electronic presentation. Dr. Reep reminded everyone that these seniors will graduate with 18 credit hours from ECU. A group of juniors have been added this year with the hope that this program has great potential for expansion. We are still lobbying as to how this gets paid for and will fill you in as we are notified.

Superintendent Reep also thanked Mr. Aaron Beaulieu, Transportation Director Joey Weathington and their staff for their extra time and effort in their decision regarding the forecast of snow for January 8th. She stated we took a beating Thursday for not having a two-hour delay as many other districts chose, but received many thanks from staff and students Friday for maintaining the scheduled high school exams and calendar days as planned.

Dr. Reep also echoed Mr. Aaron Beaulieu in thanking the Pitt County tax payers. She stated at the dinner for closing the \$35 million financing in Raleigh, bond counselors and bankers commented that they were doing very few if any closings for school construction and what a miracle it was in this economy to have a school system that had a dedicated line of revenue to be able to do this. Superintendent Reep stated that not only are we able to have school construction, but we're able to create construction jobs to help improve our economy. Again, thank you.

Chair Bright stated she would be finalizing the hearing panels and committees for the coming year. She stated we are in for a really busy year with redistricting, an election year and hopes everybody came back from winter break well rested and with a renewed spirit to move forward for the tasks at hand which will not be easy.

Chair Bright also thanked Aaron and company for their weather call last Thursday. She thanked County Commissioner Tom Johnson for his presence at the meeting as well as Ms. Ginger Livingston, Interim Reporter for the Daily Reflector. Chair Bright also wished Board Member Barbara Owens continued recovery from her health issues.

Mr. Billy Peaden stated he was at North Pitt High School this afternoon when Principal Marty Baker shared with him that one of his classes made 100% proficiency on an exam – being only one of seven in the State of North Carolina who met this goal.

Mr. Dick Tolmie stated the Daily Reflector recognized approximately seven teachers around the county who have worked hard and received grants and felt we need to continually applaud our staff for their efforts.

Mr. Benjie Forrest stated he is very excited regarding the “Race to the Top” proposal Dr. Reep discussed and how it could have positive influence for Pitt County Schools, particularly to how it relates to Career and Technical Education. He also invited everyone to attend the FFA alumni meeting tomorrow night @ 7:00 p.m. at the Pig Palace. Mr. Forrest stated there would be scholarships awarded to some Ayden-Grifton FFA students at the meeting.

Ms. Jill Camnitz informed the Board that she spent two days last week interviewing Teacher of the Year candidates and saw their commitment to our students and their passion to meet the needs of each and every child.

Ms. Camnitz also discussed whether or not legislation could change Board terms if the Board requested this be done. She wondered if Attorney Sonnenberg or Attorney Allison Schafer with the NCSBA could pursue this issue. Attorney Sonnenberg stated he would investigate the legality of the proposed question.

Ms. Jennifer Little congratulated high school students for presenting their Senior Projects. She stated high schools need more judges, and perhaps the need could be placed on the web site asking for more folks to get involved. Ms Little also congratulated the students who will be graduating from the Fast Track Program in a few days.

Mr. Roy Peaden felt we need to decide as a Board whether to go with the recommendation of the State Representative as noted in previous discussion, or

whether the Board needs to revote and move forward with a decision regarding Pitt County Board of Education members.

Mr. Peaden also challenged all weekly church messages to include the survey presented earlier regarding substance abuse involving our students. He stated this would be another avenue to share the findings with many parents and communities.

Several Board members wished everyone a Happy New Year!

Mr. Michael Dixon moved, second by Mr. Dick Tolmie, that the Board adjourn at 8:35 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectively Submitted,

Ms. Mary Grace Bright, Chair

Dr. Beverly B. Reep, Superintendent