

DATE: February 15, 2010 PRESENT: Mary Grace Bright, Chair
Jill Camnitz
Michael Dixon
Benjie Forrest
Jennifer Little
Ralph Love, Sr.
TIME: 7:00 P.M. Billy Peaden
Roy Peaden
Dick Tolmie

PLACE: Pitt County Office Building ABSENT: Barbara Owens
Marcy Romary
Mary Williams

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

Ms. Jill Camnitz led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

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

Under Consent Items, Ms. Jill Camnitz motioned, second by Dr. Ralph Love, that the Board approve the February 8, 2010 Regular Session Minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Under Spotlight on Teaching and Learning, Transportation Director Joey Weathington expressed sincere appreciation to the Board of Education, Superintendent Beverly Reep and Public Information Officer Heather Mayo for highlighting the Pitt County Schools' bus drivers and recognizing their hard work for the students of Pitt County. He mentioned several "Love the Bus" ceremonies which have been held throughout the district including the reception held before the Board meeting tonight. Mr. Weathington discussed the importance of the School Bus and Training Safety Manual and gave statistics dealing with transportation in Pitt County Schools. He also mentioned bus drivers for special needs students as well as Pre-K students and required preparation for these children.

Several Assistant Principals then shared stories regarding their bus drivers and the important role they have in their respective schools. Ms. Teresa White was named Bus Driver of the Year for the 2009-10 School Year. Ms. Genea Kornegay, Assistant Principal at W. H. Robinson, stated Ms. White was a true team player. She helps other drivers, substitutes and new bus drivers as needed, is dedicated and committed to the students, knows each student's name and communicates with his/her parents on a regular basis and helps the AP as necessary. It was stated that Ms. White, "loves her babies and wants them all to be safe on her bus". AP at Sam Bundy Cathy Kirkland stated Mr. Mickey Fields is honest, caring, patient and a "fatherly" figure to all students trying to guide them in the right direction. She stated Mr. Fields does

what is expected of him and more. AP at Pactolus Greg MacDaid commented that Ms. Myra Morris drove a bus on the curviest road in Pitt County, Ram's Horn Road. He stated she cleans her bus each day so her students will have a clean place to come to. Ms. Morris hurt her back a few months back, but told her doctor she had to drive her bus taking her students back and forth to school.

Chair Mary Grace Bright thanked all bus drivers on behalf of the Board stating they have a tough job day in and day out keeping our children safe on the buses.

Under New Business, Associate Superintendent of Educational Programs and Services Worth Forbes stated efforts were being made in curriculum to keep students interested and involved with school hoping to prevent dropouts.

He introduced Grades 9-12 Director Chena Cayton who updated the Board on Link Crew. Ms. Cayton stated that as an Assistant Principal at J. H. Rose High School, Link Crew kept her spirit up as she worked with the students. Using grant money, Link Crew involves all six high schools and at last year's Link Crew Conference, 200 students designed the dropout prevention logo, wrote letters to teachers who had a negative and positive impact on their life, listed reasons for dropping out of school - which all helped to promote the dropout campaign. "Keeping the Chain Tight" is the theme for the Link Crew Conference this year which will be held at South Central High School on Saturday, February 27, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Questions which will be asked this year are, "What educational moment changed your high school experience?", and "What change came about because of a personal experience?" Ms. Cayton and her supporters want to know what changes between school staff and students could mean a positive change in school. The leadership activity for this year's conference will be participating in a privilege walk where all students will experience a cultural walk and follow Pitt County Schools' administrative theme this year of "Walk in My Shoes".

Mr. Benjie Forrest asked were all costs for this conference paid for with grant money. Ms. Cayton stated yes. Ms. Jill Camnitz asked the overall cost for the Link Crew Program? Ms. Cayton stated she did not have a specific number for the total cost, though training of personnel is the largest expense. Participants are given T-shirts, but these are not very expensive. She told Ms. Camnitz she would obtain the total figure for her. She also commented that of the three-year grant funding, one year was left.

Ms. Jennifer Little asked regarding students interested in the program and how were they accepted? Ms. Cayton explained that they filled out an application, were positive leaders with no discipline write ups and were from various cultures. Mr. Forbes stated Ms. Cayton worked very hard for the program and in searching for grants. He stated the program created emotional involvement for students and staff.

Exceptional Children's Director Cathy Keeter then presented two remedial programs being implemented at the high school level: Language! and Algebra Essentials.

Ms. Keeter stated in n trying to help students plan for success, several barriers are raised: academic scores, a high dropout rate which is not acceptable and a low graduation rate which is not acceptable

Ms. Keeter stated algebra in the Occupational Course of Study and the Future Ready Core are the same. In knowing that many students read several grades below their level and have a low foundation for math skills, remedial programs are essential. She stated 2030 Level I and II students have been screened between grades five and eight. Many of these students warranted placement showing they were two plus years below grade level. 812 students are being served from the six high schools and four middle schools with 6150 students being served in grades 5-8. Many at-risk students are being served in middle schools. The ninth grade program will begin with English Essentials during first semester paired with English I during second semester. Ms. Keeter stated the long term goal is to be so successful with our middle school students, there will no longer be a need for remediation at the high school level. At this time, there are 92 teachers who have been trained in remedial programs. In working toward improving math content, AYP information shows students are not performing on grade level, i.e. one student repeated algebra seven times. Next year, Algebra Essentials followed by Algebra I will be offered to better prepare students for a strong math foundation. Pitt County Schools has received a SIPP II Grant to cover a five-year period of working with all students. A fidelity check will be implemented for accountability of this grant.

Mr. Roy Peaden asked why someone would promote a student who was two years behind. Ms. Keeter stated data had shown that a student who had been retained twice would have a 99% certainty of becoming a dropout. She affirmed that we had to implement good curriculum to close the gaps for students. Mr. Peaden asked what percentage of students do we fail. Ms. Keeter stated she did not have that data available. Superintendent Reep stated the dropout rate for K-12 was not just the responsibility of the high schools, but all grade levels were accountable. In the Fast Track Program, 33% of the sixth grade students are not age appropriate. 46% of our dropouts are in the ninth grade (age 16). Mr. Peaden stated, "not being able to read is like not being able to see".

Mr. Forbes stated students need to be able to read by the third grade, and we need to provide a safety net to catch students up. By the ninth grade, if a student cannot read, they lead to discipline problems and becoming dropouts. Mr. Forbes stated not only English and math teachers were receiving remedial training, but social studies and science teachers were also involved in Reading Foundations training.

Mr. Dick Tolmie felt that if third and fourth graders were not reading and working math problems at the appropriate level, remediation needed to start here – not wait for a higher grade level. If there are exceptional promotions, we should look at similar cohorts and get as close to grade level as possible. Mr. Forbes stated in the K-2 and K-5 lower levels, we are implementing "Success Maker" and "Waterford" to help students be successful. He stated time spent on the computer for these programs could be used as a comparison for the success rate of a student. Dr. Reep stated that retention does not work if a teacher does not implement a different method of teaching the student. As a district, we are now providing different strategies to reach and teach all students. Dr. Reep asked was a teacher who retained a child willing to have that child again next year, and what would he/she do differently?

Mr. Michael Dixon stated, “a child who can’t read will become a child on the streets”. He asked what’s done for a child in K-2 who can’t read, and is it enough to help?

Ms. Keeter stated Reading Foundations prepared teachers for prerequisite skills – coding skills and comprehension skills. She stated there are time constraints for sounds and further instruction, but we now have a wealth of resources for PK-12 grade. Ms. Keeter stated for a single reading deficiency, it takes 90 minutes of instruction to correct this deficit.

Dr. Ralph Love asked when a child fails algebra seven times, what is done for that child. Mr. Forbes stated we need something in place to help any child in this circumstance.

Mr. Tolmie stated if it had been documented that 99% dropped out of school if they were retained twice and could not read, this emphasized that remediation needed to be done in elementary grades and not wait for middle or high school to implement a new strategy. Ms. Keeter stated that at the end of the school year, there would be data to document if these new remediation methods were successful.

Mr. Forbes stated that Reading Recovery had been in place for the last ten to twelve years and questions are being raised as to its benefits. Students learn to read but do not comprehend what they’re reading.

Executive Director of Student Services Travis Lewis and Twilight Academy Coordinator Mike Lutz then discussed implementation of the Twilight Academy. Mr. Lewis stated this program helped students who have fallen behind in credits get back on course. With a grant through the Greenville Police Department and at-risk funding, implementation of the program evolves daily. The program is needed to increase the graduation rate (providing students a means to see a light at the end of the tunnel), reduce the dropout rate, increasing student morale by increasing student success and teachers develop a rapport with the students. As a pilot program, several methods are being used to work with these students including: NC Virtual Public Schools which is State provided offering 30 seats 24/7 365 days a year, Ed Options through Novel Stars and Credit Recovery with sixteen teachers having all core subjects offered. Approximately 170 students are enrolled in 200 courses and students may still enroll until about the half-way point of second semester. Students take the End-Of-Course test after completion of the course and make take more than one course. It is hoped that these programs may be offered to other students who fall behind in credits, i.e. algebra, English or occupational courses.

Mr. Benjie Forrest asked how was the staff selected? Mr. Lutz stated applications were processed through Ms. Harris in Human Resources and personnel who relate readily with students are sought.

Mr. Michael Dixon asked what is meant by 24/7? Mr. Lutz stated with the NC Virtual Public Schools, software for students is available at all times. With Credit Recovery, students are able to take a pretest and if part of the course has been mastered by the student, he/she will only need to take the part they could not pass. Mr. Lutz stated some students thought they could guess at the questions and pass, but this was not the case.

Mr. Forrest asked was there compensation for mileage for the teachers? Mr. Lutz stated no. Teachers may rotate between schools and all teachers' time is matched with a student's schedule. Chair Bright commented that teachers were compensated for their hours of work at their hourly rate in their regular school jobs.

Associate Superintendent of Operations Aaron Beaulieu stated he needed formal Board approval to offer to purchase 9.82 acres of land from Ms. Jeannette Gardner bordering Chicod School. Mr. Michael Dixon moved, second by Mr. Billy Peaden, that the Board approve the purchase of said property. Motion passed unanimously.

Policy Committee Chair Jill Camnitz and In-House Attorney Rob Sonnenberg then presented a revised policy Personal Records Requests – Policy 2.302 for discussion. Mr. Dick Tolmie asked was the fee for a copy of records stated in the policy with Attorney Sonnenberg stating no. He also stated Student Services personnel are now dispensing transcripts.

Changes in Procedure 10.205-P Canine Searches for Drugs were also discussed.

Chair Mary Grace Bright then approached the Board about starting the Board meetings at 6:30 p.m. after being contacted by several members regarding this issue. Mr. Roy Peaden asked what was the purpose in changing the time? Chair Bright stated if our meetings were long, it meant staying longer at night after a long day at work. Mr. Dick Tolmie stated he would rather start at 7:00 p.m. and eat dinner before the meeting. Ms. Jill Camnitz suggested trying 6:30 p.m. start time as a comparison to the 7:00 p.m. start time. Mr. Roy Peaden moved, second by Mr. Billy Peaden, that the Board meeting start at 7:00 p.m. It was decided to keep the meetings at 7:00 p.m.

Superintendent Reep thanked Ms. Chena Cayton for her help with the County Commissioners' meeting school update presentation prior to the Board meeting. She also mentioned that Ms. Cayton's son attended both meetings in association with acquiring the Eagle Scout Badge in Boy Scouts.

Dr. Reep also thanked all bus drivers for their commitment to Pitt County Schools students. She thanked all who had helped with the "Love the Bus" reception and especially Wal-Mart for providing the beautiful cake that was enjoyed by all.

Superintendent Reep invited everyone to attend the third Robotic Competition on February 21 at 3:00 p.m. at South Central High School. Four high schools will be represented at the competition.

It was announced that there will be a Facilities Committee Meeting at Sadie Saulter School February 16 at 4:30 p.m.

Chair Bright reminded everyone of the Ethics Training being offered March 2 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. in the County Commissioners Auditorium. She asked that everyone notify Administrative Assistant Brenda Pippin prior to leaving the meeting tonight regarding attendance for the training. Board members are required to have two hours of Ethics Training before the end of the year.

Mr. Roy Peaden reminded everyone of Presidents' Day and thanked all Presidents for their hard work over the years.

Ms. Jennifer Little gave full support for the Link Crew Program and the positive results it demonstrated. She also thanked Ms. Cayton, Ms. Keeter and teachers using creative measures to help all students. Ms. Little feels we need to share with the public what's available in assisting our students to become successful.

Mr. Benjie Forrest made the comment that he could "set his clock by bus drivers passing his home each morning" and thanked one and all for a job well done.

Mr. Dick Tolmie also invited everyone to the Pitt Pirates Robotics Training stating it was a wonderful experience this past year.

Mr. Billy Peaden asked could we obtain a list of students who come to school in taxis. Discussion was held regarding IEP requirements for some students because of physical conditions or behavior, homeless children under NCLB or a taxi being cheaper to operate than a bus for one or two students in specific settings. Dr. Reep stated Transportation does conduct a cost analysis for these children who are transported by taxis.

Dr. Ralph Love stated his son is a bus driver and he applauded all Pitt County Schools bus drivers, as did many of the Board members, for their dedication to our students.

Mr. Dick Tolmie then moved, second by Ms. Jill Camnitz, that the Board go into Closed Session to: (1) establish or instruct the staff or agent concerning the negotiations of the amount of compensation or other terms of an employment contract.[N.C.G.S.§143-318.11(a)(5)] and (2) consider the qualifications, competence, performance, condition of appointment of a public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against a public officer or employee. [N.C.G.S.§143-318.11(a)(6)] Motion carried unanimously.

Upon returning to Open Session, Mr. Roy Peaden moved, second by Mr. Billy Peaden, that the Board adjourn at 9:20 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectively Submitted,

Ms. Mary Grace Bright, Chair

Dr. Beverly B. Reep, Superintendent