

DATE: May 17, 2010 PRESENT: Mary Grace Bright, Chair  
Jill Camnitz  
Michael Dixon  
Benjie Forrest  
Jennifer Little  
TIME: 6:00 P.M. Barbara Owens  
Ralph Love, Sr.  
Billy Peaden  
Roy Peaden  
Dick Tolmie  
Mary Williams

PLACE: Pitt County Office Building ABSENT: Marcy Romary

Chair Mary Grace Bright called the Board of Education to order in Regular Session at 6:00 P.M.

Ms. Barbara Owens led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Information Officer Heather Mayo began the introduction of the 2009-10 NC Teaching Fellows recipients by sharing a brief history of the Program. In 1986 the General Assembly enacted the Program to recruit talented high school seniors into the teaching profession and to help them develop leadership qualities such as visionary thinking and risk-taking. By challenging students to see beyond the classroom and think about the connections of education to the quality of life and the economic survival of our state, the Program has become one of the most prestigious awards in North Carolina.

The Scholarship provides \$6,500 per year for four years for each recipient. Criteria demonstrated by these applicants are SAT scores over 1100, high school GPAs of 4 or higher on a weighted scale and ranking in the top 10% of his/her high school graduating class. The recipient's obligation after graduating from college is to teach in a North Carolina public school or United States Government School in North Carolina for four years.

Thirteen Pitt County Schools' students were selected for the Teaching Fellows Scholarship, which was more than any other system in our region and the sixth highest number in the state. Those students selected are:

Ayden Grifton High School

- Jessica Renee Dennis
- Kathryn Elizabeth Frazier

D.H. Conley High School

- Kelsey Alyssa Brown
- James Christopher Gentry
- Anthony Terrell Martin
- Skylar Brooks Mills
- Mark Anthony Poczontek
- Moraih Jane Swindell

J. H. Rose High School

- Thomas Edward Houmard

South Central High School

- Hailey Nicole Carlton
- Shaela Renee Churchill
- Mary Frances Conlin
- Alec Coleman Merricks

Vice-Dick Tolmie offered congratulations and presented each recipient with an Excellence in the East Certificate from the Board of Education. Ms. Mayo also recognized the Educational Foundation Director and District Coordinator for the Teaching Fellows Program Frances Young for the great job she does in implementing this event each year.

AIG Coordinator Tim DeCresie then applauded G. R. Whitfield School's students for winning the Battle of the Books Competition at the District and Regional levels and representing Pitt County in the State Competition. Coaches of the Team are Media Coordinator Paula Ellis and the AIG teacher Teresa Stainback. The students on the GRW Battle of the Books Team are:

Caroline Chappell  
Missy Alexander  
Jasmine Cairns  
Miranda Cox  
Stephen May  
Kayla Bennett  
Bryce McKeel  
Rand Chandler  
Morgan Whitehurst  
Mikayla Dixon

Vice-Dick Tolmie offered congratulations and presented each team member with an Excellence in the East Certificate from the Board of Education.

Chair Bright then offered the Agenda for consideration. Mr. Dick Tolmie, second by Ms. Barbara Owens, moved the Agenda be accepted as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Two members of the audience wished to speak during Public Expression. The first was Ms. Lisa Labinski who discussed school attendance lines for a neighborhood, Moore's Pointe, between Ayden and Grifton. She stated she had lived in Moore's Pointe for ten years and her three children had always attended Ayden schools. Her youngest child is now a first grader in Ayden Elementary, but the Assistant Principal called her in February stating her child is out-of-district. Ms. Labinski stated all the children, except for one house in the back of the development, had always attended Ayden schools. She presented a petition signed by parents living in the community and a map of the area asking that the children living in the development be allowed to remain in the Ayden school district.

The second speaker was Mr. Ozie Hall who spoke regarding adverse situations that

exist for black students in Pitt County Schools. The growing achievement gaps, the SAT score gaps, disproportionate suspensions for subjective offenses with the accompanying loss of instructional time, disproportionality in the Exceptional Children's Program, high dropout rates, no significant increase in the percentage of black and Hispanic teachers and many other indications that vestiges of de jure racial segregation continue to impact the progress of Pitt County Schools give us cause for concern. He stated the Pitt County Coalition for Educating Black Children remains committed to helping PCS achieve Unitary Status. Mr. Hall stated the Coalition will shortly release a preliminary report on Pitt County Schools' progress toward Unitary Status. Several Green Factors mentioned by Mr. Hall are transportation, which is poor because black students have longer bus rides than white students with a contributing factor being the systematic closing of schools in the black communities. He stated in 1970 disproportionality between faculty and staff was prevalent as many black teachers were fired – currently 80% of our teachers are white females. Mr. Hall stated our student population is 49% African American students and 7% Latino students, with no significant increase in the percentage of black and Hispanic teachers. There was a short-lived slight increase in black faculty members (principals, assistant principals and other administrators). He also stated many of our facilities have overcrowding, but schools in black communities were closed with school construction carried out in other areas. In extracurricular activities, Mr. Hall felt there is a lack of access for participation by black students – many with no means of transportation for the after school activities or parental involvement. As far as student assignment, he stated that in 39 years under court order, Pitt County Schools has not been successful in obtaining a racial balance plan within our district. He stated student assignment demonstrated a pattern of segregation within schools and in racially identifiable schools, research shows the highest qualified teachers (National Board certification, advanced degrees and longevity) disproportionately serving white students. Mr. Hall stated insight is needed in planning curriculum and instruction for diversity in schools with positive results and achieving Unitary Status together.

Under Consent Items, Ms. Jill Camnitz motioned, second by Mr. Michael Dixon, that the Board approve the May 3, 2010 Minutes; the second Personnel Report for May 2010 and the Declared Surplus List. Motion carried unanimously.

Under New Business, Attorney Ken Soo with Tharrington Smith, LLP presented background information and the process involved in achieving Unitary Status for a public school system with the Board. The history of segregation in American Schools during the 20<sup>th</sup> century came in two forms. De jure segregation, which means by law, and in North Carolina it was against the law for white students and black students to attend the same schools. After the Brown vs. the Board of Education Case, which stated that de jure segregation is no longer allowed, many school systems across the country went to de facto segregation in which whether the law was segregation or not, by school choice and other plans, segregation continued. In the 1960s, black students filed suits against the Greenville City and Pitt County Schools that challenged race discrimination in the schools. Resolution by a Consent Order had Greenville City Schools implementing a busing plan with a ratio of one-third black students to two-third white students in every elementary school, while Pitt County Schools used different methods including the construction of four high schools – North Pitt, D. H. Conley, Ayden-Grifton and Farmville Central. The school system devised a plan of feeding students into these high schools which would be desegregated and the Court approved the plan.

In 1970, U. S. District Judge John D. Larkins, Jr. approved these desegregation plans for the Greenville City Schools and the Pitt County Schools. Unitary Status is the opposite of a segregated school system. For 38 years, no one took any action involving either of the desegregation orders. Pitt County Schools maintained an assignment policy that set racial diversity targets for schools and no one complained to the Court about segregation in Pitt County. Policies and a number of actions have been put into place to try to help low performing students, if not specifically one or another racial group. Mr. Soo stated in his opinion, these all represent efforts to deal with the history of segregation.

In 2006, the Greenville Parents Association complained to the federal government that the school board had violated the Constitution by considering race when it redistricted elementary schools in Greenville. The Board argued that any consideration of race in student assignment was justified to comply with the old court orders. To resolve this complaint, in 2008 the school board asked the U. S. District Court to review the old orders and rule on the question.

U. S. District Judge Malcolm J. Howard ordered all parties to try to settle their differences and an agreement by all parties followed. In a 2009 Court Order, Judge Howard found that the school board had complied with the law and approved the elementary assignment plan. He also approved the school board's revised assignment policy, which made student achievement a key factor in student assignment and put less emphasis on race.

Judge Howard at this time also ordered the Board to work toward Unitary Status, which means eliminating the effects of past segregation to the extent practicable. "The Court ordered all parties to work toward attaining unitary status so that the Court may relinquish jurisdiction over this case and restore to the Board full responsibility for the operation of its schools". By December 31, 2012, all parties involved must submit a report to the Court which details the Board's efforts and progress toward Unitary Status. While the Board will work with parties in this litigation, the Board has a broader responsibility to the entire community and ultimate responsibility for achieving Unitary Status. Board members are elected by the people of Pitt County to direct and supervise the public schools.

Several factors are considered by the Court in deciding whether or not a school system is unitary. Vestiges of past segregation by state decree remain in our society and in our schools, but overstating the consequences will not aid in fixing legal responsibilities. We cannot remedy the history of the United States of America, but we can move forward together with a goal of Unitary Status.

Regarding student assignment, the Court looks at a comparison of diversity ratios in different schools to the school system's overall ratio. If individual schools fall well outside the overall ratio, are the differences because of past segregation or because of the pattern of housing development, geography or other factors. Ratios are important, but other contributing factors are also involved.

Several questions asked regarding the quality of education for all students are:

1. Are the educational opportunities the same?

2. How do graduation rates and other measures of success compare?
3. What are student suspension rates from different racial groups?

In evaluation of faculty and staff assignments, questions asked are:

1. How do the qualifications compare from school to school?
2. Are black or white administrators and teachers overrepresented in schools that are racially unbalanced?
3. Are high quality teachers placed in low performing schools?

Regarding facilities, if schools are racially unbalanced, how do the school buildings compare in terms of classroom size, age of the building, air conditioning, computer access and other factors? Another issue is have new schools been built in areas that improve diversity?

Transportation questions asked are do students who attend predominately black schools have significantly longer bus rides than those who attend predominately white schools? If so, is there a race-neutral explanation, i.e. geography of the area?

Questions often raised regarding extracurricular activities are:

1. Are extracurricular activities likes sports and clubs available to all students regardless of race?
2. How do extracurricular offerings at predominately black and predominately white schools compare?

Attorney Soo stated that the Pitt County Board of Education has sought to remedy past segregation by complying with the Court orders to desegregate students. For many years, the student assignment policy emphasized racial diversity as a key factor. Presently the student assignment and instructional policies emphasize support for all students, with emphasis on students who are at risk.

School administration is currently in the process of seeking to achieve Unitary Status. They are acquiring information about the district's progress in the above mentioned areas and will recommend action to fix problems associated to these areas. In evaluating and implementing new strategies to improve specific issues, i.e. student assignment, faculty assignment, etc., the ultimate goal of improving education for all students will be essential to Unitary Status.

The Pitt County Board of Education by Court Order will work together with the Greenville Parents Association and the Pitt County Coalition for Educating Black Children to compile an Action Plan to achieve Unitary Status. As we consult with an attorney in closed session for guidance concerning the litigation, our obligation to the entire community for input is important and will be sought in public meetings, PTA meetings, teacher organization, advocacy groups, school improvement teams and web site responses. The common goal of all parties involved and the citizens of Pitt County is that Pitt County Schools achieve Unitary Status.

Mr. Dick Tolmie discussed that in implementing student reassignment, the Court states we cannot consider racial balance as a factor or are they saying that we can't consider the race of individual students in making the assignment. Attorney Soo stated that schools who have achieved Unitary Status where the Constitution applies

and you can only consider race in a very general and limited way. Pitt County Schools are under Court order to achieve Unitary Status which makes us different and puts race as an important issue, but not the primary factor for student assignment going forward. Attorney Soo stated that data being sent to OREd to design maps for student assignment does not use race in the mapping process; however, race details are needed to generate ratios in many categories in different schools.

Ms. Jill Camnitz commented that participation with groups in the community was clearly stated in the mediation regarding the Student Assignment process, but wondered if there was anything that specific in terms of the process of achieving Unitary Status. Attorney Soo stated the orders are that the “parties will work together” and if problems arose, Judge Howard would be the person to make a necessary interpretation or decision. He stated working with the entire community and open communication was a necessary and important part of the job.

Mr. Roy Peaden stated transportation was provided for all students meeting criteria for bus transportation, but many students/parents do not accept the bus transportation offered. Attorney Soo stated that some would ask should black students have a 25% longer bus ride? The proper objective for a “yes” to this question would be to find the reason for this longer bus ride.

Ms. Barbara Owens asked if the Board presents the Unitary Status Report in 2012, what time frame would be involved in expecting a response from the Court? Attorney Soo stated it depended on all parties being in agreement with the Report which would mean a very fast response; and if not, we would agree to make changes we thought were not necessary or the Judge would make the decision after reviewing the Report.

Mr. Michael Dixon stated the process towards Unitary Status needs a “jump start”. He stated there has been talk about an assessment, but as yet, no assessment has been seen. Mr. Dixon stated green factors have been mentioned, but when do wheels start rolling and movement happens. He asked what do we as a Board need to do to get this started?

Attorney stated that the deadline is two and one-half years away and a timeline should be proposed. Superintendent Beverly Reep stated Pitt County Schools are rigorously collecting data to begin the Unitary Status process. She commented that In-House Attorney Rob Sonnenberg has found many historical court cases involving similar circumstances which will help us. Dr. Reep also confirmed that Attorney Soo has found focal areas of specific schools surrounding the beginning date of the Court Order and over the last ten years which will assist Pitt County Schools in achieving data to implement Unitary Status. She stated that as we unravel what is most important to the Court Order, implementing strategies involved in meeting Unitary Status before the Court Order deadline will give proof of our sincerity in this endeavor.

Attorney Soo confirmed that a methodical plan was necessary to determine issues involved with Unitary Status for Pitt County Schools, addressing the issues and working toward positive results of the issues. Superintendent Reep stated we want to build from the grass roots up and this will take time, it cannot happen overnight. She reminded everyone that Pitt County Schools is also very involved in student reassignment which will also be a key factor for Unitary Status. Achievement is the

primary factor for student assignment and in the process, careful guidance is necessary. Attorney Soo stated in regards to the question of what are we supposed to be doing now, he answered make education better for **all** students.

Bishop Ralph Love asked in regards to other parties trying to pull us together to start this, who leads? Attorney Soo stated the Pitt County Board of Education is the leader as we share ideas with other parties involved. Invitations to planned meetings to other parties have already been issued regarding student reassignment discussions, which will become more broad ranged than just the subject matter at hand.

Dr. Reep stated we have orders from the Court not to use race in the process of student assignment, and yet we get constant questions regarding race, i.e. ratio of students taking AP courses. In using our old policy, classroom assignments were made balancing race. Then the Office of Civil Rights ruled that we could no longer use race in determining classroom assignments. Yet, the OCR asks three times a year for rosters providing race and gender of students. We're often asked, if we cannot use race – why ask for race at all. When we get ready to assign students to schools, we're using base factors of achievement and proximity to the school. If we populate a new school based on student achievement, what will the racial make-up of that school look like? Attorney Soo stated under Court Order we have to track race to examine achievement gaps, graduation rates, dropout rates, etc. by race. There is a racial impact on student assignment. Superintendent Reep then brought up that Education Secretary Arne Duncan had begun federal compliance reviews of 32 K-12 school districts nationwide intended to spotlight possible discrimination against specific groups of students that has resulted in persistent achievement gaps on standardized tests. Several groups/civil rights activists state that achievement gaps are increasing between higher and lower socioeconomic status students.

Ms. Mary Williams stated she was concerned about the possibility of resegregation and the neighborhoods where current schools are located. She stated kids want to go to school in their neighborhood, and what would we do with that. Ms. Williams stated transportation is the number one factor – discussing the demographics of Pitt County and having no minority schools in minority neighborhoods within the city limits. Attorney Soo commented on what the Board has done, and declared Unitary Status as a goal with an upcoming established plan to pursue this goal. He stated Ms. Williams' concern might be addressed in the plan for Unitary Status.

Superintendent Reep and In-House Attorney Sonnenberg then discussed a temporary policy amendment to Policy 10.113 Open Enrollment Policy to help alleviate overcrowding at A. G. Cox Middle School. Dr. Reep presented a proposal that for the school year 2010-11, only students assigned to A. G. Cox Middle School would be permitted to open enroll in C. M. Eppes or E. B. Aycock Middle Schools where there is adequate capacity. As the deadline for schools participating in open enrollment is stated to be April 1, a temporary amendment to Policy 10.113 needs approval from the Board. The July 1 deadline for students to enroll in an open enrollment school remains the same. Mr. Roy Peaden reminded everyone of the 90% capacity factor for populating schools. With no further discussion, Mr. Billy Peaden moved, second by Mr. Michael Dixon, that the temporary policy amendment to Policy 10.113 Open Enrollment Policy be approved to add C. M. Eppes and E. B. Aycock Middle Schools to the Open Enrollment List as described. Motion passed unanimously.

Assistant Superintendent of Finance Michael Cowin then updated the Board on information regarding the 2010-11 budget. He received a breakdown of the Senate Committee's proposed budget approximately five minutes before tonight's Board meeting, thus has not had time to study the proposal. Mr. Cowin explained that the proposal will go before the full Senate, and then in some form or fashion be incorporated in a Senate budget to go before the House where a final version of the budget will go before the Governor. He is bothered by the one year Stimulus money that has been plugged in holes of funding for clerical, custodial and substitute costs as well as a cut in CTE funding with no guaranteed source for funding of these positions the following year. Mr. Cowin stated this involved 195 positions for Pitt County Schools.

Mr. Dick Tolmie commented that the shift in funding to Stimulus money also placed Career and Technical Education in the "suspense pocket" for next year. Mr. Cowin stated without a doubt this shifted the burden from the university system budget to the K-12 budget.

Mr. Benjie Forrest asked Mr. Cowin did he know if the Senate Committee's budget proposal matched the Governor's? Mr. Cowin stated he had not had time to fully examine the information but would study it over the next day or so. Superintendent stated we know the Senate withdrew the one-time bonus for the furlough period last year and there would be no step increase for teachers. She also commented that she had spoken to two Senators this past week regarding a discretionary reduction in funding to school districts.

Mr. Cowin then discussed a change in the second June meeting date for the Board to allow more time for budget allocation from the State and the need to prepare a continuing Resolution which will allow PCS to operate until a final State budget is approved. The Board reached a consensus to move the second June meeting date to June 28, 2010.

Superintendent Beverly Reep shared with the Board that many banquets and award ceremonies were occurring over the next couple of weeks and encouraged members to attend when possible. She attended the twenty-first Teacher Executive Institute Banquet last week and stated it was a great experience to see Pitt County businesses supporting our staff. She also expressed that our Educational Foundation Director Frances Young does a wonderful job representing Pitt County Schools in these endeavors.

Dr. Reep also stated that the Health Sciences Academy and the Business and Technology Academy will be recognizing their senior students during banquets this week.

Superintendent Reep also congratulated Sadie Saulter Principal Ferdonia Stewart as the newly elected President of the Pitt County Principals and Assistant Principals Association.

Dr. Reep reminded everyone that the County Commissioners will have the 2010-11 Budget Workshop Tuesday May 18 at 9:45 a.m. and invited all members to attend for

support. She stated that County Manager Scott Elliott recommended \$500,000 be allocated for Pitt County Schools in his budget today.

Chair Bright and several Board members congratulated the newly elected Board of Education members – three of whom were in the audience tonight – Mr. Worth Forbes, Mr. Sean Kenny and Ms. Christine Waters. She also welcomed County Commissioners Ephraigm Smith and Tom Johnston.

Mr. Roy Peaden reminded everyone of the Facilities Committee Meeting June 1, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.

Ms. Jennifer Little stated she and Ms. Jill Camnitz attended a webinar from the NCSBA last week and were very pleased with this set up and the information presented. She mentioned the economic cost factor of attending the webinars to receive current updates as well as CEUs toward the yearly twelve credit hours required by the NCSBA for Board members. She shared with the Board that the NCSBA is going to be tracking the CEUs for Board members more closely than in the past.

Ms. Little also mentioned the pre-EOG rallies that are being held in schools and the pump up and support it gave our students before testing started.

She encouraged the J. H. Rose Baseball Team as they compete.

Ms. Little also stated that by attending the Teacher Executive Institute Banquet last week, she became aware of how area businesses truly support our school system.

Mr. Michael Dixon, after congratulating the other newly elected Board members and Mr. Billy Peaden who was re-elected, commented that it would be good to meet to discuss concerns which arose during the campaign. He also congratulated Ms. Stewart as the new PAPA President and spoke regarding the reward of serving on the interview panel for students applying for the Teaching Fellows Scholarships.

Ms. Jill Camnitz commented that she would love to serve on the interview panel for the Teaching Fellows Scholarships. She also asked about attending a Senate budget webinar being shown May 24, 2010, which will be followed up on by Administrative Assistant Benda Pippin.

Mr. Benjie Forrest stated he is very proud of the G. R. Whitfield students, staff and parents who participated in and won the Battle of the Books Competition for the district and regional levels. He also invited all Board members to the Pitt County FFA Alumni Golf Tournament followed by a pig pickin' and homemade strawberry ice cream in Ayden to fund scholarships for FFA and agricultural education students of Pitt County Schools. He commented that County Commissioner Ephraigm Smith and over 100 businesses are participating with this golf tournament this year.

Mr. Dick Tolmie spoke regarding funding and having worthwhile information offered to receive the twelve credits required for Board members by the NCSBA each year. Ms. Camnitz reported that there might soon be a fine of \$50 for each credit hour a Board member is short each year.

Mr. Billy Peaden asked about the Teaching Fellows Scholarships and wondered if North Pitt and Farmville Central High Schools had any students apply for the scholarships. Dr. Reep stated we will follow up with Ms. Frances Young to answer this question.

Bishop Ralph Love congratulated Mr. Michael Dixon and Mr. Billy Peaden, current Board members who were re-elected, and discussed the unpleasant campaign "hits" that occurred. He also stated he could not attend the June 28 Board meeting as he was going to have surgery on his knee.

Ms. Mary Williams told the new Board members they have a difficult responsibility waiting for them and they might want to back out now! She then congratulated everyone.

Mr. Dick Tolmie then moved, second by Ms. Jill Camnitz, that the Board go into Closed Session to: 1) 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)] and 2) consult with our attorney to consider and give instructions concerning a judicial action titled Pitt County Board of Education v. Adrian A. Garcia.

Upon returning to Open Session, Mr. Roy Peaden motioned, second by Mr. Dick Tolmie, that the Board approve line items 1-5 and 7-15 as seen on the attached "Administrative Contracts Eligible for Renewal". Motion carried unanimously. Mr. Roy Peaden moved, second by Mr. Dick Tolmie, that the Board not approve line item 6 as seen on the attached "Administrative Contracts Eligible for Renewal". Motion passed with two negative votes.

With no further business to discuss, Ms. Jill Camnitz moved, second by Mr. Dick Tolmie, that the Board adjourn at 9:50 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectively Submitted,

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Ms. Mary Grace Bright, Chair

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Dr. Beverly B. Reep, Superintendent