

DATE: March 15, 2010 PRESENT: Mary Grace Bright, Chair  
Jill Camnitz  
Michael Dixon  
Benjie Forrest  
Jennifer Little  
Ralph Love, Sr.  
TIME: 7:00 P.M. Barbara Owens  
Billy Peaden  
Marcy Romary  
Dick Tolmie  
Mary Williams

PLACE: Pitt County Office Building ABSENT: Roy Peaden

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

Dr. Ralph Love led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Chair Mary Grace Bright then read a Resolution in Honor and Recognition (Posthumously) of Ms. Kathy Arnold Taft, Previous Pitt County Board of Education Member and State Board of Education Member. The Resolution was approved unanimously by the Board following motion by Mr. Michael Dixon, second by Dr. Ralph Love.

Board members were given the opportunity to express their thoughts regarding Ms. Taft. Ms. Jill Camnitz commented that the Resolution stated clearly the importance of Ms. Taft to our community and felt she lived her life for the well being of our children. Dr. Love stated he had worked with Kathy on the Board of Education and knew she was dedicated to the Board and the community she served. He informed those present that she guided him as a new Board member during his first year. Mr. Dixon commented that she kept the best notes of the Board meetings and had a deep seated passion for children. He stated she would be missed in our community and his prayers were with the family. Mr. Dixon stated she had a great impact on education not only in Pitt County but in North Carolina.

Following the comments, Chair Bright asked for a Moment of Silence for the Taft family.

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

Under Spotlight on Teaching and Learning, Ms. Robin Dailey and Ms. Pat Clark shared with the Board a "United Way Grant to Increase Family Engagement". Ms. Dailey commented that the dropout rate was a problem in our county, our state and our country. She stated that 40% of our dropouts occur in the ninth grade, and presently the goal is to reduce this number by 50%. Ms. Dailey informed the Board

that we already have funding for the Student Success Academy (formerly called Summer Significance Academy) which involved thirteen schools with middle grade students. This program lasts for six weeks during the summer and has been in place for four years. Data will be collected at the end of this year to see what impact it has had on the dropout rate. The new Parent/Family Engagement Grant (totaling \$50,000) started this semester and involves rising ninth graders in a project entitled "Destination Graduation". This grant is only for this semester, but the grant being submitted in May will be for three years of funding.

Ms. Dailey works with sixth graders who are at risk for dropping out. This year for the first time each student was presented at iPod Touch to focus on technology. By using this instrument, Dr. Reep commented that the students have access to Study Island which will help improve their academics. They also are taught character building exercises through the use of supplemental books and parents are given information regarding supplemental materials. Ms. Clark works with the seventh and eighth grade students giving them hope, setting goals, helping them to understand the importance of staying in school and then pushing them along that path. Parents are given a survey to complete regarding school attendance, school achievement and goals. Reunions are held along the way to include students who began the program in the sixth grade and their families. A diploma is actually shown to the students and the positive statement of "I will graduate" is strongly enforced. Visiting all high schools as well as the Twilight Academy is planned to help the students understand graduation is the goal. Ninth grade students will be using iPod Touch next year as we help prepare teenagers for technology and the real world. The ultimate goal is to provide early intervention for preventing dropouts.

Ms. Jennifer Little asked were volunteers needed. Ms. Daily stated they have partnerships with STRIVE, Building Hope, Boys and Girls Club and other community agencies as well as churches. Ms. Clark stated they were pulling from different resources including the police department; Senator Don Davis who will be speaking to the eighth graders, Public Information Officer Heather Mayo is helping with publicity, etc. Ms. Little stated it would be great if each Board member could mentor a group of students or work with a particular school. Ms. Dailey feels the key is getting the family involved with technology playing its part through Facebook, emails, etc.

Ms. Clark stated parents were thanking them for the opportunity to give feedback and be involved.

Ms. Camnitz asked about the sixth grade students involved with the Student Success Academy Programs. Ms. Dailey stated they could accommodate 100, but presently 68 are enrolled. Sometimes students are contacted to participate, but parents do not get them up to be ready to go. She stressed that parent involvement is crucial. Ms. Clark stated their mission is to get the students up and rolling constantly supplying them with tools for success. Dr. Reep stated it is vital to prove this program works and keep funding in place. A person in attendance in the audience asked could this be started in elementary school. Dr. Reep stated at Ridgewood Elementary and Farmville Middle School the book Leader in Me was being shared with students and follow up assignments had already begun.

Chair Bright then recognized and welcomed Board Member Barbara Owens as she had been out with health issues. Fellow Board members applauded as Ms. Owens stated she was glad to be back.

Under Consent Items, Mr. Michael Dixon motioned, second by Mr. Dick Tolmie, that the Board approve the March 1, 2010 Minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Under New Business, Executive Director of Student Services Travis Lewis presented an update on a Consolidated Report from the State involving School Crime & Violence, Suspensions & Expulsions and Dropout Rates. Mr. Lewis stated this report was done annually and presented to LEAs for student suspensions in grades K-12. In the other listed areas, comparisons with districts usually involve students in grades 9-12 throughout the report. He further commented that if schools reported five or more of the “dangerous and violent offences” per 1,000 students in two consecutive years, the schools are labeled “Persistently Dangerous Schools” and the State could place sanctions on the school, i.e. school choice must be provided for instance. Mr. Lewis reported that no school in Pitt County has even been “at-risk” for the “Persistently Dangerous” status and pointed out that in regards to School Crime & Violence, Pitt County has had a 39% decrease in number over the past two years with “dangerous and violent offences” decreasing to 11% since the 06-07 school year.

Short-Term Suspensions in Pitt County Schools have decreased, but Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions have increased over the last two years. Mr. Lewis reported a total of 8,855 suspensions during the 08-09 school year were committed by 3,702 students (approximately 16% of the total student enrollment K-12). Differing offences were discussed with Mr. Lewis informing the Board that Pitt County Schools numbers were higher than the State average and most of the comparisons with other school districts. He stated that many projects are in place to reduce these numbers including: Transition Center initiatives, Positive Behavior Support, alternatives to Out-of-School Suspensions, improved Data Collection and Analysis, Focus on Improving Classroom Engagement and others.

School dropout rates are soaring and Mr. Lewis stated community support is necessary with active involvement from parents, the community and churches. Pitt County Schools dropout rates have decreased in the last two years, but statistics like 43% of all dropouts are ninth graders, 59% of all dropouts are male and 65% of all dropouts are African-Americans have got to improve. As compared to other counties selected, Pitt County has the highest dropout rate for students in grades 9-12 at the present time.

Reasons most cited for school dropouts are attendance at 42% followed by enrollment at community colleges, unknown causes, academic problems, moving with no school status known, failure to return after a long-term suspension and choice of work over school. Measures Pitt County Schools have put in place to address school dropout are: a Dropout Task Force, campaign and district plan; revised promotion standards; pilot – Twilight Academy and Credit Recovery; Link Crew; Project Success; Student Success Academy; Fast-Track Program; exit interviews; algebra and English essential classes; Project FIND, and several more.

Mr. Benjie Forrest asked who was eligible to receive an alternative diploma. Mr. Lewis stated at-risk students who have been retained multiple times and are on track for dropping out of school. The principal of the school refers the student's name to the central office where the student's record is studied and appropriate action is taken for graduation. The student is able to see the "light at the end of the tunnel" taking the core classes he/she needs for graduating with 21 credits.

Mr. Forrest stated this presented two concerns for him: 1. Setting up two groups of students with different requirements to receive a high school diploma, and 2. Trying to connect kids to things that would make them interested and successful in graduating, leaving high school prepared to be life-long learners. Mr. Lewis stated he could see both sides of this issue – the benefits and drawbacks. The main point he was trying to explain to the Board is that in comparison with other districts for graduation, some have lower standards to be met than Pitt County Schools do and are playing by different rules. Ms. Jill Camnitz stated the administration has put into practice many great ideas to keep students in school; and even though the current numbers are discouraging, we need to be patient, keep pursuing these new procedures and the numbers will improve. Mr. Lewis concurred that we need to continue the momentum we have put into place and our percentages will reflect the hard work of all involved – students, staff and community.

Ms. Camnitz did state that though it was exciting to see the suspension numbers go down, many parents are concerned about disruptive behavior in the classroom which affects instruction for all students. Mr. Lewis responded that behavior in the classrooms was being addressed by school and central office administration, and plans for understanding the underlying cause for behavioral changes, in-school suspension instruction and alternative plans are being devised. Dr. Reep reported that the Twilight Academy and on-line classes would keep the suspended student on task and help with disruptions in the regular classrooms. Superintendent Reep did want to say that Pitt County Schools' administration is not pushing for an alternative diploma, but did want to clearly communicate to the Board and the community what is happening in other districts to improve graduation percentages when PCS is compared to them.

Ms. Jennifer Little asked in the districts with lower dropout rates, how many have alternative schools? Mr. Lewis stated he could not give that answer, but would investigate and present results at a later date. Dr. Reep stated Credit Recovery showed a direct correlation for a reduction in dropouts. Ms. Little asked were the programs in place funded by grants. Mr. Lewis stated some are. Ms. Little then asked were programs discussed previously in our schools also in place in alternative schools? Mr. Lewis stated the varying alternative schools could be more closely examined to see what the programs included. Ms. Little stated we need to get a comparison of the alternative schools and convince ourselves, the county, the community and tax payers of this issue and strongly pursue increased funding in this area to decrease the dropout rate a lot more than where it presently stands.

Mr. Michael Dixon asked were methods for obtaining these numbers consistent with Mr. Lewis replying yes. Mr. Dixon then asked what plans are being made for an alternative to out-of-school suspensions to reduce the loss of instructional time. Mr. Lewis replied the administration in each school is working on detailed consequences

for behavioral issues, i.e. work responsibilities assigned in the school (picking up lunch trays), after-school detention, seeking the underlying reason for repeated disruptive behavior, etc. He reported that South Central High School had developed a new form for teachers to submit a discipline referral reminding teachers of their responsibilities and being accountable for their students in the classroom – the district may begin use of this procedure if successful.

Mr. Dixon asked if the alternative diploma is a true diploma for graduation. Mr. Lewis stated it is a true high school diploma with Dr. Reep verifying it would honor a student graduating with 21 core credits approved by the State. Mr. Lewis stated Pitt Community College approved 21 credits in the Adult High School Diploma Program with 50 PCS students receiving diplomas in this program and 124 receiving diplomas in the GED Program.

Mr. Dick Tolmie felt we need input from businesses and potential employers regarding the acceptance of two different diplomas, and questioned creating two classes of students - maybe we should consider going to 21 credits for everyone.

Ms. Mary Williams stated the Board needs to look at policies in place and be sure all students are disciplined in a consistent manner throughout all high schools. Mr. Lewis stated the “Code of Student Conduct” provided a framework of discipline actions for principals to enforce in all high schools. Ms. Williams asked were all administrators consistent with these guidelines? Mr. Lewis stated if a principal had any questions regarding discipline for a specific action, central office would be contacted for further guidance. He also stated if the “Code of Student Conduct” was not being followed by a principal and it’s brought to the attention of central office administration, then we have to address the issue and proceed with proper action.

Ms. Jennifer Little asked about academic requirements for short and long-term suspensions. Mr. Lewis stated suspensions were excused absences and make up work is provided for the student.

Mr. Benjie Forrest expressed an interest in knowing how CTE courses affect dropout rates. He would like to see data on students who dropout taking CTE classes versus those who are not taking CTE classes. Mr. Forrest also asked about resources available for these students and students engaged in the CTSO within the framework of their Career & Technical Education course regarding those students who drop out of school. Mr. Lewis asked was there a threshold for this data with Mr. Forrest responding at least the completion of one course. Mr. Lewis stated this information could be obtained.

Chair Bright stated thus far Alternative Diplomas had been discussed for use with at-risk students. She asked that information be gathered to offer this diploma to students who desire to graduate from high school early and move on to college. Mr. Lewis stated the only contact he had made was in reference to at-risk students, but he could contact these districts and check for further clarification of the Alternative Diploma.

Chair of the Finance Committee Michael Dixon and Assistant Superintendent of Finance Michael Cowin then shared with the Board an update from the Finance

Committee Meeting. Mr. Cowin presented consideration of Amendment #1 for the 2009-10 Budget for approval of the Board. He shared that 61% of the total budget was used for instructional services and the COPS projects were non-cash transactions. The explanation of requested amendment changes are as follows:

1. State Public School Fund: The first Amendment to the State fund represents an increase of \$1,356,506.00. This increase represents amounts appropriated from the State Public School Fund through allotment revision #18.
2. Local Current Expense Fund: The first Amendment to the Local fund represents an increase of \$229,591.48. This is the result of an increase in funding related to various grants accounted for in the General Fund.
3. Federal Programs Fund: The first Amendment to the Federal fund represents an increase of \$815,587.31. This increase represents Federal Grants allotted to Pitt County Schools through State allotment revision #18.
4. Capital Outlay Fund: The first Amendment to the Capital fund represents an increase of \$34,194,101.00. This increase reflects projects approved by the Board and paid by the County of Pitt from the 2009 COPS issue for additions to Eastern Elementary, Farmville Central High School, and D. H. Conley High School as well as the construction of a new K-5 school.

Upon motion by Mr. Michael Dixon, second by Mr. Dick Tolmie, that the Board approve proposed Amendment #1 to the 2009-10 Budget, motion carried unanimously.

Superintendent Beverly Reep and Public Information Officer Heather Mayo then shared with the Board an update on the Student Reassignment Plan. Dr. Reep stated the administration has been challenged by means of obtaining criteria for use in planning student reassignment. In the past, race had been used as part of the criteria in this process, but this avenue was stopped based on work with the Office of Civil rights and by a mediated court order stating we can use socioeconomic factors as a good way to continue to look at creating diverse schools. In trying to obtain this information, the USDA stated individual student free/reduced lunch data could not be used for this process. Upon making a formal request to the NC DPI, the State Board Chair and the Attorney General's Office to ask if we can use this data in the aggregate, no formal approval for obtaining these figures has been given. In selecting criteria to forward to ORED to enter into their system the data on how to proceed with redistricting, the following details have been selected – proximity, capacity and achievement (one of the factors listed under diversity in policy 10.107). The proximity factor will be the school closest to the student's address, capacity will be figured at 90% capacity for the school and achievement will be obtained using grades 3-8 reading data from last school year. We picked reading data because it was the lowest area of performance. A non-proficient score was set for Level I and II scores on the End-of-Grade tests, and proficient score was set for Level III and IV scores on the End-of-Grade tests. No individual student data will be shared or looked at. Using these three factors, we will be able to examine a school's make up as diversity needs to be a factor in our formula for reassignment. Then, we have to decide what would be an acceptable proficiency rate. Dr. Reep stated that geographically we cannot control proficiency by moving kids around, but with programming/choice options and resources we hope to improve achievement levels. Certain segments in different attendance areas may overlap to improve achievement levels, but some schools are very isolated and there is no way to use this method for proficiency. Knowing this, then resources, programming, etc. could be used to improve the achievement rate. This data has been sent to ORED but

we have nothing to share regarding this to date. We expect to have information available by our July Workshop.

Dr. Reep asked Board members to notify Administrative Assistant Brenda Pippin of days that would not work for attending a Board Workshop/Retreat in July. She feels this date needs to be selected as soon as possible to get it set on everyone's calendar in working to meet our goals for the near future. She stated that parties involved with the Mediation Settlement will be invited to the July Workshop, as well as the newly elected Board members.

Mr. Dick Tolmie stated in regards to the diversity question, how can we identify students for "P" or "N-P" if we have no approved avenue to obtain needed information in this regard? Dr. Reep stated we can work by segment information, not by individual student information. Mr. Tolmie stated if the "powers that be" direct us to not use socioeconomic data, could someone not be able to see who passes or fails reading on an End-of-Grade test as well as seeing who is on free/reduced lunch? Dr. Reep replied that no one will tell us legally how to obtain an aggregate number to work with.

Ms. Marcy Romary asked would Dr. Reep provide a copy of the power point she used in this explanation with the Board. Dr. Reep stated it would be provided for each member and placed on the web site as well.

Ms. Heather Mayo then informed the Board that though the Student Reassignment Process is several months away, a Communications Plan has been developed with several objectives provided. Ms. Mayo discussed goals of promoting better understanding of the entire Student Reassignment Process, using different methods of communication, eliminating rumors, have planned community engagement, alleviate stakeholders' concerns and promote transparency in the planning. Driving forces for the framework are knowledge from past professional experiences working with student reassignment, interaction and conversations with community members and parents, strong media coverage and Board member suggestions will all be used in progressing toward our goal for a strong Communications Plan. By April 1<sup>st</sup>, our goal is to have an informational website in place which will be located within the Pitt County Schools' website. Weekly updates will be done regarding frequently asked questions and answers. There will be a Myth/Reality Section to end rumors that may be circulating in the community. We will provide an overview of all schools including program/educational components with a profile of the school and maps for the community to examine regarding redistricting. Published meeting dates and times as well as minutes and background information will be available under "one roof". A massive e-mail data base will be built for communication which has not been used in the past. Community forums and contact meetings with principals and staff will be established to obtain feedback during the process. Comment cards and maps will be placed in school offices. Additionally, various PTAs, civic groups, religious groups, real estate association and businesses will be approached to discuss student reassignment. A student transition plan will be developed for safety issues, transportation, personnel and academics which will be communicated through various tools already discussed.

Policy Committee Chair Jill Camnitz and In-House Attorney Rob Sonnenberg then presented two revised policies – Policy 7.204 Two-Fold Classified Positions and Policy 7.108 Certified Personnel Reduction in Force for First Reading. A new policy-Policy 7.211 Classified Personnel Reduction in Force was also presented for First Reading. Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Delilah Jackson answered questions and gave background for the changes discussed. As an update for information purposes, Procedure 7.204-P Two-Fold Classified Positions was also discussed. Ms. Camnitz asked if members had additional questions before the next Board meeting regarding these changes to please contact Attorney Sonnenberg, Ms. Jackson or herself.

Superintendent Beverly Reep congratulated Mrs. Jackson on her recent marriage and stated she was glad to have her back in place in the office following her honeymoon!

Dr. Reep informed the Board that there would be an Open House held at the Twilight Academy for any Board member who wished to see the environment these students are provided.

She also thanked all members of the community who have pitched in and supported the dropout prevention program in Pitt County.

Dr. Reep also wanted to be clear in saying that no child in Pitt County Schools had been suspended because they could not comply with the uniform policy. She stated many schools in the district have uniform closets available for students who have a need, social workers work with students in this regard and many community churches, businesses and parents have donated funding for this cause. Students who have been suspended in regards to a uniform would not comply with the uniform policy.

Superintendent Reep also stated there had been lots of feedback regarding making up the day missed due to snow on Memorial Day. She stated the decision had been made for students to attend one-half day to receive credit for the snow day, and that each school has been asked that activities be planned to remember and honor our Veterans/troops, i.e. write letters to our troops, tell stories heard from family members who served in the Armed Forces, etc. Hopefully, family members will then have time to celebrate the holiday as usual with early dismissal.

Chair Bright thanked County Commissioner Chair Kenneth Ross, Ms. Phyllis Ross and County Commissioner Tom Johnston for their attendance tonight in support of our schools. She also stated that a review of the new AIG document would be presented Tuesday through Thursday from 3:30 – 5:00 p.m. in the fourth floor Conference Room for anyone who wants to attend. Chair Bright also reminded everyone to return the Graduation Form so that arrangements could be made to receive proper gowns for the graduations.

Ms. Jennifer Little shared that the PTA at A. G. Cox had recently held their annual Talent Show with great performances and much fun had by all attending. She also congratulated the South Central High School Girls' Basketball Team as they competed in the State Championship Playoff.



Mr. Benjie Forrest congratulated Ms. Tabitha Hudson in the Marketing Education Program from D. H. Conley High School and the DECCA CTSO for many state winning teams and individuals who will be moving on to National Competition in Kentucky in early summer.

Mr. Billy Peaden shared with the Board that Board Member Roy Peaden's mother had been taken to the Emergency Room prior to tonight's meeting.

Ms. Barbara Owens thanked everyone for their concern and caring during her absence due to health issues in recent months.

Ms. Jill Camnitz spoke about an article in the New York Times discussing "Building a Better Teacher – Can Educators be Educated about how to Educate" just as Dean Linda Patriarca from the College of Education at East Carolina University shared with the Board at the last Board meeting March 1. She commented that this was a national issue and not just in Pitt County.

Mr. Michael Dixon moved, second by Mr. Dick Tolmie, that the Board adjourn at 8:55 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