

SUPERINTENDENT'S PARENT ADVISORY MEETING
MARCH 15, 2005 – 5:30-6:30 P.M.
SCHOOL BOARD OFFICE

Present were:

Alan Lee	Division Superintendent
Joe Gorkowski	Human Resource Manager
Foney Mullins	Supervisor of Elementary Education
Teresa Turner	Principal, Meadowview Elementary School
Lisa Alderman	Abingdon High School
Crystal Bazyk	Rhea Valley Elementary School
Sherry Bowers	High Point Elementary School
Debbie Boyd	Greendale Elementary School
Daryl Carty	Damascus Middle School
Scarlet Collie	Watauga Elementary School
Libby Fields	Valley Institute Elementary School
Vickie Green	John S. Battle High School
Patty Minnigh	E. B. Stanley Middle School
Margaret Schambach	Glade Spring Middle School
Grant Smiley	Abingdon Elementary School
Theresa Titman	Holston High School
Stan Williams	Meadowview Elementary School

Dr. Lee opened the meeting by introducing Dr. Foney Mullins, Ms. Teresa Turner and Mr. Joe Gorkowski. He asked each parent to do an introduction, and the meeting began with Dr. Mullins and Ms. Turner talking about elementary level instruction.

- Dr. Mullins: There are approximately 3,100 elementary students and 7 elementary schools. The pupil-teacher ratio is 18/1. There are 170 regular classroom teachers.

This year, 3 pre schools have been added for a total of 10 with approximately 160 pre school students. Pre schools are not state mandated; therefore, they are funded from local money. The pre-school program is very beneficial. Children are screened, and the most needy children, based on readiness, are selected. A space problem at the schools prevents us from having pre school available for every child. Pre schools have a teacher as well as an aid.

Our goal is for students to read on grade level by 3rd grade. Reading Specialists were hired at every elementary school and were funded from local money. Currently, we have nine Reading Specialists. Last year another Art Teacher was added, and we now have five Art Teachers and five Music Teachers. There are eight Physical Education Teachers and seven and one-half Guidance Counselors.

Two years ago we began a new program called Kindergarten Intervention, which is funded by federal money. Kindergarten Intervention Teachers were hired to work in kindergarten classes, and they work with small groups of students who need extra help. This program has been very successful.

Federal money is used for the Reading Recovery Program for first graders. There are eleven Reading Recovery Teachers, and the program has shown great success.

Enrollment is holding steady at the elementary school level. Meadowview and Rhea Valley Elementary Schools applied for the Reading First Grant, and that money has allowed a reading coach to be hired for both schools. The program has been very beneficial. It has provided for small group instruction and center based learning. Reading specialists work with all students at all grade levels in elementary school.

We are hiring highly qualified teachers, and six schools are fully accredited. Rhea Valley Elementary School's science scores were below the state guidelines last year causing them to lose accreditation status. Rhea Valley was at one time accredited. However, accreditation is an ongoing process. We look for continuous ways of improvement.

Dr. Lee asked the parents to consider things they feel make an elementary school good or bad. Responses were:

- Stan Williams (Meadowview Elementary): His son and daughter have never had a teacher they did not like. They like their principal, and they are getting a good education. They enjoy going to school.
- Patty Minnigh (E. B. Stanley Middle): She and her husband chose this county after doing some research on Abingdon Elementary School and speaking with a board member. They especially liked the open door policy and having access to teachers and the principal.
- Crystal Bazyk (Rhea Valley Elementary): She did her student teaching in another school district and prefers the smaller schools and classroom size of Washington County. Her son does well and does not mind attending school.
- Lisa Alderman (Abingdon High): Being able to communicate with teachers is a plus. She sees a lot of interaction between teachers and parents.
- Teresa Titman (Holston High): She and her family have been in the county for eleven years. They chose Rhea Valley Elementary and have been very pleased. Dr. Mullins was principal when her children first began school here. All her kids loved Rhea Valley, everyone was great, and she has been highly impressed.

- Debbie Boyd (Greendale): She loves Greendale Elementary. Teachers are accessible and are good teachers. School atmosphere is good, and her kids love going to school.
- Libby Fields (Valley Institute Elementary): Ms. Fifer's door is always open. She has even had to call her at home. The teachers are helpful, and that is a big deal with parents.
- Sherry Bowers (High Point Elementary): Her kids have enjoyed their teachers and have had good experiences. Parent involvement with teachers is great, and she appreciates that a lot.
- Grant Smiley (Abingdon Elementary): Having no problems with any teacher is very important. He can think of no teacher at the school where his daughter attends that he would have a problem with her being in class. In another school system, he did find certain teachers he would prefer his child not have in class.
- Scarlet Collie (Watauga Elementary): She appreciates the open door policy. She received a lot of good recommendations from other people about Watauga Elementary before her kids started school.
- Daryl Carty (Damascus Middle): He appreciates the extra emphasis placed on reading.
- Margaret Schambach (Glade Spring Middle): There has been a real improvement in the gifted program at Meadowview. Reading is also critical.
- Vickie Green (John S. Battle High): Teachers, staff and their attitudes reflect on the students. If the teacher is glad to be there, the student will also be glad. SOL scores are important, and she wants our kids to learn what they need to learn.

Dr. Lee told them he appreciated the feedback and asked if they had any questions or comments. Responses were:

- Margaret Schambach (Glade Spring Middle): The emphasis is on early grades. She is worried about kids in 3rd, 4th or 5th grades that might get behind and wanted to know if there is Title 1 money for those kids.
- Ms. Turner responded that at Meadowview elementary there are two reading specialists. They also do inclusion for students with learning disabilities and include them in the regular classroom and pull-out programs. LD teachers have an opportunity to go into the classroom and work with those students and any others having trouble. With both those methods, reading specialists and inclusion, no students is missed.
- Dr. Lee said that one major change in the county is that every kid having academic difficulty is identified and followed at all three levels.
- Libby Fields (Valley Institute Elementary): At Valley Institute, children are tested and scored at the beginning of each year and put in levels. In the lower level, they double team with reading specialists, and that works well.
- Grant Smiley (Abingdon Elementary): Do we have handicapped children in the county, fully wheel chaired, where someone has to be with them?

- Dr. Mullins responded that there are special programs at Greendale and Watauga Elementary Schools for those students. Rhea Valley also has special programs. High Point Elementary has a special pre school. They go by specific needs, and some will be sent to other schools in the county as they get older. Numerous buses are available to transport these students.
- Dr. Lee informed them that having these kids in our school system has had a positive impact. More kids with learning disabilities have passed algebra this year than ever before.
- Vickie Green (John S. Battle High): Are there intervention programs in math for the older students?
- Dr. Mullins responded that this year, a math tutor was placed in every school. Math scores have been good. We have a lot of remediation in our schools, before, during and after school. The 21st Century Grant was just approved, which is an after-school program.
- Vickie Green (John S. Battle High): The transition in leadership of changing principals has been an adjustment.
- Scarlet Collie (Watauga Elementary): Watauga has five kindergarten classes. What about next year?
- Dr. Mullins responded that teachers will be switched to take care of that situation.
- Sherry Bowers (High Point Elementary): She inquired about the pre-school program saying currently only children who are age 4 can attend. There is a gray area for very young 5 year olds that could be helped, and that is a concern she has.
- Dr. Mullins responded that federal guidelines stipulate the age. The school system, however, works with Head Start Programs and other pre-schools to seek needed support and make things available.
- Libby Fields (Valley Institute): She feels the Pre-K Program is very important. She informed them that the 5th grade practice SOL test is on the school web site.
- Teresa Titman (Holston High): The state web site has some used tests that are for practice. She loves having nurses in the elementary schools.
- Debbie Boyd (Greendale Elementary): The Accelerated Reader Program at Greendale Elementary is great.
- Lisa Alderman (Abingdon High): What happens to kids who do not have parent support and cannot take advantage of the after school remedial programs and SOL sessions?
- Dr. Mullins responded that transportation is provided for SOL review, and tutoring is also done during the day.
- Crystal Bazyk (Rhea Valley Elementary): She is a happy parent, and she loves having a school nurse also. Her daughter is in 2nd grade and is a diabetic.
- Patty Minnigh (E. B. Stanley Middle): Things are going great.
- Stan Williams (Meadowview Elementary): Everything is going good.