

**STUDENT ADVISORY MEETING
DECEMBER 1, 2011 – 11:15 A.M.
SCHOOL BOARD OFFICE**

Present were:

Adam Gambrel	Abingdon High School
Audrey Smith	Abingdon High School
Erick Farris	John S. Battle High School
Grey Robinson	Patrick Henry High School
Chase Coleman	Patrick Henry High School
Ethan Miller	Holston High School
Alexis Perrigan	Neff Center/Technical School
Dakota Fields	Neff Center/Technical School
Jim R. Sullivan	Superintendent
Gary Catron	Supervisor of High Schools

Mr. Catron opened the meeting by welcoming the students. He asked them how block scheduling was going. The semester will end January 10. Responses were:

- Everything is good at Patrick Henry.
- Teachers at John Battle seem to have more time. He thinks it is a better schedule.
- Block is going well at Holston. He has heard of no issues.
- Everything is going well at the Neff Center. She is waiting to see how next semester goes when she will have two classes that switch.
- He has heard of no issues at the Neff Center/Technical School.
- He likes block for the most part. He has SOLs next week, and he does not feel prepared.
- She likes block and feels everyone is getting used to the schedule. She has enough time between classes.

Mr. Sullivan talked about a recent meeting he had with a member of the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors member commented that when meeting with CEOs in the industry, he is hearing that they perceive that schools are putting more emphasis on students going to college rather than preparing them to enter the workforce after high school. Mr. Sullivan assured him that our high schools are also working on career and technical education.

Mr. Catron asked if anyone was taking a personal finance class. He informed them that Highlands Union Bank is sponsoring on-line financial seminars at eight Southwest Virginia high schools with topics such as balancing a checkbook and understanding bank loans, mortgages and student loans. The classes are offered by a company called EverFi.

Mr. Sullivan said that at the last meeting the issues of bullying and drugs were mentioned. He asked if they had any comments on those subjects, and there were no comments.

He provided them with a copy of the budget goals and explained that each year the School Board sets goals as they work on the budget. The School Board has been working on salary increases for employees in five phases. Four of the phases are complete. Due to the economy, employees have not had a salary increase in three years. The second goal is to maintain appropriate student/teacher ratios. The third goal is to maintain the budget level of \$840,000 for instructional supplies and materials for the classroom, which has been cut in half for the past few years. The last goal is to work on capital improvements to maintain our buildings. Technology is a separate line item and was not affected by budget cuts.

Mr. Sullivan said that in the budget process we look at what we need and what we can live without. There has been a decrease in staff through attrition.

Mr. Catron asked if the students had high student/teacher ratios in any of their classes. Comments were:

- There are a lot of students in her English class, approximately twenty-five. That is her biggest class.
- She is in VHCC Chemistry, and the class size is not bad.
- In the Sports Marketing class, they are short on chairs. There are twenty-nine students in this class, and students sometimes have to sit in regular chairs. That is the only over size class he has.
- Science classes tend to be the biggest, and the rooms seem smaller.

Mr. Catron said that the exam format will change significantly this year due to block scheduling. On January 9 and 10 (the 89th and 90th day of the semester), there will be one exam on Monday and two on Tuesday. January 11 is an off day. Significant schedule changes will have to be made. Two hours are set aside for exams. The exam exemption is still in place.

Mr. Catron updated them on the building program. Band rooms are almost complete – only a few minor things to go. The Neff Center addition is almost complete, and it is hoped that the technical school will move during Christmas break.

Mr. Sullivan asked how the Neff Center addition and band rooms were working out. Responses were:

- The Abingdon High School band room is great. The sound is good.
- There is no place to wash brick off in the new Neff Center building. Other than that, the building is great. He likes the push button garage door opener.
- Her only issue with the Neff Center construction was when the water was cut off during construction. That made it difficult for the Cosmetology Department.

Mr. Sullivan said that Phase I and II of the Facilities Plan cost approximately \$14 million. A new school would cost approximately \$30-\$40 million. Our buildings are well maintained in most areas. The auditoriums need some upgrades.

Mr. Sullivan talked to the students about a three-hour delay saying that this year two instructional days could have been saved had we had the three-hour delay in place. One concern has always been student vehicle traffic. Safety is a priority.

Mr. Catron said that band rooms would soon be wireless. Meetings will also be scheduled in those rooms from time to time to fully utilize the rooms.

Graduation dates will be set at a regularly scheduled board meeting in March, according to School Board policy.

The students were asked to talk about things going on in the schools. Responses were:

- Residents from Grace Health Care will be visiting the Neff Center. Activities are scheduled, and each class adopts a person. A fund raiser was done to help with the expenses.
- Some of the Neff Center students feel the home schools should have more consideration of the scheduled activities at the Neff Center. They also feel they are not always provided notices of club meetings and other activities happenings at the home schools.

Questions:

- Student: When there is a three-hour delay, do students go to every class?
Response: Mr. Catron said early classes will be skipped. If the class is at Virginia Highlands Community College or Emory & Henry, students will be expected to attend unless otherwise notified.
- Student: What about exams?
Response: An announcement will be posted on the web. An alternate plan will be established.
- Student: What about athletic trainers?
Response: Mr. Catron said that as part of the budget planning, two more trainers will be requested to be put back into the budget. Student safety is the most important thing.
- Student: Being able to get on Google Images is a big help with projects.
- Student: Recently, some students were doing video projects where they had to download pictures. They were able to see the pictures but were unable to download them due to being blocked.
Response: Mr. Catron said that he would invite Jason Lester, Manager of Technology, to the next meeting so they could express their concerns.
- Student: He encountered a hotmail account that was blocked.
- Student: She likes g-mail. It is PC Mac compatible.
- Student: ISS students at the Neff Center sometimes have a problem getting their make-up work.

Response: Mr. Catron responded that it is a time management issue. The expectation is that the work will be made up. He will check into the problem.

Mr. Sullivan thanked them for coming. The next meeting is February 7