

TEACHER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 19, 2004 – 3:45 P.M.
SCHOOL BOARD OFFICE

Present were:

Alan Lee	Division Superintendent
Lee Brannon	Supervisor of High Schools
Curtis Burkett	Supervisor of Middle Schools
Berkley Clear	Director of Academic Operations
Foney Mullins	Supervisor of Elementary Schools
Jim Rector	Asst. to Supt./Director of Personnel
Elizabeth Thomas	Asst. Supervisor of Vocational/Adult/Alt. Ed.
Ronald Walls	Director of Facilities
Kit Bieschke-Baker	Skill Center
Patty Barrett	Greendale Elementary
Amy Cornett	Patrick Henry High School
Diana Johnson	Watauga Elementary School
Jane Laoo	High Point Elementary School
Tamara Mullins	John S. Battle High School
Jeffrey Musick	Rhea Valley Elementary School
Janie Patrick	Abingdon High School
Kellie Persiani	Valley Institute Elementary School
Joe Preston	Damascus Middle School
Erin Ruble	Wallace Middle School
Nancy Sheets	Meadowview Elementary School
Melanie Smiley	Abingdon Elementary School
Linda Snodgrass	E. B. Stanley Middle School
Linda Waldron	Holston High School
Sandra Wilson	Glade Spring Middle School
Randy Woodward	Neff Center

Dr. Lee opened the meeting by welcoming the teachers. He asked them if there was anything they felt the school system needed to do differently or if there was anything that we aren't doing that we need to do. Responses were:

- Kit Bieschke-Baker: The heat is not yet on at the Skill Center.

Dr. Lee responded that once the heat is switched over from cooling to heating, the heat would remain on. Mr. Walls said turning the heat on is just a matter of filling up the boiler, which takes two to three days.

- Randy Woodward: He hears comments from teachers that they would like for administrators to listen to them and not take comments personally.
- Diana Johnson: Things are going well at Watauga.

- Nancy Sheets: She is seeing more students labeled ED and wondered about the possibility of these students being placed in a self-contained classroom away from the regular classroom.
- Erin Ruble: When a custodian is absent, a sub is needed. Teachers have commented that general cleanliness (i.e., floors, carpets) suffers. Also, some students are being dropped off at 7:30 a.m. and are the last to leave. It makes for a long day for them.
- Jane Lao: Teachers would like more early dismissals. There are so many things going on in the week, and an early dismissal once per month would be great so teachers can get caught up. Technology training could also be done in one session and free up an evening.

Dr. Lee asked if there was money set aside and there was an option of paying teachers an additional three days of contract time at the current rate or the same number of days at a higher rate, which would they choose. Most chose the current rate.

- Linda Snodgrass: She appreciated the workday in September, but it would have been better to have had it at the end of the six weeks instead of before. Classrooms are also very full.

Dr. Lee said he had been asked to have a teacher workday during the Washington County Fair. He asked if they felt the calendar days set aside were being used to the utmost benefit. They responded yes.

- Patty Barrett: They only have twelve computers in the lab and would like more computers. They also have a lot of clubs after school.
- Joe Preston: They have a large number of transfer students and are out of textbooks. The librarian would like to get three extra books in every subject for all three grades. She also mentioned that it would be convenient if teachers could make requests for extra textbooks online in a similar way they order printer cartridges.
- Patty Barrett: Are there any large print textbooks in the county? She has some students with bad eyesight.
- Sandra Wilson: The 6th and 7th grades need another teacher. Classes are large and crowded.

Dr. Lee told them that in the last few months we have gained approximately one hundred students. That means extra money from the state.

- Tamara Mullins: Everything is going great. They are waiting on the new phone system training.
- Janie Patrick: Abingdon High School now has 730 e-mail addresses, and progress reports will be sent out via e-mail. There is still a problem with not enough communication with seniors. There is not enough information for them, and they don't know all the opportunities that are out there. She

hears daily that more communications is needed with guidance. The Guidance Department is overloaded. Teachers are all saying it is cold in the building. Parents have been asked to keep their kids home if they get the flu this year.

Dr. Lee responded that we are working on the heat problem, and the issue of guidance counselors being overloaded is also an issue. Counseling is not just career counseling. Counselors also deal with personal problems of students.

- Jeffrey Musick: One teacher approached her about having reading and math supervisors working with the teachers and going directly to the schools. Teachers are also concerned about math intervention. Math is still a problem at the elementary level and needs to be addressed.

Dr. Lee responded that a major focus this year is math.

- Linda Waldron: A couple of teachers have commented about no heat in the building. She has also had a math teacher with a concern about the SOLAR Program. She does not feel she is properly aligned with other math teachers and wanted to know if this could be addressed with different schools.

Dr. Lee responded that SOLAR is a unifying approach and will set the standard and cause more unification across the county.

Mr. Burkett said that SOLAR will cause us to look at our pacing guides. Our pacing guides have been sent to SOLAR.

A shortage of computers at the elementary level is being discussed, and the possibility of elementary students taking a hard copy test and using scanners is being talked about.

Dr. Lee said to relay to the teachers that we understand their concerns, and we are trying to see if there is something we can do differently.

- Erin Ruble: They made some practice tests, and all the answers were the same.
- Linda Waldron: Kids are missing so much school, and there is no way for them to make up the time.

Dr. Lee responded that when a student misses school, he/she needs to demonstrate they can master the material, not necessarily just make up the time. We should offer as much information as we can every day, and kids need to make up that learning. We should focus on learning rather than time. He asked the teachers to think about this concept, and it will be discussed again.

- Kellie Persiani: There are some kids that do not qualify for LD classes, and they need extra help – more time and tutors.

Dr. Lee asked them to think about one good thing that has happened or will soon happen at their school. Responses were:

- Kit Bieschke-Baker: SKILLS USA Car Show will be October 23 from 9-2. Students from across the county will participate. The cost is \$5 for cars to be judged and \$2 to show off a car. There will be ballot votes. There is also a food drive in November. A Skill Center student got the first perfect G.E.D. test score – the first in fifteen years.
- Randy Woodward: The Neff Center has fifteen programs and half are dual credit. They are having a Halloween walk at the nursing home.
- Melanie Smiley: She was initially upset that she had two out of twenty-two computers not working until she heard that one of the other schools had more than that.
- Diane Johnson: Watauga is proud of all students. They have sixteen pre-K and five hundred nineteen regular students, which is the most ever for Watauga. A third grade girl scored 600 on all four components of the SOL test. The PTA, in conjunction with the Governor's School, will sponsor an election program. The 2nd graders had a PTA Program this month. The PTA will sponsor a book fair on November 2. They have a full-time ESL teacher this year and several students of other nationalities. They have crisis drills and update their crisis plan regularly.
- Nancy Sheets: The homework support club is new, and it is wonderful. It meets every Tuesday and Thursday after school. They have worked hard to not portray it as punishment. It assists kids that have no one at home to see their work gets done, and there is someone there to assist them with their homework. In the community, a brother of a Watauga student needs a bone transplant, and students have risen over \$3,000 in one day by having a Crazy Hair Day.
- Erin Ruble: Friday they had Community Service Learning Day with over thirty events throughout the community. This Friday is Red Ribbon Week, and the theme is "Team up Against Drugs".
- Jane Laoo: They have an inclusion committee that meets with teachers who have special ed students in regular classrooms. Special ed teachers help modify lesson plans to accommodate those students with success.
- Linda Snodgrass: The mobile lab has been a success. Everyone likes the smart boards and would like to have more.
- Amy Cornett: Today they had an ATV/tractor safety event, and over one hundred kids participated.
- Patty Barrett: They recently received a \$1,000 grant for outside the classroom to work on habitats, etc. The PTA made over \$8,000 at the fall festival. They offered teachers \$200 grants.
- Joe Preston: Damascus' librarian, Gail Gilland, is in the running for State Teacher of the Year. It is down to eight finalists.

- Sandra Wilson: They have wireless lab classes. Students are doing power point presentations. Forty-two students placed at the county level in chorus.
- Tamara Mullins: They had the grand opening of their newly remodeled cafeteria. It has a different atmosphere.
- Janie Patrick: Technology is wonderful at Abingdon High School. Kids check out the palm pilots. Mr. Perrigan and Mr. Johnson both carry palm pilots. The school has smart boards. Their oldest computer lab is four years old, and they will soon be replacing that lab. E. B. Stanley and Watauga Elementary have been wonderful places for her child to attend.
- Jeffrey Musick: They are enjoying having their new principal, Debbie Anderson. She is working hard and goes over and beyond what needs to be done. Teachers are working hard. They are using Holston High School & Emory & Henry College students as tutors, and it has worked well. They also help with homework. An author is visiting Thursday for the PTA Program. The Reading First Grant has been well worth it because of all the new materials they have received as a result. Everything is coming together.
- Linda Waldron: The Mill Mountain Players from Roanoke have visited the school and did a one-on-one drama. Custodians at Holston are the best in Washington County. They really get to know the kids, and that is helpful.
- Kellie Persiani: The PTA had candy bar sales to help buy computers.

One teacher asked about the Washington County Retirement Program, and Dr. Lee responded that the School Board wants to keep the program. The Virginia Retirement System has changed some of the rules that would require a retiring teacher to miss either the first or last thirty days of school. A revised proposal has been submitted, and we are waiting to hear if it will be approved. Everyone will be informed of the outcome.

Dr. Lee thanked them all for coming.