

TEACHER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 2, 2005 – 3:45 P.M.
SCHOOL BOARD OFFICE

Present were:

Alan Lee	Division Superintendent
Lee Brannon	Assistant Superintendent
Gary Catron	Supervisor of High Schools
Joe Funk	Supervisor of Business & Finance
Tom Graves	Director of Facilities
Belinda Mullins	Supervisor of Middle Schools
Foney Mullins	Supervisor of Elementary Schools
Patty Barrett	Greendale Elementary School
Lisa Carmody	High Point Elementary School
Amy Cornett	Patrick Henry High School
Heather Dillard	Watauga Elementary School
Kellie Halsey	Meadowview Elementary School
Angie Hess	Valley Institute Elementary School
Connie Kinder	William N. Neff Center
Michael Lester	Abingdon Elementary School
Brandi Norman	Abingdon High School
Liz Phillips	Wallace Middle School
Joe Preston	Damascus Middle School
Johnny Silcox	Skill Center
Rosemary Slate	Glade Spring Middle School
Jeannie Stallard	E. B. Stanley Middle School
Chad Wallace	John S. Battle High School

Dr. Lee welcomed the group and asked them to tell him the thing that is most frustrating to them. Responses were:

- Michael Lester (Abingdon Elementary): They are having a huge problem with copiers. They are on a budget system, and when you really need the copies you can't get them.

Dr. Graves commented that a vendor has already been contacted that will visit every school and evaluate the cost of a document center. It would be less expensive to have everyone's computer tied into a central document center. The copy would print to a separate file for each person.

Dr. Lee asked how benchmark testing went. Teachers responded that it went ok. The main problem seemed to be with wireless computers not having enough time to recharge or not enough computers. He told them Jason Lester is aware of the problems at E. B. Stanley, and he would alert him to problems at other sites.

- Chad Wallace (John S. Battle High): Finding time for students to do makeup work is a problem.

Some suggestions from the group for this were: Home computers, getting assignments off the Quia web page, using class time to make up tests and homework.

- Liz Phillips (Wallace Middle): They just completed benchmark testing and are working on Star testing. More modern computers would help.

Dr. Lee responded that the county has a planned computer replacement schedule for the entire school system. Estimated cost is an additional annual \$125,000 for computers. It may be determined that this is not sufficient to meet our needs, so their input is important. Additional funding may need to be allocated in the budget.

- Rosemary Slate (Glade Spring Middle): Her frustration is in dealing with students who refuse to complete their work or do the job they are assigned. She sees little parental support. She has tried positive reinforcement, which does not seem to work very well either.

Responses: Lisa Carmody commented that it is hard for some kids to study when they get home from school. Chad Wallace said that he spends a lot of time talking to kids about learning responsibility and how that relates to their future. Kellie Halsey suggested partnering with teams such as Little League to stress the importance of education.

- Amy Cornett (Patrick Henry High): One of the goals of the school is making positive contacts, where every student is contacted. They have had over 5,000 positive contacts and have gotten a lot of feedback from that. They record replies from parents.

Several other schools were also doing positive contact.

- Brandi Norman (Abingdon High): A major complaint she hears from the teachers is they need more money and that with increased health insurance costs, they feel they did not get a raise.

Dr. Brannon responded that the School Board was very diligent in making sure health insurance cost increases were absorbed by the School Board. There was no health insurance increase for employees unless they changed from single to family, etc. A teacher with twenty years of experience will reach the top of the scale faster and will be paid the higher rate for a longer amount of time.

Dr. Lee informed them that it is the School Board's goal to make salaries more competitive, and there is a plan in place to work on that over the next four years. He encouraged them to call Human Resources if they felt an error had been made and that they lost money instead of gained.

Brandi Norman also said she would like to see more financial support for teachers who are working on furthering their careers.

- Jeannie Stallard (E. B. Stanley Middle): Her major frustration is the students who are capable of doing the work but refuse.
- Amy Cornett (Patrick Henry High): Inclusion classes are large at Patrick Henry, and they are struggling.

Other comments on inclusion classes were: Heather Dillard said this is her first year teaching inclusion classes, and it is going well. Joe Preston said that he has to apply several different teaching methods in one class. Mike Lester has an inclusion class, and he likes the fact that they are learning with the other kids. He does have to fine tune his method to teach every student. The Special Ed teachers offer wonderful support.

- Angie Hess (Valley Institute Elementary): They just began using Integrate Pro, which requires entering grades on the same computer each time. It would be easier if it could be accessed from other computers.

Other teachers responded that the program can be saved to the server or disk or loaded on a home computer and then accessed by other computers. Dr. Lee encouraged her to speak with her IT teacher for a possible solution.

- Patty Barrett (Greendale Elementary): She has two students enrolled from out of district, and their attendance is horrible. They have doctor's notes for their absences. Another problem is the Special Ed teacher has a parent who comes and stays all day, and this is distracting to the other Special Ed students. Also, the kindergarten teachers have twenty-one students each, and the kindergarten intervention teacher is leaving soon.

Dr. Mullins responded that kindergarten intervention is funded by a federal program. As Greendale is a small school, they are funded for one half-time teacher, which is being split with Abingdon Elementary. Dr. Lee said this may need to be a budget consideration. Last year, several pages of wants and needs were developed for budget consideration. It is good to hear what our needs are.

- Kellie Halsey (Meadowview Elementary): Attendance and homework are a frustration. There is no extra time to pull kids aside during the day.

Jeannie Stallard said she has been teaching for twenty-six years and has the same frustration every year. There will always be some students with no parental support.

- Johnny Silcox (Skill Center): Building maintenance is a problem. When the lights or ballasts go out, it takes a while to get them repaired. Problems are reported to the Maintenance Department by way of a

request form that is given to the custodian who in turn gives it to the office. He also suggested buying computer parts and putting them together versus buying new computers.

Dr. Graves made a note of the maintenance problem and will check with the Maintenance Department.

Mr. Wallace commented that buying software also gets expensive. Mr. Silcox said that Mr. Doucette may be able to get some inexpensive programs for \$2 each.

- Connie Kinder (Neff): Her frustration has already been discussed.
- Heather Dillard (Watagua Elementary): Lack of technology in the classroom is her frustration. Their lab is located near the front door, so students cannot be sent there alone. She has one computer in her room for twenty-one students. Lack of substitute teachers is another complaint. Art, music and gym sometimes have to be cancelled due to no sub.

Dr. Lee responded that a new substitute teacher calling plan will soon be implemented, which should increase the number of subs available and cut down on the period of time it takes to acquire one. The system is inexpensive and runs through the server. Cost is approximately \$1,000 per month. Absences are pre approved whenever possible. Subs look on the site for the job opening and sign for the job. Nine hundred phone calls can be made in five minutes. A sub can sign up prior to forty-eight hours, and after that the system begins making calls.

- Joe Preston (Damascus Middle): Subs are also a problem at Damascus Middle. In one instance, the secretary called eighty-four people before finding a sub. The telephone system is also in need of repair. When outside lines are dialed, there is sometimes an echo.
- Lisa Carmody (High Point Elementary): She has some emotionally needy kids this year, and it is frustrating to have to meet those needs before their academic needs can be met. She has twenty-two students in her class, and she has been teaching for twenty-one years.
- Connie Kinder (Neff): She suggested setting aside some time for a school psychologist to work with teachers. Sometimes having someone to listen to them is a big help, and they don't usually get that. She also suggested that each school should have a portable defibrillator.

Dr. Mullins made a note and will look at incorporating this into some type of professional development or teacher workday time.

Dr. Lee thanked the group for being there.