

Board of Education Meeting
November 8, 2021
6:30 PM, at Polk County High School Auditorium

Members Present: Chairman Ashworth, Vice-Chairman Mr. Covil, Ms. Page, Ms. Allen, Ms. Bell, Ms. Gibbs, Ms. Jackson

Members Absent: None

Others: Superintendent Aaron Greene, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Jan Crump, Assistant Superintendent Dave Scherping, Finance Officer Debbie Lovelace and Attorney Phillip Feagan

Call to Order and Welcome

Mr. Ashworth called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 PM and welcomed all in attendance.

Pledge of Allegiance

Recognition of the 2021-2022 Principal of the Year

On behalf of the Board of Education, Chairman Ashworth presented a plaque to the 2021-2022 Polk County Schools Principal of the Year, Mr. Todd Murphy.

Recognition of the 2021-2022 Teachers of the Year

On behalf of the Board of Education, Chairman Ashworth presented each of the 2021-2022 Teachers of the Year with a plaque. Chairman Ashworth presented plaques to Kristy Cox from Polk Central Elementary School, Jeff Thomas from Polk County High School, Dale Rush from Polk County Middle School, Tara McDonald from Saluda Elementary School, Julie Wilson from Sunny View Elementary School, and Parker Mullinax from Tryon Elementary School. Dale Rush was presented an additional plaque recognizing his selection as District Teacher of the Year.

Approval of October 18, 2021 Board Minutes (Action)

Chairman Ashworth called the Board's attention to a copy of the October 18, 2021 Board Minutes. Mr. Ashworth asked if there were any additions or corrections and there were none. Mr. Ashworth entertained a motion to approve both sets of minutes. Ms. Allen made the motion to approve both sets of minutes as presented. Ms. Page seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

I. INSTRUCTIONAL

Niche Recognition - Aaron Greene (Information)

Superintendent Greene spoke with the Board regarding the Niche Recognition website. Polk County is ranked #1 out of 115 for safe school districts, #1 out of 115 for best places to teach in NC, and #1 out of 115 for the District with the best teachers in NC, #2 out of 115 for the best school district in NC and #93 out of 115 for the most diverse school district in NC on the Niche website. Mr. Greene stated that this recognition reflects not only the efforts of the school district but the community as a whole. Superintendent Greene offered his appreciation to the community for their support.

Economically Disadvantaged Student Determination - Dave Scherping (Information)

Assistant Superintendent Dave Scherping gave a presentation to the Board regarding economically disadvantaged student determination. The designation of “economically disadvantaged” students used to be a consistent measure across the country. Free and Reduced lunch applications were used to determine economically disadvantaged students. This has changed over recent years as all students now eat free Free and Reduced Lunch applications are not being completed. Mr. Scherping explained how the determination has changed over the years and how schools have been affected. He went over data from past years and explained how this change is affecting schools and funding allotments. Mr. Scherping added that the district may have to change the way it gets this information and makes these determinations in the future. Chairman Ashworth asked the Board if they had any questions or comments and there were none.

Head Start Annual Report - Kathy Harding (Information)

Kathy Harding presented to the Board regarding the Head Start Annual Report. She shared information from the 2020-2021 annual report. This information contained the budget summaries and the child outcome data. The 2020-2021 Preschool funding sources totaled \$1,474,020. The 2020-2021 Head Start expenditures totaled \$757,660 and the 2021-2022 Head Start budget is \$816,783. Ms. Harding went on to explain how some of the indicators are already improving this year. Chairman Ashworth asked if there were any questions or comments and there were none.

Overnight Field Trip Request: Cheerleading - Aaron Greene (Action)

Superintendent Greene requested approval from the Board for an overnight field trip request for cheerleading. Mr. Greene explained that this is an annual event held in Raleigh, NC. This request has met all guidelines and has the appropriate endorsements. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve this overnight trip request. Mr. Covil made a motion to approve the overnight field trip request for cheerleading and it was seconded by Ms. Jackson. Mr. Ashworth asked for questions or comments and there were none. The motion was approved 7-0.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE

2021-2022 Budget - Aaron Greene (Information)

Superintendent Greene updated the Board on the state’s 2021-2022 budget. He explained that there has not been budget passed and there is nothing definite as to when it will be passed. Without having a budget from NCDPI the District is unable to plan its own budget, affect multiple operations and departments. Chairman Ashworth asked if there were any questions or comments and there were none.

Policy Updates (First Reading) - Dave Scherping (Action)

Assistant Superintendent Dave Scherping proposed a new Board policy, 6304 Use of School Bus Safety Belts. The new buses that the district has purchased and received now have seat belts. Mr. Scherping went over the policy and the responsibility of the students and drivers. Attorney Feagan asked if the training would be held twice annually. Mr. Scherping stated that the district has researched that and feels that one time a year would work best but administration would do whatever the Board wanted. Ms. Jackson asked if the buses have security for when a safety belt is not in place that the bus driver be notified. Mr. Scherping stated that there are not security devices on these buses for that. Chairman Ashworth called for a motion to approve Policy 6304 Use of School Bus Safety Belts on first reading. Mr.

Covil made a motion and it was seconded by Ms. Bell. Mr. Ashworth called for questions or comments from the Board and there were none. The motion passed 7-0.

PCHS HVAC Update - Dave Scherping (Information)

Assistant Superintendent Scherping provided an update to the board regarding the PCHS HVAC Project. Mr. Scherping went over the project and what had been completed and what work was left to be done. Four air handlers have been installed on the roof and the two chillers have been replaced. He stated that the project was a little ahead of schedule. Chairman Ashworth asked the Board if there were any questions or comments and there were none.

COVID Update - Aaron Greene (Action)

Superintendent Greene provided a COVID update to the Board. He stated that currently the District has a temporary mask mandate and the county still has high community spread. Mr. Greene stated that the previous quarantine rules and obligations are still in place. Superintendent Greene presented information from the CDC, DHHS and the local health department to the Board. Administration recommended that the temporary mask mandate stay in place for now. Ms. Jackson asked why vaccinations are being held at the school and not at the health department. She feels this is sending the message the District is pushing the vaccines. Superintendent Greene stated that in the past the District has allowed or partnered with the Health Department to use our facilities. Ms. Jackson stated that when the Board decided to mandate mask initially the percent positive was at 8.3% and currently the county is at 5.4%. Ms. Jackson stated it seems like we are in the decline area and should go back to mask optional. Ms. Bell stated that she sees that this decrease in percentage shows that what is being done is working. Ms. Bell asked if the quarantine guidelines are still the same. Mr. Greene stated that the DHHS guidelines are still the same, and without masks the rules for quarantine go back to 6 feet for 15 mins. Ms. Allen stated that she would like to see the numbers at 5% or less for two to three weeks before the district moves to optional mask. Mr. Covil asked Mr. Greene if the 3 cases a week is a number that he came up with. Mr. Greene stated that 3 cases a week is a number that other districts are using as a guideline. If numbers increase much beyond that contact tracing and quarantining become disruptive to the learning environment. Ms. Gibbs stated that she agrees with Ms. Allen, that she wants to put a number that we are working toward. If there is concern for the holidays, she feels that the district can mandate mask for two weeks after the break. Ms. Page states that she would like to see mask optional at 5% or less county wide and do two weeks of mask mandate after Thanksgiving and Christmas break. Chairman Ashworth stated that he wants to move forward in some way but his concern is the quarantine guidelines. He doesn't want the district to go backwards instead of forward. Ms. Gibbs stated that she had heard that NCDHHS was going to change guidance. Mr. Greene stated that he is hopeful to get more information in the following weeks. Ms. Jackson made a motion to move the action to after public input and it was seconded by Ms. Gibbs. The motion was approved 7-0.

III. OLD BUSINESS

None

IV. NEW BUSINESS

None

V. INFORMATION

- Veterans Day Holiday - 11/11/21
- Thanksgiving Break - 11/24/21-11/26/21
- October Head Start Policy Council Minutes
- October Pre-K Monthly Report
- Pre-K Financial Report
- Monthly Financial Report
- Monthly Credit Card Report

BOARD TRAINING

None

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

Ms. Bell made a motion to hear from all public that signed up to speak and it was seconded by Mr. Covil. The motion passed on a vote of 7-0. Several Polk County residents attended the meeting and offered public input to the Board. A verbatim account of public input and all open meeting Board discussion is available via digital audio recording.

After public comment concluded, Chairman Ashworth prompted the Board to address the mandatory vote on masking policy. Ms. Bell made a motion to continue temporary masking and Ms. Allen seconded. The motion failed 3-4. Ms. Jackson then made a motion to move to masks optional and it was seconded by Ms. Gibbs. During discussion of the motion Ms. Page requested to modify Ms. Jackson’s motion to have masks optional when the county positivity rate falls below 5 % for two consecutive weeks. Ms. Jackson agreed to the modification, and Ms. Gibbs seconded that motion. The motion to have Polk Schools move to masks optional once the county positivity rate falls below 5 % for two consecutive weeks passed 4 -3.

VII. CLOSED SESSION

Closed Session

At 8:10 PM Mr. Ashworth entertained a motion to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel, safe schools, and an attorney-client matter. Ms. Gibbs made the motion to go into closed session and it was seconded by Mr. Covil. The motion carried 7-0.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Resumption of Regular Session: With all discussion concluded in closed session, Mr. Ashworth called for a motion to return to open session. At 8:56 pm, Ms. Jackson made a motion to return to open session. Mr. Covil seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

Mr. Ashworth called the Board’s attention to those matters on the personnel agenda that required Board approval. Mr. Ashworth asked the Board’s pleasure in regard to a motion. Mr. Covil made the motion to approve the recommendations of the Superintendent and the Human Resource Officer. Ms. Bell seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

Information:

Elisabeth Blanton	Transferring from Pre K Teacher Assistant to Afterschool Family Engagement Coordinator/Office Support		
Tara McDonald	Teacher	Saluda	Resigned

Dewayne Sherman	Part-Time Custodian	Sunny View	Resigned
Leah Bey-Hudgens	Receptionist	PCHS	Leave
Lindsey Edwards	Teacher	PCHS	Leave
Beth Branagan	TA	PC	Leave
Jacque Brown-Williams	Sub	Sub	Leave
Shelly Twitty	TA	PC	Leave
Jeffrey Michelli	Teacher	PCHS	Leave
Deena Moore	Custodian	SVE	Leave
Caitlin Williams	Teacher	PCHS	Leave
Ashlyn Searcy	Teacher	PC	Leave
Paula Brown	Teacher	PCMS	Leave
Maria LLanos	Teacher	PC	Leave
Leah Foster	TA	PC	Leave
Leah Foster	TA	PC	Leave
Wendy Berryhill	Teacher	SAL	Leave
Doug Lanning	Teacher	PCHS	Leave
Hannah Goode	TA	TES	Leave
Jennifer Doten	TA	SAL	Leave
Jon Ezell	Teacher	PCHS	Leave
May Dunaway	Counselor	TES	Leave
Shanea Tingling	TA	TES	Leave
Shanna Pittman	Teacher	PC	Leave
Ashley Bell	Counselor	PC	Leave
Ty Stott	Teacher	TES	Leave

Action:

Name	Position	School	College	Hometown	Licensure Area	Years Exp
Mayghan O'Connell	Full-Time Pre K	Floater	Gardner-Webb University	Rutherfordton	N/A	3

	Teachers Assitant					
David Noto	Afterschool Group Leader	Tryon	N/A	Tryon	N/A	N/A
Grace Lucas	Part-Time Custodian	PCEC	N/A	Tryon	N/A	N/A

VII. ADJOURNMENT

With no more business to come before the Board, Mr. Ashworth declared the meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm.

Mr. Ashworth, Board Chair

Aaron Greene, Board Secretary
AG/TO