

OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE CALDWELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Caldwell County Board of Education met in special session for a Board Retreat at 2:00 PM on July 25, 2006, in the Staff Development Room of the Education Center, Lenoir, North Carolina.

The following members were present:

Dr. Sharon S. Pennell, Chairman
Mike LaBrose, Vice-Chairman
Linda Coffey
Tim Hawkins
Helen Beam
Kay Phillips

Dottie Darsie was absent.

Chairman Dr. Sharon S. Pennell called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INVOCATION

Chairman Dr. Sharon S. Pennell welcomed the Board, administrators and the press to the Board Retreat and Vice-Chairman Mike LaBrose gave the invocation.

UPDATES

Donnie Bassinger, Associate Superintendent for Auxiliary Services, updated the Board on the following items:

- Maintenance Department – There are currently 25 employees in the Maintenance Department. Mr. Bassinger reviewed their position and responsibilities and noted that an additional electrician is needed if funding is available at a cost of approximately \$28,000.
- Transportation Department – There are currently 13 employees in the Transportation Department with no additional personnel needed at this time. Caldwell County has 120 yellow school buses, with 14 being for Exceptional Children and 30 white activity buses. The buses travel approximately 1.3 million miles per school year with a 2.2 million dollar budget. Mr. Bassinger also reviewed how the state formulated the funding allotment. The Board asked about gas costs and Mr. Bassinger explained that the state funded gas allotment was figured at \$1.05 per gallon last year, but had to be increased to \$1.95 per gallon. For every nickel that gas increases, it cost the school system approximately \$809.00.
- Construction Update – Several paving projects were completed at Dudley Shoals, Hibriten High School, Kings Creek, Oak Hill and South Caldwell High School. All gym floors were refinished countywide, carpet and tile replacement updates were given, drop ceilings replaced and hardwood floors refurbished at various schools.
- Walking Track at Hudson Elementary School – A walking track is being proposed around the perimeter of Hudson Elementary School; therefore, a gate will be placed at Hudson Elementary School to keep walkers off the school property when the school is closed.
- Early College Facility – Bids will be out in November to begin plans for this facility. This will be a four level facility with 14 classrooms.

UPDATES

- William Lenoir Middle School – Preliminary drawings for a new William Lenoir Middle School were reviewed by the Board. The school will be built adjacent to Hibriten High School and will cost approximately \$16 million dollars. Bids for the site work are being received. The new school will house approximately 900 students with two levels in the academic wing. Mr. Bassinger plans to meet with faculty and staff to receive feedback prior to the actual construction.

Trish Johnson, Associate Superintendent for Human Resources, updated the Board on the following items:

- Human Resource Department – Ms. Johnson gave a brief overview of the responsibilities of the five employees in the Human Resource Department and noted that the main focus for this summer was securing Highly Qualified staff to fill the job vacancies at the various schools. There have been ten new administrators hired, in addition to our new superintendent, four new principals, one reassigned, four new assistant principals and eight mental health positions. There have been 39 in house transfers with 80 new employees. One-hundred and forty-two ILTs have been hired and will be attending a “Great Beginnings” seminar. There were 10 1/2 vacancies at the time of Ms. Johnson’s report, but she noted that this is continually changing.
- Math, Science and EC Teachers – These areas are the most difficult to place, especially in light of the new No Child Left Behind Requirements. All elementary and Exceptional Children’s teachers are required to be “highly qualified” prior to employment; therefore, lateral entry applicants cannot be considered as in the past.
- Incentives – The Board discussed incentives to entice teachers to come to Caldwell County and Superintendent Dr. Steve Stone advised that a plan needed to be developed for incentives to keep our veteran teachers.

Dean Norman, Technology Director, gave a brief update on the following items:

- Smart Technology Rooms – A total of 350 additional Smart Technology Rooms were completed last year, and an additional 130 rooms are being completed this summer, bringing the total number of “smart rooms” to 766 for each instructional classroom in Caldwell County.
- Server Challenges – A new server is currently in place. Mr. Norman explained that a “hacker” from Romania had hacked into our website and shut down all the websites within the Caldwell County Schools domain. The problem has since been fixed and security measures set in place. Mr. Norman filed an on-line report to the FBI reporting the problem.
- Email Change – A primary focus of the Technology Department has been to switch all users to the new Outlook Express email, which is compatible with the newer technology being developed. This will continue to be a main focus this summer.
- “Active Directory” – The other main focus for the Technology Department is installing a new software program, “Active Directory” at the high schools and middle schools. The program requires that all student users sign in with a name and a password, allowing teachers/administrators to track where students go on the Internet.

UPDATES

- Technology Facilitators – Facilitators are placed in each school as the point of contact when technology problems arise. They also review the “Web Work Orders” at his/her respective school to see if they can troubleshoot prior to the Technology Office being contacted.
- Manpower – One Technology Technician was added to fill in for a technician that was called to active duty in Iraq for approximately one year. An additional technician was added and will be helping with summer maintenance, training, etc. and then assigned to schools during the school year. Since new equipment/technology has been added, this will only maintain the workload for the Technology Department, not relieve it.
- Early College Computers – Mr. Norman is working with the community college regarding a content filter, etc. for students enrolling in Early College since the computers are not a part of the Caldwell County School system network. Once the facility is constructed for Early College, a network will also be installed with the Caldwell County Schools network.

Dr. Caryl Burns, Director of School Improvement, updated the Board on the following items:

- AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) – Hudson Elementary School achieved AYP in reading for the second year, as well as Hudson Middle School; however Hudson Middle School continues to be a “School of Choice” for one more year. Horizons made AYP. They were a “School On Watch.” Gateway also made AYP in reading. West Caldwell High School was added this year as not making AYP; however, this was not an academic problem, rather a testing issue since 95% of their students were not tested. Superintendent Dr. Steve Stone is addressing this issue. Gamewell Middle School is the greatest concern, as they have not made AYP for the fourth consecutive year. If they do not meet their targets this year, they will fall into the “Corrective Action” phase for 2007-2008. Dr. Burns did note they are making progress and she is working diligently with administration and staff.
- Critical Area for School Improvement – The middle school area is the focal point for school improvement. There has been no safety net for those middle school students that fall behind and the decision is often made here for the student to dropout. Dr. Burns stressed there needed to be a coordinated effort at this level in order to see improvement.
- “Corrective Action System” – When all of the testing information is received, if the school system does not meet enough goals, the Caldwell County School system will become a “Corrective Action System.” Dr. Burns reviewed the guidelines with the Board of what “corrective action” means and reaffirmed the seriousness of our situation.

Superintendent Dr. Steve Stone distributed the attached information to the Board regarding the budget highlights currently passed by the General Assembly and the 2006 Summary of Legislation.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION

Kaeti Groome, Director of Exceptional Children, updated the Board on what the Exceptional Children’s Department was doing to assist the Exceptional Children’s Subgroup in making AYP. In 2004, the North Carolina State Improvement program piloted a program at Hudson Middle School to train Exceptional Children in “Letterland.” In 2005, all EC students at all schools, combined with regular Ed teachers, began using our current program Language!.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION

Exceptional Children's scores revealed that students gained from 2 to 10 points, with some as much as 18 points. Five school employees will be trained to be "trainers" in Language! and will train all Exceptional Children's teachers. Ms. Groome noted that the focus this year would be at the middle school level and she and Dr. Burns will be working collaboratively with the curriculum consultants.

Jamie Ingle, ESL Director, updated the Board on the ESL program. There are currently 683 ESL students enrolled in the Caldwell County Schools, 376 of which are Limited English Proficient (LEP). Most students are housed at Davenport A+, West Lenoir Elementary and Gamewell Elementary and Middle Schools. The primary way the students learn English is to place the non-English speaking students in the classroom with English speaking students. There are very little "pull-out" situations and the 2004-2005 student performance ratios have proven this technique is very successful. Caldwell County exceeded the AYP goals and scored higher than the surrounding counties. Modification strategies are used in the classroom and every ESL student has an LEP plan that the ESL facilitators develop. Ms. Ingle noted that the schools have also been very successful in teaching English using the "Rosetta Stone" software program.

Guy Garner, Director of Child Nutrition, provided the attached information to the Board and reviewed the progress of the Caldwell County Schools in relation to the nutrition standards set by the state. He also advised the Board that the "No Fry Wednesday" continues to be successful as the students have gotten use to the concept and there are fewer complaints. Mr. Garner noted he is looking at providing lemonade per requests from faculty, staff and students at the high school level and is looking for one with low sugar levels.

Superintendent Dr. Steve Stone advised the Board that he had met with Denise Michaud, Director the Health Department, and will be attending a State Health Leadership Assembly with her in early August regarding the Pandemic Flu. A plan has not yet been developed, but Dr. Stone will be working towards that goal. He also advised that in the event of a break out, the Governor has the authority to commandeer the school system, utilizing our schools sites as immunization centers and buses for transportation. An Emergency Responder Council meets every month and Dr. Stone intends to have representation at that meeting from the school system.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Chairman Dr. Sharon S. Pennell asked the Board to review the attached draft of the 2006-2009 Board Priority goals and advise her of any changes and/or additions prior to placing on a one month comment at the August Board meeting.

Vice-Chairman Mike LaBrose opened the floor for discussion regarding electronic board meetings and asked if the Board would agree to investigate the possibility. Board packets and agendas would eventually be processed electronically, with each member having access via a monitor at the board table. There would be no voting done electronically and personnel and confidential matters would not be transmitted electronically. A committee will be formed to review the possibility.

POSSIBLE POLICY REVISIONS

Ervil Anderson, Director of Student Support Services, provided the attached information and briefly reviewed it with the Board. Ms. Anderson advised that legislation for dealing with sex offenders on campus has not yet passed the House; therefore, NCSBA has not drafted a policy for school districts to follow. She also drafted a proposed policy for Board review on Juvenile Court Records and a policy for Permissible Use of Seclusion and Restraint that was signed into law under the Deborah Greenblatt Act. These policies will be placed on the August 2006 Board agenda for a one-month comment period.

Superintendent Dr. Steve Stone requested that Policy 6560, Courier Service/Deliveries/Mail to Employees be revised to allow floral deliveries to students after 1:00 PM. The Board will review and place on a one-month comment period at the August 2006, Board meeting.

DINNER

The Board adjourned for dinner at 4:45 PM.

CLOSED SESSION

Upon motion of Tim Hawkins and second by Linda Coffey, the Board unanimously agreed to go into Closed Session at 5:45 PM pursuant to N.C.G.S. Section 143-318.11 (A) (1) to discuss personnel matters. No action was taken.

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Upon motion of Tim Hawkins and second by Helen Beam, the Board unanimously agreed to end the Closed Session and return to Open Session at 6:35 PM.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Angel Clark, Technology, demonstrated a new link on the Caldwell County Schools Website that will allow employees to post personal information regarding, illness, deaths, etc. for school employees. This link will be available to school personnel only and will be channeled through the Webmaster for security purposes.

Finance Officer, Bob Query, distributed and reviewed the attached summary of the 2006-2007 Revenue/Expenditure Continuation Budget and the State Allotment Comparisons for 2005-2005 to 2006-2007. He also requested that the Board develop a plan for grant applications and monies required to continue services generated by these grants.

Superintendent Dr. Steve Stone discussed the drop out rate, snow days, "No Staff Left Behind" and a bullying report. Information was shared and discussed by the Board on these topics. The Board supported the Superintendent suggestions to improve staff morale and directed him to develop a study group and look at the dropout problem. Bullying will be added as a category to the School Violence Report and annually reported to the Board.

Chairman Dr. Sharon S. Pennell reviewed a year-end update on the number of students, staff and total costs for Horizons Elementary School. Efforts were also discussed on how to increase enrollment for the 2006-2007 school year.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Superintendent Dr. Steve Stone advised the Board that he had been requested to accept more foreign exchange students. The Board advised to stay with the current policy of allowing two foreign exchange students, per high school, per year.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board and upon unanimous approval of the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:46 PM.

Signed _____
Chairman, Caldwell County Board of Education

Attest:

Secretary, Caldwell County Board of Education