

BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

4:00 p.m. – Call to Order – Executive Conference Room
(Work Session Updates / Closed Session)

Thursday, October 5, 2023

5:30 p.m. – Minitorium

Broadcast live on BCS Communications YouTube Account

MINUTES

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Buncombe County Board of Education met in a regular session on October 5, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. in the Minitorium located at 175 Bingham Road, Asheville, North Carolina and streamed live on YouTube, when the following business was transacted.

The following Board members were present:

Ann Franklin, Madam Chair
Peggy Buchanan, Member
Rob Elliot, Member
Judy Lewis, Member

Kim Plemmons, Member
Amanda Simpkins, Member
Amy Churchill, Vice-Chair

Staff present: Dr. Rob Jackson, Superintendent; Dr. Jennifer Reed, Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Joseph Hough, Assistant Superintendent Auxiliary Services; Dr. Jamie Johnson, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Equity & Student Support; Dr. Shane Cassida, Director of Student Services; Amy Dupree, Director of Special Services; Clark Wyatt, Director of Maintenance; Jeanann Yates, Director of Federal Programs; Robert Frisby, Director of Technology; Tim Fierle, Director of Facilities; Debbie Devane & Brian Chandler, Directors of Elementary & Intermediate Education; Dr. Donna Lanahan, Director of Secondary Education; Shanon Martin, Assistant Director of Student Services; Michele Smith, Director of Career & Technical Education; Steve Earwood, Director of Testing & Accountability; Scott Emory and Joshua Ponder, Technology Support Specialists; Christy Cheek, Buncombe County Schools Foundation Director; Dr. Stacia Harris, Director of Communications; Tim Reaves, Assistant Director of Communications; Hann Henson, Digital Communications Specialist; Lisa Payne, Director of School Nutrition; Tina Thorpe, Chief Finance Officer; Carol Edge, Operational Budget Manager; Dean Shatley, Attorney and Kim Matthews, Executive Administrative Assistant

MOTION TO CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Plemmons made a motion to enter into closed session at 4:33 p.m. and Mr. Elliot seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

The Madam Chair entertained a motion for the Board of Education to enter into closed session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11 for the following purposes:

- Under subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged and confidential personnel information pursuant to G.S. 115C-319-321;
- Under subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged and confidential student information pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 1232g (FERPA);
- Under subsection (a)(3) to discuss matters protected by the attorney-client privilege.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Franklin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:28 p.m. and Mr. Elliot seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

WORK SESSION UPDATES

Dr. Jackson reviewed the professional development activities that staff, and administration, took part in this week. The Board also had questions about the homeless population of our students and how it might relate to foster care. Dr. Johnson shared comments on the process involved and how our own Resource Center is able to help.

CALL TO ORDER

PRESENTATION OF COLORS / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / ERWIN HIGH SCHOOL – Instructed by Chief Tony Gutierrez, CW3 Army (Retired), and 1st Sergeant Chad Prevatte, Army (Retired)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Plemmons made a motion to approve the agenda and Ms. Buchanan seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

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SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

- Dr. Jackson noted that it was day twenty-six of the 2023-2024 school year and that having spent time in all forty-five schools he could share that it has been an incredible start to the school year. He expressed pride in the teachers, staff and administrators who give deeply of themselves for our students. Dr. Jackson said that as the work of educators constantly changes as new state statutes are introduced and new requirements are added, our teachers and staff still create amazing learning environments for our students. He challenged everyone to go out of their way to thank our educators for sustaining in the work and for continuing to choose to be educators even as the complexity of the work increases.
- One small way that we can show gratitude to our staff is through salaries and benefits Dr. Jackson remarked. He thanked the County Commissioners for continuing to invest in our teachers and staff. Through their decision this week and increased investment in the school system this year, in addition to state salary increases, BCS is able to increase the local supplement for certified staff by 2% and fully fund the classified salary study this year! While we will continue to advocate for continuing to grow our salary and benefits for our teachers and staff, Dr. Jackson said that it was important to share our appreciation for the work of the Commissioners.
- Dr. Jackson stated that this month celebrates National Principals Month. This is our opportunity to join with district leaders, elected officials, parents, students, teachers, staff, school leaders, and communities to celebrate and honor the principals' visionary leadership and tireless pursuit of success for each student. We have forty-five amazing principals who are extremely dedicated to servant-leadership!
- National Custodian Appreciation Day was also just celebrated. Dr. Jackson expressed his thanks for the people who work so hard to ensure that our classrooms are clean, warm, and inviting – their pride in their work truly shines!
- Dr. Jackson congratulated the BCS Education Foundation for recently receiving a \$10,000 grant from the Chamber of Commerce to implement the *BCS TEACH: A Recruitment Plan and Retention Plan for Buncombe County Schools* program. The Foundation also had an outstanding Golf Tournament this week, again raising funds to support the programs, grants, and scholarships of the foundation. Dr. Jackson thanked all who gave so generously to support the Foundation - as the Foundation does so much to support our students and teachers.
- Dr. Jackson gave a shout-out to each of the High School bands. He said that Dr. Reed and himself had the opportunity to see them perform this past weekend. Their hard work and dedication absolutely show and resulted in each of them leaving the Land of the Sky Marching Band Festival with some impressive hardware.
- Serving the students of Buncombe County remains an honor, Dr. Jackson stated. He noted that during the curriculum feature, all would hear about the impressive academic performance and opportunities to continue to improve. He said that everyone in BCS is dedicated to the goal of every single student reaching their potential and being prepared for their pathway beyond high school.

GOOD NEWS

- CTE Accomplishments:
FCCLA – Reynolds High School, Owen High School, Erwin High School & Roberson High School
DECA – North Buncombe High School & Reynolds High School
FFA – Owen High School, Enka High School, North Buncombe High School & Reynolds High School
National FFA - American FFA Degree Recipients – North Buncombe High Graduates
- Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics & Science Teaching (PAEMST) Finalist – Leigha Jordan, Valley Springs Middle School
- BCS Principal of the Year – Chip Cody, C.A. Erwin High School

CURRICULUM FEATURE

- 2022-2023 School Performance Data and Accountability Measures – Steve Earwood, Director of Testing and Accountability

Mr. Earwood shared information with the Board concerning the system's cohort graduation rate, noting that BCS has continually improved and has a higher rate than the State level. He also noted that BCS' ACT composite scores were above the State scores. School performance grade indicators for grades 3-8 and 9-12 were also reviewed. Mr. Earwood then examined the school performance grades results for 2023 and gave an in-depth overview into what these grades show for our schools. He also displayed the trends and impacts from the pandemic on BCS' testing and discussed how each school's School Improvement Team will use these results for planning as well as the District Level Improvement Team. Mr. Earwood then answered questions from Board members concerning the testing results and how these correlates to student outcomes in other areas and how many other factors influence testing scores.

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PRESENTATION

- **Suicide Prevention Efforts in Buncombe County Schools**
Dr. Shane Cassida, Director of Student Services gave a real case scenario from our system of an event that happened relating to one of our schools in the last two months. He praised the team who managed this situation for quickly following procedures, leading to a positive outcome. Dr. Cassida said that there are efforts in multiple areas to assist students in the suicide prevention efforts, from increased classroom instruction on how to handle stress; how students can look for suicide symptoms in themselves and friends; training for students on the “Say Something App”; and students at Erwin and Reynolds High Schools receiving additional training and additional assistance from a UNC grant are just some of the ways. Dr. Cassida stated that staff receive a minimum of two hours of at-risk suicide training and that a grant from Sources of Strength allows for additional training for selected staff. BCS’ suicide intervention work group was formed to ensure that our system’s social workers and counselors receive more training, along with our School Resource Officers, school nurses and afterschool partnerships. Dr. Cassida also acknowledged the demanding work of BCS’ Crisis Response Teams. He said that these team members have additional professional development to help themselves manage the trauma they see in our schools.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Bill Robinson, a resident of the Owen District, expressed his concern over the bullying of students in schools.
- Rev. Sara Wilcox, a parent from the Reynolds District, voiced her concerns that students and parents are challenging books in school libraries - stating that this will limit what our students read about our history.
- Laurin Robertson, a parent in Reynolds district, shared her concerns over the recently passed law, SB49 and its related legislation. She worries that it may put some children at risk of abuse if schools have to report certain things to a child’s parent.

ACTION AGENDA

- **Approval of Administrators at Schools Designated as Low Performing**

Ms. Plemmons made a motion to approve the current principal at each of the schools designated as low performing, to remain in their current position and Ms. Lewis seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

- **Request for Buncombe County to Facilitate the Consolidation Study Required by the State**

Mr. Elliot asked Mr. Shatley to explain the need for this request. Mr. Shatley stated that it is necessary due to the new state law, HB66, that mandates BCS to redraw electoral district lines, and the additional amendment, HB142, that requires BCS and Asheville City Schools (ACS) to complete a feasibility study on the merger of the two school systems. Neither BCS nor ACS asked for this legislation but are required to comply and report the findings to the legislature by February 2025. Dr. Jackson added that he had met with the County Manager, Avril Pinder and the ACS Superintendent, Dr. Maggie Fehrman. The County is agreeable to this request to facilitate the study and will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to procure a consultant to perform the study.

Mr. Elliot made a motion to approve a request to have Buncombe County facilitate the state required consolidation study for BCS and ACS and Ms. Simpkins seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Minutes: September 7, 2023 – Regular Meeting Open Session
- Personnel Report
- Advisory Council Members for Approval
- Advisory Council Members: Request to Add
- **POLICIES FOR SECOND READING**
Policy 3225/4312/7320 Technology Responsible Use
Policy 3228/7323 Use of Personal Technology to Conduct School Business
Policy 4130 Discretionary Admission Release Policy
Policy 4155 Assignment to Classes
Policy 6330 Insurance for Student Transportation Services
Policy 6402 Participation by Historically Underutilized Businesses

Mr. Elliot spoke about the policy committee meetings that review the policies that are brought before the Board for adoption and revision. He noted that the policies for first reading this month have revisions to conform to the Parent’s Bill of Rights statute. He assured the public that the focus of our schools will be on keeping students safe and respected.

Ms. Simpkins made a motion to approve the items on the consent agenda and Ms. Buchanan seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

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INFORMATION AGENDA

- **POLICIES FOR FIRST READING**
 - Policy 3210 Parental Inspection of and Objection to Instructional Materials
 - Policy 4335 Criminal Behavior
 - Policy 4720 Surveys of Students
 - Policy 6120 Student Health Services
 - Policy 6220 Operation of Student Nutrition Services
 - Policy 7300 Staff Responsibilities
 - Policy 7650 Employee Travel and Other Expense Reimbursement

ANNOUNCEMENTS / FUTURE MEETINGS

- The BCS County-Wide Advisory Council meeting will be held on October 24, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at Erwin High School in the Cafeteria.
- The next Board of Education Regular Meeting will be held on November 2, 2023. Work session updates and Closed Session beginning at 4:00 p.m. in the Executive Conference Room, and the Open Session beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the Minitorium at 175 Bingham Road, Asheville, NC 28806.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Plemmons made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m. and Ms. Lewis seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

Rob Jackson, Superintendent &
Ex Officio Secretary

Ann B. Franklin, Madam Chair

Minutes for Approval: November 2, 2023
klm