

**Jackson County Board of Education
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Sylva, North Carolina**

398 Hospital Road, Sylva

September 28, 2021

5:45 p.m.

The Jackson County Board of Education met in regular session at 5:45 p.m. on Tuesday, September 28, 2021, at the Board of Education Administrative Office Board Room, 398 Hospital Road, Sylva, North Carolina. The meeting was conducted using video and telephone conferencing to limit the number of people present for the meeting. The following members were present:

Alison Laird-Large, Chairperson
Margaret McRae
Wes Jamison
Abigail Clayton

Also present were Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent; Teri Walawender, Personnel Director; Ashley Leonard, Board Attorney; Jeremiah Jackson, Chief Technology Officer; and Cora Fields, Board Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Alison Laird Large called the business meeting to order.

CLOSED SESSION

The board unanimously approved a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, 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 or confidential personnel information pursuant to G.S. 115C-319-32 and (a) (3) to discuss matters protected by attorney-client privilege.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board unanimously approved the consent action agenda:*

1. Draft Closed Session Minutes for Regular Meeting on July 27, 2021.
2. Draft Closed Session Minutes for Regular Meeting on August 24, 2021.

Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to convene open session.

CALL TO ORDER – REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

Chairperson Alison Laird Large called the regular business meeting to order.

Mrs. Kathryn Moses and students from Jackson Community School led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Agenda.

OPEN SESSION FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Keith Blaine emailed the following public comments and requested that it be read:

Dear Board Members, Jackson County Public School Staff, Teachers, Parents, Students and Guest, During an interview of NC Public School Superintendent Catherine Truitt on August 9, 2021, the following quotes from her are as follows:

Question: Are you adamantly opposed to the teaching of Critical Race Theory in our schools?

Superintendent Truitt: *Yes, absolutely.* The idea that we have not made any progress towards a more perfect union since our country's founding and furthermore that our country is somehow inherently racist is not true and actually does damage to the way that we want to educate kids to have a better understanding of civics and what our government has done to make that more perfect union over the last 250 years.

Superintendent Truitt: What we really should be focusing on in schools is *not making kids social justice activists*; what we should be doing is being focused on helping kids be proficient readers and learn math so they can graduate from high school and choose the post-secondary plans of their choice and be successful. End of Quotes from Superintendent Truitt

Keith Blaine: I am requesting the Jackson County Elected Public School Board Members to VOTE to Oppose promoting and teaching Critical Race Theory in ALL Jackson County Public Schools which includes: 1) teacher/staff training and 2) teacher instruction and assignment to students.

The Critical Race Theory statement from the staff does not condemn or prohibit CRT training or instruction in Jackson County Public Schools.

Another quote from Superintendent Truitt from the same interviews:

Question: Is [Critical Race Theory] being taught in our schools right now?

Superintendent Truitt: There are tenets of Critical Race Theory for sure being taught in our schools as well as popping up in teacher trainings that districts are offering... The idea of wokeism is predominant in our schools through individual teachers.

Keith Blaine: Jackson County Public School students are the future leaders of our County, State, and Nation. Please do NOT ALLOW 'Wokeism' as Superintendent Truitt said in our schools. Stand up for what is right for our future leaders right here in Jackson County. Vote TONIGHT to STOP CRT in Jackson County Public Schools!!!

Thanks, Keith Blaine

Dr. John Edwards shared the following comments with the board: The goal of the petition to put the Bible back into public education, the purpose is to put the knowledge of the God of the Bible back into our public education curriculums, our courtrooms, and the general life, minds, and hearts of the people. Education without truth is valueless or harmful. Truthful information and disinformation are not equal. Truthful information helps to promote trust while disinformation promotes distrust, disloyalty, and anarchy. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable right..." (Declaration of Independence of the United States of America). The Bible affirms these truths that are self-evident. We are petitioning to enrich the learning experience of children by restoring Biblical content to teaching materials so they may know the God of the Bible. Educators must be allowed to utilize the Bible for educational purposes without fear of being bullied, criticized,

ostracized, marginalized, or censured. Our educators also need to be free from fear of reprisal or loss of position. It will cost the state and taxpayers no additional load onto an already stretched budget of time, resources, and effort to make this change. Thank you, Dr. John V. Edwards, DDS

Mr. Matthew Shuler spoke to the board and said he supports what Dr. Edwards said concerning the bible, but more particularly allowing Gideon's or other organizations to be able to hand out the bible. Mr. Shuler passed out copies of the North Carolina Constitution and pointed out in Section 8 that it is a disqualification for office for any person who shall deny the being of Almighty God. He stated that if we don't allow for teaching about God that we are setting up our children to be disqualified to hold public office. He added that in Article IX Education, that religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools, libraries, and the means of education shall forever be encouraged. He said that he still carries the bible that was given to him when he graduated that was signed by forty of his teachers. He encouraged Jackson County Public Schools to allow the bible to be used as a book of reference.

CONSENT ACTION AGENDA

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board unanimously approved the consent action agenda:*

- A. Open Session Minutes of Regular Meeting of August 24, 2021.

INFORMATION AGENDA

- A. **Agenda Item:** Superintendent's Report
Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers reported on the following items:

1. Dr. Ayers begin by thanking all JCPS staff, students, and families for the tremendous work they have done to make the first six weeks of school successful! She said that JCPS is fortunate to have a school system that remains "open for business" during tumultuous times as it relates to the pandemic. She added that it is fortunate that she has not had to make the difficult decision to close a school like many of the neighboring counties have had to do for safety and health reasons. She attributed JCPS's successful beginning to the staff and families. She thanked the staff and families for their incredible support and engagement.
2. Dr. Ayers shared that the JCPS COVID positivity rate as of this afternoon is 0.5% across the district. This is so exciting to know that JCPS is doing well with safety precautions, following the mask requirement, and keeping schools on schedule and open. It is vital to remain diligent in mitigating the spread and continuing with face-to-face instruction.
3. Over the last month, NCDPI released 2020-2021 state testing data. This data has reinforced the decision to implement a consistent district-wide curriculum and allowed our schools and directors to focus on specific academic areas to target. This year and for future years, JCPS will focus on uniform reading strategies, understanding and reading comprehension in the K-8 schools. With the new reading curriculum materials, the goal is to see growth and achievement for all students while they gain critical reading skills to

last a lifetime. Dr. Ayers said she is most excited to announce that all the newly purchased Wit & Wisdom materials have arrived at the schools and are already in the hands of JCPS instructional staff!

4. Likewise, JCPS will continue to focus on improving state testing data results in mathematics. JCPS will continue to improve our math skills and student performance using the district curriculum purchased last year. NC state test data reflects that there are definite strengths in JCPS high school courses. Furthermore, the 2020-2021 graduation rate is 92.9%. This is the highest in the western NC region and JCPS ranks 8th in the state!
5. On the athletic front, Dr. Ayers offered a big shout out to all JCPS coaching staff. The coaches are working extremely hard and are very dedicated to the student-athletes. In high school sports, the Blue Ridge Bobcats volleyball team has a 1-5 record while the men's soccer team is 2-1. The SMHS volleyball team has a 7-6 record and are travelling to West Henderson today. The Mustang varsity football team is 3-2 and will host West Henderson Friday evening for homecoming. The men's varsity soccer team is 8-3-1, while our cross country, tennis and golf teams are playing well too. She encouraged families and communities to attend athletic events at all the JCPS schools and support the student-athletes.
6. The SMHS marching band has been busy too. They participated in their first competition of the season this past week and walked away with the following awards: 2nd place colorguard, 2nd place drum major, 1st place percussion, music and visual, and 2nd place in their class. Way to go marching Mustangs! They will be competing again this Saturday, October 2nd in Bristol, TN.
7. Finally, she encouraged families and community members to participate in the Blood Drive hosted at Cullowhee Valley School on Wednesday, October 6th from 12:00-5:00. JCPS has an extremely supportive community here in Jackson County and we are grateful for what is done for our students, staff, and families. She also thanked the families and community who support the school system in a kind and respectful manner. She stated that through the interactions with our staff, their participation in Board of Education meetings and attendance at athletic events, it is abundantly clear that the Jackson County community is committed to the success and growth of Jackson County Public Schools!

B. Agenda Item: EC Compliance Indicators

Presenter: Kelly Doppke, Student Support Services Director

The JCPS EC department is responsible for reporting data on 14 indicators to NCDPI annually. The indicators are used as part of our state and federal monitoring requirements and the data helps the district as we plan for program improvement. JCPS recently received a report on two indicators: Indicator 11 - reflects the percentage of students for whom a referral was received, and placement determined within 90 days. JCPS remained at 100% for indicator 11, it is important to point out that this indicator was based on 18-19 data and is likely to be lower next year. During the spring of 2020, JCPS did not have access to students in a face-to-face manner to complete some of

these timelines. The EC department is responding to these delays on a case-by-case manner and discussing compensatory services and academic recover for students with disabilities. Indicator 12 is a similar data point, but reflects on the Child Find process for preschool aged students with disabilities. The goal is to evaluate and determine eligibility by a student's 3rd birthday. This data is based on real 19-20 numbers, and JCPS saw a dramatic difference from 100% in all previous years to 78% this year. Since the percentage is below 90% on this indicator, JCPS is awaiting directions from DPI for corrective action. It is important to point out that this non-compliance is a direct result of COVID closures, and has impacted our entire state and nation. Locally, JCPS is on target this year to meet this compliance standard for 21-22.

C. Agenda Item: State Data Release Update

Presenter: Adam Holt, Director of Testing and Accountability

Mr. Holt informed the board that the data was released by NCDPI and approved by the NC State School Board in early September. Just a reminder that no testing occurred during the 2019-2020 school year and no data was released. Federal and State Accountability Waivers are in place for this year and the following data has been waived and will not be released: School Performance Grade Calculations (This is the letter Grades that schools receive), All Federal and State Identification (Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), or Low Performing Schools, and School Accountability Growth from EVAAS. The data is very difficult to compare to pre-pandemic 2019 data. There is a link to the full data release on the JCPS homepage and select the Testing and Accountability Department page. On a normal year, all assessments are held to a 95% participation rate. This was waived for this past school year. However, our schools worked very hard to assess all students. Mr. Holt stated that he appreciated our schools and students for participating in assessments last school year. Out of 239 assessed assessments and subgroups, we met the 95% participation requirement in 216 areas. That is 90% of all assessment areas and subgroups. A couple of areas that we did not meet on for our All Students Group are EOC Biology, ACT, and ACT WorkKeys. The curriculum department is working to make improvements in this area quickly. They have implemented Wit & Wisdom as a K-8 ELA curriculum resource to increase our reading proficiency. Mr. Holt added that we are very proud of our graduation rate and our continued support of our secondary schools in supporting our students as they graduate high school.

D. Agenda Item: COVID Testing at JCPS Schools Update

Presenter: Kelly Doppke, Student Support Services Director

Mrs. Doppke informed the board that JCPS will begin free voluntary COVID testing for students and staff. Mrs. Doppke said that this optional testing utilizes pooling where up to 25 individuals can be screened using a single test. Each student in a class, pod, or cohort swabs their own nose and places the swab in a tube with the others, which are analyzed as a single sample. This provides population-level data so school leaders can make informed public health decisions at a fraction of the cost. If the test result is positive, an intervention can be made to prevent a possible outbreak.

E. Agenda Item: Audit and Budget Update

Presenters: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Walker informed the board that due to the lack of an approved state budget, JCPS is still operating under a temporary budget resolution that will be reassessed in early October. Mrs.

Walker also informed the board that JCPS recently had their annual external audit that looked at compliance, internal controls, and transactions. The audit observed no findings and showed an increase in the local fund balance of approximately \$200,000.

- F. **Agenda Item:** Unaudited Financial Summary
Presenter: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Walker presented the Unaudited Financial Summary as of September 28, 2021.

ACTION AGENDA

- A. **Agenda Item:** Memorandum of Understanding Westbridge Pre-Employment Transition Services
Presenter: Kelly Doppke, Student Support Services Director

Mrs. Doppke presented the MOU for Westbridge Pre-Employment Transition Services, formerly known as Webster Enterprises, and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Memorandum of Understanding Westbridge Pre-Employment Transition Services.*

- B. **Agenda Item:** E-Rate Teacher Laptop Purchase
Presenter: Jeremiah Jackson, Chief Technology Officer

Mr. Jackson informed the board that JCPS has applied for Federal E-Rate Emergency Contingency Funding for the 2021-2022 school year, to provide chromebooks for two grade levels. Mr. Jackson provided copies of the quotes and selected Y&S Technologies as the best option that met JCPS specifications and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Margaret McRae, the board voted unanimously to approve the E-Rate Teacher Laptop purchase from Y&S Technologies.*

- C. **Agenda Item:** Promethean Panel Purchase
Presenter: Jeremiah Jackson, Chief Technology Officer

Mr. Jackson presented the bid for the purchase of Promethean Panels for the school and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Promethean Panel purchase.*

- D. **Agenda Item:** Authorization for Jackson County Recreation and Parks Department to make improvements to the Fairview Elementary School Youth Complex
Presenter: Dr. Dana Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers presented a request by the Jackson County Recreation and Parks Department for authorization to make improvements to the Fairview Elementary School Youth Sports Complex. and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Authorization for Jackson County Recreation and Parks Department to make improvements to the Fairview Elementary School Youth Sports Complex.*

- E. **Agenda Item:** Architect's Services Proposal
Presenter: Dr. Dana Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers presented the Architect's Services Amendment #1. Dr. Ayers informed the board that the original architect's contract issued June 23, 2000 needed to be amended to reflect the change in the company name under which Mr. John Cort, principal architect, is employed, from Cort Architectural Group to McMillan Pazdan Smith PLLC and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Architect's Services Amendment #1.*

- F. **Agenda Item:** Review Mask Mandate
Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers reviewed the current JCPS mask policy that requires all students, staff, and educational visitors to wear masks when indoors. She said that the JCPS COVID numbers have remained low as a result of masking, social distancing, hand washing, and good custodial practices. As required by the Department of Public Instruction the board will review COVID procedures monthly.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Mask requirement for all students, staff, and educational visitors in grades PreK through 12, regardless of vaccine status.*

- G. **Agenda Item:** BOE Meeting Location for October 2021
Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers requested the board change the location for the October 26, 2021 Board of Education meeting from Cullowhee Valley Elementary School to the Central Office Board Room, to help limit the number of visitors to the school, and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Central Office location for the October 28, 2021 board meeting.*

- G. **Agenda Item:** Field Trips
Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

1. FES, Grade 3 – Planetarium, Young Harris, GA, 10-13-2021, TT7056.
2. FES, Grade 4 – Ripley's Aquarium, Gatlinburg, TN, 04-07-22 to 04-08-22, TT7005.
3. FES, Grade 5 - Ripley's Aquarium, Gatlinburg, TN, 03-09-22 to 03-10-22, TT7048.

Dr. Ayers reviewed the above listed field trips and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the above listed field trips.*

PERSONNEL ACTION AGENDA

Action: *Upon a motion made by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the personnel agenda as recommended by Dr. Dana Ayers. The board unanimously approved the following recommendations:*

Employee Recommendations:

1. Ayres, Chloe – Afterschool Assistant, FES
2. Bishop, Johnnie Nell – Extension of Temporary Custodial Hours, CVES
3. Bishop, Johnnie Nell – Substitute Bus Monitor, CVES
4. Buchanan, Amanda – School Nutrition Assistant, SCES
5. Capps, Kathryn – Substitute School Nutrition Assistant, BRS
6. Clawson, Gail – Instructional Support Assistant, SCES
7. Copeland, Debra – Extension of Temporary Custodial Hours, CVES
8. Deal, Tyson – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
9. DeSilva, Priyangan – EC Teacher Assistant, CVES
10. Elders, Melissa – School Nutrition Manager, SMES
11. Fiskeaux, Kim – Homebound Tutor, SCES
12. Freesman, Jillian – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
13. Gobar, Penelope – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
14. Goranson, Olena – School Nutrition Assistant, FES
15. Haigler, Shirley – Homebound Tutor, SMHS
16. Holden-Brown, Tammy – Bus Driver, SMHS
17. Howerton, Caleigh – Afterschool Assistant, FES
18. Inestroza, LeAnn – Substitute Bus Driver, CVES
19. Jeleniewski, Paige – Homebound Tutor, SMHS
20. Joyner, Alexandria – Homebound Tutor, CVES
21. Joyner, Alexandria – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
22. Kabinoff, Beth – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
23. King, Morgan – Teacher, SMES
24. Laws, Kaylah – Homebound EC Teacher, SCES
25. Lunsford, Hannah – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
26. Macke, Stacy – Homebound Tutor, SMHS
27. Massingale, Michelle – Teacher, CVES
28. Mathis, Susan – Afterschool Assistant, FES
29. Mayes, Kathryn – EC Bus Monitor, CVES
30. McGuinn, Alexis – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
31. McKee, Kelly – Finance Administrative Specialist, Central Office
32. McMahan, Patricia – School Nutrition Assistant, CVES
33. Montesano, Stefani – Afterschool Assistant, FES
34. Montieth, Jennifer – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
35. Murcia, Irma – School Nutrition Assistant, SMES
36. Myers, Gail – Instructional Support Assistant, CVES

37. Nordmann, Clare – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
38. Nicholson, Rachel – Instructional Support Assistant, CVES
39. Perez, Bernice – School Nutrition Assistant, FES
40. Peterson, Emmelia Caroline – Head Color Guard Instructor, SMHS
41. Plemmons, Shauna – EC and General Ed Homebound Teacher, FES
42. Price, Anna – School Nutrition Assistant, SMES
43. Pruett, Tonya – Homebound Teacher, FES
44. Raxter, Lisa – School Nutrition Assistant, SCES
45. Rearigh, Andrea – Homebound Teacher, FES
46. Reep, Madison – Afterschool Assistant, FES
47. Robinson, Haley – Afterschool Director, CVES
48. Setzer, Ronald – Bus Driver, SMHS
49. Siemon, Marina Lynn – Afterschool Assistant, FES
50. Sutton, Alyssia – Receptionist, SMES
51. Volk, Amanda – Teacher, SMES
52. Voris, Joshua – Afterschool Assistant, FES
53. Wilson, Erik – Teacher, SMHS

Employee Resignations:

1. Allen, Laura – Teacher, FES
2. Cope, Lisa – School Nutrition Manager, SMES
3. Holder-Brown, Tammy – Bus Driver, SMHS
4. Pollack, Brad – Teacher, CVES
5. Ridley, Rebekah – School Nutrition Assistant, SCES
6. Sandoval, Jesus – Custodian and Bus Driver, SMES
7. Simmons, Jr., L. Wayne – Technology Technician I, Central Office

Employee Retirements:

1. Hooper, Rhonda – Purchasing Specialist, Central Office
2. Williamson, Catherine Caroline – Graduation Coach, JCS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next regularly scheduled business meeting of the Board of Education is October 26, 2021, at 6:00 p.m., at the Board of Education Administrative Office, 398 Hospital Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no objection, Chairperson Alison Laird Large adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Alison Laird Large, Chairperson

Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Secretary