

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

February 27, 2023

Work Session Minutes

The Caswell County Board of Education met in a work session on Monday, February 27, 2023, beginning at 4:00 p.m. in the Caswell County Schools Administration Building of Caswell County Schools. Members present: Chair Mel Battle, Vice Chair Vennie Beggarly, Joel Lillard, Gladys Garland, Nicole Smith, Tracy Stanley, and Trudy Blackwell. Others present include Superintendent Dr. Sandra Carter and Asst. Superintendent Dr. Carla Murray. Connie Kimrey recorded the minutes. (Board Attorney was present for a portion of the meeting)

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

Policy # 4318, Use of Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices

Discussion took place regarding teachers being told they cannot take up cell phones. The wording in the policy was recently changed and now there is confusion if teachers take up phones if there will be liability issues. Other concerns included ear buds being used although they are legitimately used in some classes with the chrome books.

It was agreed to wait until the board attorney was present for further input prior to making a decision.

Policy # 424, Student Wellness

Policy # 952, Promoting Student Nutrition/Healthy School Environment

Concerns were shared that the policy indicates outside food is not allowed. It was shared that O'Kelly's was recently delivering to schools and there have been previous issues with outside food at the middle school.

Item C (4) references that food and beverage marketing on school campuses during the school day must meet federal and state standards. In accordance with these standards, only foods and beverages that meet the Smart Snack standards may be marketed or advertised on school campuses during the school day. Fast-food promotion and packaging will not be allowed during student breakfast, snack, and lunch times, as well as any special celebrations that occur on school campus during the instructional school day.

Dr. Carter shared that the Child Nutrition Director is adhering to the federal guidelines. She noted that some schools are taking this more serious than others and there seems to be a lot of miscommunication. She also shared that they have been charging for ice and have been informed they should not be doing this.

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Mel Battle shared that we need to be consistent and make sure all are following the rules as well as using common sense. All schools should be on the same page. Dr. Carter shared she will review at the administration meeting tomorrow and will go over the guidelines.

Trudy Blackwell questioned what the guideline that will be followed is. Dr. Carter shared that items from grocery stores such as a "lunchable" is allowed; however, items from a fast food restaurant are not allowed for students and employees.

Vennie Beggarly shared that she felt an employee should be allowed to have something noting a teacher may stop on the way to school and have a coffee and should be allowed to take it to their classroom. Dr. Carter shared it depends on how strict the board wants to be.

Joel Lillard would like to see the actual copy of what the federal policy says.

Dr. Carter will get a copy of the guidelines and bring to the next meeting.

Joel Lillard shared concerns with snacks being allowed noting that they have been told that snacks are not allowed. He expressed his concern with the lunch schedules and noted that some students have to wait a long time before eating lunch and felt that either snacks should be allowed or change the lunch times to allow students to eat sooner.

Dr. Carter is to bring back information regarding snacks and lunch schedules.

Joel Lillard questioned if Policy # 952 is something the board put in place or is it strictly based on federal requirements.

Stoney Creek Elementary and Central Office Structure were deferred until Closed Session

Visit Log for Central Office Staff visiting Schools

Joel Lillard shared he would like to see a monthly log for school visits. He shared he has spoken to someone at another school district and this is provided to the board. Dr. Carter asked what other boards required this. Joel Lillard shared is it not required; however, the board receives it. He gave an example of Stoney Creek and upon going any further requested this to be discussed further in closed session. He shared this sign-in log would allow the board to see what administrators are visiting the schools.

Hours for Custodian

Discussion took place regarding the hours that are being worked and dual positions which are creating a gap with no custodians on site to clean the schools. Mel Battle shared that he felt you need custodial help after school and with the employee serving in dual roles it appears we are limited to how many hours they can work. He wasn't sure if this is working for all schools and may be something that needs to be looked into.

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Joel shared that he is hearing that classrooms are not being cleaned thoroughly as the employee is in a rush to finish so they can drive the bus. He felt we need to be creative on how we cover this and questioned if a part-time person is needed to fill the gap. Dr. Carter shared that we look at the Saffelle report and all schools received good scores except for NL Dillard. Mel Battle shared that we need to look at every school and the possibility of someone being at school after the students are gone as this is key in having classrooms cleaned thoroughly. Trudy Blackwell noted that the scores may have passed with the report; however, she has seen firsthand areas that are not being cleaned and perhaps placement and changing hours for custodians is needed.

Dr. Carla Murray was requested to do a custodial study (hours/allotment per pupil, etc.) and align elementary schools with the number of staff and bring back to the Board at the next meeting. Those filling dual roles for custodian and bus driver are the major concern. It was also noted that you cannot compare North and South as they are different based on what is being used.

Dr. Carter noted that custodian positions were difficult to fill and these have been hurdles we have had as these positions have been vacant.

Joel Lillard noted that it appears the custodian staff are heavy during lunch and questioned if having one person would be sufficient noting that this consumes a big chunk of the day.

Trudy Blackwell also requested that rooms that are not being used be looked into and see that they are not turning into a catch all room. She noted that these rooms are in need of decluttering and cleaning.

Joel Lillard shared that it appears that there are always substitute cafeteria workers and they are the same people in these positions. If they are working in a full time capacity why are they not being hired rather than acting as a substitute?

Dr. Carter shared this has always been at the discretion of the child nutrition manager and based on funds noting that they have used substitutes to not pay benefits.

Dr. Carter was requested to provide a list of how many substitutes are at each school.

School Counselors (issues they are facing)

Gladys Garland questioned how we are dealing with issues that the schools are faced with and are we providing programs for our children and staff. Dr. Carter shared a survey went out to the counselors and the majority responded indicating that all are dealing with issues from Covid and the impact it had on students with social media and social/emotional issues. The telehealth with Compassion Health has been an asset and is being utilized. Also, Renaissance Wellness has assisted with therapists and that has been working well.

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Gladys Garland wanted to make sure students are being observed for any behaviors that may be of concern to the school system.

Mel Battle shared it appears that at the high school there are a lot of things the counselors are not aware of noting the scholarships. He shared that Dr. Hilary Dodson is working with the counselors with scholarships and shared he received a call in regards to an old scholarship.

Dr. Carter shared that they are doing a good job noting we have the lowest drop out scores which are lower than the state average and felt we are going in the right direction.

Fire drills/lock downs

Gladys Garland wanted to make sure we are doing this every month. Dr. Carter shared this does occur and the board is informed of any lockdowns when they occur.

Exit Forms

Dr. Carla Murray shared she checked with other districts to see what their process is and noted she submits a report every year to the state on why people choose to leave. A draft form was shared and she noted that employees would complete this form prior to their departure and a box is available to check if they would like to receive an exit interview.

Joel Lillard felt that the exit interview should be done in person. Mel Battle shared that as small of a school system as we are he felt we should be able to do this also. Dr. Murray shared that if the employee checks the box this will occur. Vennie Beggarly shared she wasn't sure all employees would feel comfortable answering the questions in person and may prefer the form. Joel Lillard shared it should not be given on their last day and should not be felt as it was an attack but rather a way to find out what we could do better and not make the employee feel intimidated. He felt it should be done in person as a way to gain more information on why people are leaving and find ways to improve upon.

No decision was made on how to handle or proceed with the exit interview form that was shared.

Drugs

Dr. Carter shared that she has spoken with Sheriff Durden noting that several deputies have left and they are short-handed. Student Services Director Jennifer O'Briant has reached out concerning School Resource Officers (SRO) and at this time we have piece-meal coverage as there is not a permanent SRO onsite except at the middle school.

A grant has been applied for with the NC Safe Schools to hopefully purchase vape detectors. Ms. O'Briant is looking at the next safe schools grant and getting costs together which include

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two companies in which detections can be made. Students will be required to go through a detector. One company is Evolve and the other is Zero-Eyes. Both companies offer benefits and once narrowed down information will be brought to the board to see what company the board would like to apply for.

Nicole Smith shared that an individual spoke in Greensboro and inquired if we can talk with the Sheriff's department to host a night like this for the high school and middle school.

Joel Lillard shared someone sent information to him on a story that WRAL did on Johnson County concerning detectors that do not require someone to man them.

Tracy Stanley shared that she understands that the sheriff's department is short; however, the one deputy that is at the high school does not need to sit in the parking lot in the car. He should be inside the school.

Vennie Beggarly shared that she watched the webinar regarding SRO's and their roles in the schools and some things are actually not their jobs. The webinar was very informative.

Attorney Ron Bradsher shared that he has sent a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which is patterned after Wake Count. The SRO's are always first and foremost under law enforcement. The MOU lists the details of their involvement. Attorney Ron Bradsher will share the MOU with the Board.

Joel Lillard questioned our options if we are not using the funding received from the grant and asked if contracting with a private security company or check with local sheriff department. Dr. Carter shared she would need to check into this as the grant was written specifically for SRO's. She will need to see if funding can be rerouted and then look at other sources if available. Attorney Ron Bradsher shared that retired deputies may possibly be interested. Joel Lillard also shared that some deputies will work on their days off and be paid at time and a half and suggested the funds (if allowed) be used to pay their salaries.

Dr. Carter will bring back information regarding the SRO funding and other security options.

Athletic Expenditures

A listing was shared with actual costs and when budget time occurs this will be looked into further as football and basketball should carry enough to offset the other sports but at this time there are concerns.

Board will review this at budget time.

Nicole Smith shared that when looking at the 2021/22 budget it looks as if \$71,000 was spent for sports and a balance of \$20,000 for the high school and \$5,000 for the middle school. She shared that athletics fosters a healthy balance, cognizant skills, teamwork and assists with

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social skills among others. She shared a listing of needs that have been shared with her. Those include:

BYSHS:

- In regards to the \$20,000, a separate line item is needed for security/transportation
- Soccer = needs soccer balls
- Volleyball = not regulation
- Wrestling = was told there are not enough mats and having to borrow them (it was questioned if this is accurate as wrestling only needs one mat for matches)
- Basketball = balls/bags/rack/Gatorade bottles/ uniforms are needed
- Baseball = gutters on building and dugout / also need a press box
- Football = pressbox needs care (especially with windows)
- Track = not up to code (it was shared that there was not enough land to add another lane due to the bleachers)
- Lawnmower = Currently a zero-turn to mow the baseball/softball/football. This is also being used to mow around the buildings in which it picks up seeds and carries them on to the softball/baseball fields, which defeats the purpose. A normal mower would be more sufficient
- Tru-Green contract is not working and they are not doing a good job

NL Dillard Middle:

- NL Dillard Middle was allotted \$5,000 and they spent that on helmets
- Volleyball net is 20 years old and is being taped together
- Football field is a mess and very wet and will sink down on it (due to moles/voles)
- Practice field (near the road) is not in good shape
- Storage buildings are falling apart and doors are hanging
- Assistants are only paid \$250

Nicole Smith shared she wasn't sure if these concerns have been shared with the Board. Mel Battle indicated that most times this never makes it to the Superintendent or to the Board. Dr. Carter shared she was not aware of these concerns. Mel Battle shared it is the coaches responsibility to share with the athletic director who in turns shares with principal and then to the Superintendent.

Nicole Smith shared that some of these items are listed on the work order listing that was received.

It was agreed to keep these expenditures in mind at budget time.

Dr. Carter shared that the \$20,000 is more than most districts receive and the meetings with the booster clubs have been well received and felt that communication is improving.

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Joel Lillard shared that the principal may be aware but sometimes it becomes “habit” to just say that we don’t have the money and the information needs to be shared to the board.

Board Items

- Lunch Schedule

Mel Battle questioned if the board (as mentioned previously) would like to begin going to the schools on the morning meetings for lunch. All were in agreement. A schedule will be made and provided to the board.

- April meeting

Due to the Easter holiday it was suggested to have one meeting in April on April 24th which will be a morning meeting.

Caswell County Civic Center

We are waiting on additional quotes. This will be brought back to the board.

ROTC

Information was provided. Dr. Carter questioned if the board wanted a survey to be shared with students in grades 8 through 11. The board was in agreement. It was also asked if someone from the ROTC can come and talk with the students. It was shared it did not matter which branch of the ROTC was contacted.

Dr. Carter is to proceed with survey and inquire if a representative can speak with students and bring back information to the board.

LETRS Training & Employee Bonus

Mel Battle shared that we will hold this item until a future date and discuss at a later time.

Master Board Training

NCSBA has been contacted to inquire on available dates for the course “Building Your Own Team.”

Jersey Retirement

A revised draft was provided. Mel Battle shared he was not in agreement with some items noting Item # 1 and felt some things have been watered down regarding Part # 4.

Concerns were expressed that the retirement of a jersey should be what you did at the high school not at another school. The draft indicates that the Athletic Director or Principal can reject or approve; however, Mel Battle shared he felt it should be a committee decision.

Joel Lillard shared he would like to see the Board of Education taken out of it but to include that they will be informed of the decision and also noted that there have been great athletes who attended school but did not pursue college.

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No decision or action was taken regarding the jersey retirement.

Work Orders (Maintenance)

Time did not allow discussing this. Mel Battle requested that board members bring this information back to the next meeting for further discussion.

Cell Phone policy will be added to the February 27, 2023 agenda.

Attorney Ron Bradsher shared information regarding clubs and noted that with the new policy recently adopted this will affect every club. Currently there are 26 clubs at the middle school and the clubs will not exist during instructional time (from the time the bus arrives until the time the bus leaves). Applications will need to be submitted for after school clubs and will need to be determined if they are student led or staff led. This will affect everyone and bring into alignment with the new policy.

ADJOURN

Gladys Garland moved, seconded by Vennie Beggarly to adjourn the meeting at 5:50 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Mel O. Battle
Chairman

Dr. Sandra Carter
Superintendent