MINUTES OF
THE WILSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
WORK SESSION
APRIL 13, 2022

The Wilson County Board of Education held a Work Session on Wednesday, April 13, 2022, at 1:40 p.m. in the Administrative Office, 113 N. Tarboro Street. Chairman Dr. Christine Fitch called the meeting to order at 1:42 p.m. with the following members present:

Dr. Christine L. Fitch, Chairman
Henry E. Mercer, Vice Chairman
Velma Barnes
Beverly Boyette
Blake Boykin
Rhyan Breen
Debora Powell
Dr. Lane B. Mills, Secretary

The meeting was livestreamed through the Wilson County Schools (WCS) YouTube Channel. The public could also view the meeting through links on the WCS Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages and the WCS website.

Others present were Associate Superintendent Dr. Cheryl Wilson, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Dr. Norris Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services Dr. Ben Williams, Director of Maintenance Mark Letchworth, Director of Public Relations Amber Lynch, Assistant Director of Maintenance Greg Woodard, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and Board Clerk Linda Horrison, as well as Board Attorney Katie Cornetto and *The Wilson Times* Reporter Olivia Neeley. There were three citizens in attendance.

After calling the meeting to order, Dr. Fitch asked for approval of the agenda. Ms. Powell made the motion, seconded by Mr. Boykin and Mr. Breen, that the agenda for the Work Session of the Wilson County Board of Education for today, April 13, 2022, be approved. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Dr. Fitch led the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.

Under Chairman's Comments, Dr. Fitch shared that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Accreditation Exit Presentation – Cognia and Long-Range Facilities Planning for Wilson County Schools. Cognia Lead Evaluator Dr. Julia Williams and her team (Kate McAnelly and Jen Marcellus), joined the Work Session remotely through the Zoom video conferencing platform.

Under Accreditation Exit Presentation – Cognia, Lead Evaluator Dr. Julia Williams of Cognia, presented the findings of the District Re-Accreditation visit and review with the Board. An accreditation is an international protocol for institutions committed to systematic and sustainable improvement which assists the institution in building capacity of the institution to improve and sustain student learning; and stimulating and improving effectiveness and efficiency. The role of Dr. Julia Williams and her Engagement Review Team was to gather first-hand information to evaluate the district's performance against the

Cognia Performance Standards; and provide feedback to the district to help focus and guide our improvement journey. A total of 104 interviews were conducted by Cognia. Dr. Julia Williams provided the following general findings about WCS:

- Dedicated, stable, high-functioning Board and committed district leadership have established trust in the community served, provided support, and voice across constituencies;
- Whole child at the center - focus on social-emotional wellbeing, MTSS, PBIS, multiple options, open doors, high expectations for staff and learners;
- Calibration, alignment and focus district's multiple improvement processes and initiatives to align with and monitor progress toward strategic systemic goals; and
- Focus on student achievement, standards alignment, articulation and bringing successful practices to scale.

Dr. Julia Williams will now submit a written report to Cognia within 10 business days and a final report in the workspace in about 30 business days.

Dr. Fitch thanked Dr. Julia Williams for her presentation and shared that the Board will look forward to the full report.

Under Long-Range Facilities Planning for Wilson County Schools, the Administration shared updates and projects for facilities planning. Dr. Mills asked the Board to provide direction related to upcoming projects and timelines; to prioritize projects and requests as a part of planning; and schedule next meetings.

Wilson County Commissioner Chris Hill addressed the Board during the Work Session. Mr. Hill was in attendance to educate himself on the Board of Education processes. Mr. Hill was not at the meeting on behalf of the County Commissioners but was available to answer questions if needed.

Dr. Mills shared the following information with the Board:

- Moving Forward
    - The Operations Research and Education Laboratory (ORED) study indicated that Winstead Elementary could be consolidated with Vinson-Bynum Elementary and a few planning areas could be assigned to Hearne Elementary.
    - Toisnot Middle can serve as the interim location for Frederick Douglass Elementary and future school construction. The Administration will need to reassign students and staff to Darden, Elm City and Forest Hills middle schools.
    - If the Board acted upon the school usage possibilities, Toisnot Middle and Winstead Elementary would be closed/subsumed.
    - The Board will need to decide on the timing of consolidation. Winstead Elementary and Toisnot Middle could be completed prior to the 2022-2023 school year. Consolidation at Toisnot Middle would alleviate staffing shortages and allow preparation for Frederick Douglass Elementary.
    - Based on the ORED report, these changes would not address all of the capacity and efficiency issues at the elementary level.

- Additional decisions are needed to address the Wilson County Board of Commissioners' support for constructing a new school.
  - The Board would need to consolidate another elementary school(s).
  - The Board would need to determine a location for the new school.
- The Administration will need direction and a timeline from the Board regarding next steps to address these issues.

Mr. Boykin made the motion, seconded by Ms. Boyette, that the Board direct the Administration to move forward with the consolidation of Winstead Elementary and Toisnot Middle schools in accordance with all applicable Board policies and North Carolina state law. Mr. Boykin made a friendly amendment to the motion. The motion now states, that the Board move forward with the consolidation of Winstead Elementary and Toisnot Middle with the appropriate elementary and middle schools as needed in accordance with all applicable Board polices and North Carolina state law. The motion passed 6:1, with Ms. Powell casting the dissenting vote.

- Priorities Already Set
  - Construction of a new Frederick Douglass Elementary
    - The Board will need to determine a date for selecting an architect for this project. Seven firms have submitted applications and will be reviewed prior to the Board process.
  - Renovations to Barnes Elementary and Lee Woodard Elementary
    - Questions from the County Commissioners about cost increases – process issue
  - Complete items from the field trip with the County Commissioners
    - Request for Qualifications (RFQs) will be presented at the April Board meeting for renovations of auditoriums at all three high schools; the addition of safety vestibules at Fike and Hunt high schools; and new science labs at all three high schools. Conversations will need to be conducted with the County Manager on the process for funding these projects.
    - The RFQ process will begin for the new track at Hunt High. This information was approved at the March Board meeting. The same scope of work as Beddingfield High track will be used, including a concession stand and outdoor athletic bathrooms.

During the Special Meeting, Ms. Boyette expressed concerns about the price increase for the renovations at Barnes Elementary and Lee Woodard Elementary. She shared that when she voted on the projects, she was not aware that the projects would increase from $2.6 million to an estimated $10 million. Ms. Boyette also shared that she was not aware that during Phase 2 of the project, the Administration would be moving students into mobile units.

Phase 1 of the project began in March at Barnes Elementary and in April at Lee Woodard Elementary. Phase 2, which is estimated to start January 2023, is still in the planning stages and will be presented to the Board at a future meeting. After discussion, Mr. Boykin asked if the Board could meet with the architectural firm to learn more about the renovations, which is Skinner Farlow Kirwan Architecture.

It was the Board's consensus to interview architectural firms to construct a new Frederick Douglass Elementary during a Special Meeting on April 27 at 1 p.m. The Board also requested the presence of Skinner Farlow Kirwan Architecture at this Special Meeting to discuss renovations at Barnes Elementary and Lee Woodard Elementary.

Dr. Fitch thanked the Administration for preparing for the meetings and facility needs. She also thanked the Commissioners for their willingness to provide the Board with new facilities.

There being no further business at 3:26 p.m., Mr. Breen made the motion, seconded by Mr. Mercer, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Christine L. Fitch

Dr. Christine L. Fitch, Chairman

L B Mills

Dr. Lane B. Mills, Secretary