MINUTES OF
THE WILSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
February 8, 2021

The Wilson County Board of Education held a Special Meeting on Monday, February 8, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. in the Administrative Offices, 113 N. Tarboro Street. The meeting was conducted virtually using the Zoom video conferencing platform. Chairman Dr. Christine Fitch called the meeting to order at 1:00 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

Dr. Fitch, Ms. Boyette, Mr. Boykin and Mr. Breen participated in the meeting at the Administrative Offices. The other Board members participated in the meeting offsite.

The meeting was televised on Spectrum and Greenlight Channel 22; and 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. Dr. Fitch announced that in keeping with Executive Order #180, attendees would wear face coverings for the duration of the Board meeting.

Others present or participating virtually were Associate Superintendent Dr. Cheryl Wilson, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Dr. Norris Parker, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services Dr. Ben Williams, Executive Director of Elementary Education Jennifer Lewis, Executive Director of Secondary Education David Lyndon, Executive Director of Federal Programs Robin May, Executive Director of Technology Matthew Mayo, Executive Director of Exceptional Children Melissa McFatter, Executive Director of Accountability and Testing Scott Sage, Director of Transportation Robert Harvey, Director of Maintenance Mark Letchworth, Director of Public Relations Amber Lynch, Administrative Assistant to the Associate Superintendent Maureen Hooper, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and Board Clerk Linda Horrison, as well as Board Attorney Katie Cornetto and *The Wilson Times* Reporter Drew Wilson.

After calling the meeting to order, Dr. Fitch asked for approval of the agenda. Ms. Powell made the motion, seconded by Mr. Mercer, that the agenda for the Special Meeting of the Wilson County Board of Education for Monday, February 8, 2021, be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

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

The purpose of the meeting was to revisit the 2nd Semester Transitional Plan and review 14 revised policies, 11 administrative regulations and the HB75 Part V – School Mental Health Support Personnel Report.

Under Chairman's Comments, Dr. Fitch shared that last week, the Governor and legislators called for schools to be reopened. Based on this decision and requests from others, the topic of reopening schools was added to the agenda for today's meeting that was originally scheduled for policy update reviews. At the January 19 Board meeting, the Board decided to reopen schools with a target date of March 22, 2021, with the option to revisit the issue. Dr. Fitch shared that parents, teachers and staff have contacted her about the decision to remain in remote learning. Some praised the decision while others were displeased. One main concern was the challenge of social distancing – especially on buses. Another concern is a lack of vaccinations for the teachers. She added that essential workers in the medical field have been vaccinated and some feel that teachers are essential workers, along with custodians, food service and the receptionist at the school entrance. However, these people are not in line to receive the vaccine yet. Even though face-to-face instruction is the best solution for our students, there are concerns that must be dealt with regarding our teachers and staff. The number of students infected may not be as great, but the Board must consider that many people are asymptomatic and are not showing signs of COVID-19. Persons are being infected without knowing how they came in contact with the virus. Dr. Fitch asked how can we assure our staff that all are well when they return? She added that this is the dilemma the Board is faced with and they must have a forthright discussion. Dr. Fitch also gave an update on the mass COVID-19 vaccination clinic that was held last month at Fike High School for citizens ages 65+ to receive the first dose of the vaccine. The second dose will be administered at Fike High School on February 10 during a drive-through event by appointments only. Another vaccination clinic will be held on February 17 in the cafeteria at Beddingfield High School for ages 65+ by appointment only. She ended her comments by sharing that there are different variants of the virus that spread more quickly and that there has also been discussion that we are not supposed to have Super Bowl parties but we are supposed to send kids back to school. She added that there are many unanswered questions and the Board needs to make sure to err on the side of caution.

Under Revisiting 2nd Semester Transitional Plan, at the January 19 meeting, the Board voted for traditional and early college teachers to return to schools on March 15 and students to return on March 22. Students in the adaptive curriculum would return to school on January 25 and transportation would be provided. Staff could report to school buildings during the extended remote learning. School Nutrition would continue to provide meals for students and families. Bus drivers would have an opportunity to work in various capacities within the schools. Daycare centers at Beddingfield and Hunt High Schools would continue to operate. On February 2, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt and State Board of Education Chair Eric Davis joined Governor Roy Cooper and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy Cohen for a press conference. They shared ongoing research that shows that with proper mitigation measures, in-person learning is safe. They also emphasized the critical importance of ensuring all students have an opportunity to learn in a classroom. A letter was sent to local Boards of Education and Superintendents encouraging in-person learning following all safety protocols outlined in the NC Strong Schools Toolkit. Based on this information, the Board is revisiting the transition to in-person learning for the second semester.

The Administration presented a Revisiting Transition to Face-to-Face (F2F) Learning Plan with details about students returning to school, staffing, transportation, athletics and extracurricular activities. The Revisiting Transition to Face-to-Face Learning Plan is

attached. The Board will need to decide on a plan for students transitioning to face-to-face learning for the second semester.

The Administration shared that at the January 19 Board meeting, the Board voted that when students returned to face-to-face instruction, they would return following this schedule: Elementary students would attend face-to-face instruction in school buildings four days a week; middle school and early college students would attend face-to-face instruction two days a week; and high school students one day a week. The students would be in remote learning the days they were not in school buildings. The Virtual Academy would continue to be an option for students in grades PreK-12 throughout the remainder of the school year.

After presenting the details of the plan, Dr. Mills shared several options for the Board to consider:

- Current Decision by the Board
    - Traditional and Early College – Teachers return on March 15 (end of the 3rd grading period) and students return on March 22 (Early Colleges are on Spring Break the week of March 8).
- Re-entry by Level
    - Elementary and Middle – Teachers return on February 15 and students return on February 22
    - High School – Teachers return on February 22 and students return on March 1
        - High school testing on February 23 (ACT) and February 25 (Pre-ACT)
        - Spring Break for the Early Colleges is scheduled for March 9-12
- Full Re-entry
    - All schools – Teachers return on February 15 and students return on February 22
        - During the week of February 22, only Monday and Friday high school students will be able to report for instruction due to testing of ACT and Pre-ACT.
        - Spring Break for the Early Colleges is scheduled for March 9-12

Mr. Breen shared that he prefers re-entry by level. He advised the Board that healthcare workers were at work for 10 months prior to the vaccine. Roughly only 75% of the healthcare workers have been vaccinated. He shared that he can relate to parent's concerns about remote learning because his son's grades were higher when attending face-to-face instruction and today, he had to pay for childcare to attend the Board meeting. He suggested elementary and middle school students return on February 22 and high schools on March 1. He also shared that there is no definite timeline that teachers would receive a vaccine by March 22, which is the date the Board previously approved for students to return.

Ms. Barnes shared that face-to-face instruction for elementary students is needed at this point. She added that the Board cannot control the vaccination schedule because the state mandates who receives the vaccine. She advised that she was recovering from COVID-19 and her second test came back positive, so she is not able to receive the vaccine even though she is in the category of 65 and older. She prefers the re-entry by level option.

Mr. Boykin shared that for the safety of students and staff, high schools should return after ACT testing since they will need the whole building. He also shared that he would like to see high school students walk across the stage for graduation this year.

Ms. Boyette shared that she agrees with re-entry by level. She added that the district did not want 50% of the students to fail a course during the first semester. She added that she agreed with high school students returning on March 1, but she would like for elementary students to return by February 15 and middle school students by February 22.

Mr. Mercer shared that he would feel more comfortable with the plan that the Board approved in January with students returning March 22. He added that the plan to return students and staff in March would hopefully allow everyone to be better protected and less staff and students would need to be quarantined. Mr. Mercer encouraged the Board to remain on the plan that was approved in January.

Ms. Powell thanked the teachers that have gone above and beyond the call of duty. She shared that teachers are working longer hours and on the weekends. She added that virtual learning is not easy and she understands that students need to be back in school. She advised that there are issues with transportation and double routes that would require students to be at bus stops early and return home late from school. She shared that teachers would be more comfortable returning after they receive their vaccinations. She agreed with the plan that the Board approved in January.

Mr. Mercer made the motion, seconded by Ms. Powell, that the Board maintain the decision to return on March 22. The motion failed 3:4, with Ms. Barnes, Ms. Boyette, Mr. Boykin and Mr. Breen casting the dissenting votes.

Mr. Breen made the motion, seconded by Ms. Boyette and Mr. Boykin, that the district re-enter by levels. For elementary and middle schools, teachers would return on February 15 and the students return on February 22; in the high schools, the teachers will return on February 22 and the students return on March 1; with scheduling as developed in the previous re-entry concept. The motion passed 4:3, with Mr. Mercer, Ms. Powell and Dr. Fitch casting the dissenting votes.

Dr. Fitch advised that students will return to school by levels. Elementary and middle school teachers will return on February 15 and students will return on February 22. High school teachers will return on February 22 and students will return on March 1.
Elementary school students will attend school in person four days a week and remain in remote learning one day a week, with thorough cleaning occurring on Wednesdays. Middle school students will attend school on an alternating schedule and be assigned to either the Green Group or the Blue Group. Middle school students will attend school in person two days a week and remain in remote learning three days a week, with thorough cleaning occurring on Wednesdays. High school students will attend school on an alternating schedule one day a week and remain in remote learning four days a week, with thorough cleaning occurring on Wednesdays. Early College students will attend school on an alternating schedule and be assigned to either the Green Group or the Blue Group. Early College students will attend school in person two days a week and remain in remote learning three days a week, with thorough cleaning occurring on Fridays.

At 2:48 p.m., it was the Board's consensus to take a recess. The meeting reconvened at 3:00 p.m.

Under Proposed Draft/Revised Policies and Administrative Regulations, the Board reviewed the revisions, which are necessary to align local Board policies with North Carolina General Statutes and North Carolina School Boards Association (NCSBA) policies. Ms. Cornetto provided legal guidance on the policies.

The Board reviewed and did not request any changes in the verbiage of the following revised policies, which will be presented at the next regular Board meeting as a second read:

- Revised Policy 1740/4010, *Student and Parent Grievance Procedure*
- Revised Policy 1742/5060, *Responding to Complaints*
- Revised Policy 1750/7220, *Grievance Procedure for Employees*
- Revised Policy 1760/7280, *Prohibition Against Retaliation*
- Revised Policy 2671, *Appointment of Wilson Community College Trustees*
- Revised Policy 3410, *Testing and Assessment Program*
- Revised Policy 3460, *Graduation Requirements*
- Revised Policy 3620, *Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations*
- Revised Policy 4001, *Equal Educational Opportunities*
- Revised Policy 4600, *Student Fees*
- Revised Policy 5070/7350, *Public Records – Retention, Release, and Disposition*
- Revised Policy 7335, *Employee Use of Social Media*
- Revised Policy 7410, *Teacher Contracts*
- Revised Policy 7445, *Student Teachers*

The following administrative regulations were shared with the Board:

- Administrative Regulation 3200-R, *Selection of Educational Resources*
- Administrative Regulation 3210-R, *Parental Inspection of and Objection to Educational Resources*
- Administrative Regulation 3460-R, *Graduation Requirements*
- Administrative Regulation 3460-F1, *Request for Alternative Diploma*
- Administrative Regulation 3460-F2, *Request for Early Graduation*
- Administrative Regulation 3515-R, *Religion in the Schools*
- Administrative Regulation 4001-R, *Section 504 Compliance*
- Administrative Regulation 4050-R, *Children of Military Families*
- Administrative Regulation 4240/7312-R, *Child Abuse, Human Trafficking, and Related Threats to Child Safety – Reporting, Investigating, and Training*
- Administrative Regulation 6220-R, *Accommodating Students with Dietary Needs*
- Administrative Regulation 6225-R, *Free and Reduced Price Meal Services*
- Administrative Regulation 7335-R, *Standards and Guidelines for Employee Use of Social Media*

Under Policies to Be Repealed, these policies are being repealed by the Law Offices of Schwartz and Shaw, PLLC, to comply with general statutes and align with the NCSBA and Wilson County Schools (WCS) policies. Upon approval by the Board, the following will be removed from the WCS Policy Manual:

- Policy 6500, *Due Process Procedures for Disciplinary Action Statement of Purpose*
- Policy 6520, *Criminal Prosecutions*
- Policy 6601, *Interrogation*
- Policy 6700, *Optional Student Programs*
- Policy 7031, *Supervision of Students*
- Policy 7130, *Duties of Principals in Transportation Program*
- Policy 8000, *Function of Administration*
- Policy 8020, *Protection of Administrators*
- Policy 8100, *Superintendent*
- Policy 8110, *Qualifications of Superintendent*
- Policy 8120, *Recruitment of Superintendent*
- Policy 8200, *Administrative Personnel*
- Policy 8252, *Orientation*
- Policy 8256, *Career Status*
- Policy 8300, *Responsibility for Compliance with Board Policy*
- Policy 8512, *School Sponsored Information Media*
- Policy 8514, *Students May Foster School - Community Relations*
- Policy 8520, *Staff Community Relations*
- Policy 8700, *Use of School Services Restricted*
- Policy 8710, *Alterations of Facilities or Equipment*
- Policy 8800, *Data Management*
- Policy 8801, *Administrative Records/Reports*

Ms. Boyette made the motion, seconded by Mr. Breen and Ms. Barnes, that the Board repeal the policies that are listed on the precis for Policies to Be Repealed and that have been outlined there. The motion passed unanimously.

Under HB75 Part V – School Mental Health Support Personnel Report, the Board received as information only the current status of HB75 per legislation. In order to be compliant, the Administration is required to make the Board aware of this information. A report was provided for psychologists, school counselors, nurses and social workers.

There being no further business at 3:39 p.m., Mr. Mercer made the motion, seconded by Mr. Breen and Ms. Barnes, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Christine L. Fitch

Dr. Christine L. Fitch, Chairman

Dr. Lane B. Mills, Secretary