

MINUTES  
ASHE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
September 9, 2019

The meeting was held as scheduled with all members present. Chairman Jones called the meeting to order, welcomed those in attendance and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

After reviewing the amended agenda, the agenda was approved by general consensus of the Board.

During open comments, Rebecca Williams from the Arts Council announced that in July 2010, the House of Representatives passed a resolution designating the second week of September as *Arts in Education Week*. This week, September 9-13, is designated to promote and showcase the immense role arts education has in producing engaged and successful college and career-ready students. The resolution states in part, "Arts education, comprising a rich array of disciplines including dance, theatre, music, media arts, literature, design and visual arts, are essential elements in a complete and balanced education for all students." Mrs. Williams then acknowledged all the art teachers in the school system.

A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mr. McClure gave unanimous approval to the minutes for the regular meeting of the Board on August 5, 2019.

A motion by Mrs. Eldreth and a second by the Vice Chairman gave unanimous approval to the request from Michael and Robyn Dean, who reside in Ashe County, to allow their son to attend school in Watauga County effective the 2019/20 school year.

A motion by Mr. McClure and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the request from Kaya Hutchinson, who resides in Ashe County, to allow her daughter to attend school in Watauga County effective the 2019/20 school year.

A motion by Mrs. Jones and a second by Mrs. Eldreth gave unanimous approval to the request from Diana Simons, who resides in Ashe County, to allow her sons to attend school in Alleghany County effective the 2019/20 school year.

A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the request from William Minor, who resides in Ashe County, to allow his children to attend school in Watauga County effective the 2019/20 school year.

A motion by Mrs. Eldreth and a second by Mr. McClure gave unanimous approval to the request from Ashe High JROTC for an overnight trip to The Lost Sea Caverns in Sweetwater, Tennessee, October 19-20, 2019.

A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mrs. Eldreth gave unanimous approval to the request from Ashe High Rho Kappa students for an overnight trip to historic Charleston, South Carolina either March 19-21, 2020 or March 27-29, 2020.

A motion by Mr. McClure and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the request from Ashe High School Bands for an overnight exploratory trip to New Orleans, Louisiana, April 13-16, 2020.

A motion by Mrs. Jones and a second by Vice Chairman Beckworth gave unanimous approval to the request from Blue Ridge 6<sup>th</sup> grade for an overnight trip to Washington, DC, April 6-9, 2020.

A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mrs. Eldreth gave unanimous approval to the request from Mountain View 6<sup>th</sup> grade for an overnight trip to Washington, DC, April 22-25, 2020.

A motion by Mr. McClure and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the request from Westwood 6<sup>th</sup> grade for an overnight trip to Washington, DC, April 28-May 1, 2020.

A motion by Mrs. Eldreth and a second by Mr. McClure gave unanimous approval to the request from Ashe Middle 8<sup>th</sup> grade for an overnight trip to the Outer Banks, April 21-24, 2020 or April 28-May 1, 2020.

A motion by Mrs. Jones and a second by the Vice Chairman gave unanimous approval to the request from Lisa Sibaja, EL teacher at Mountain View, to attend an out-of-state conference sponsored by the Department of Public Instruction in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, November 6-8, 2019.

A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the Local Articulation Agreement between Ashe County Schools and Wilkes Community College. A copy of the agreement is on file at Central Support Services, Ashe County High School and Wilkes Community College.

A motion by Mr. McClure and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the LEA Based Calendar Waiver Request for Weather Related Causes for School Year 2020/2021 as presented by the Superintendent. The waiver request is due to the Department of Public Instruction September 13, 2019.

A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mr. McClure gave unanimous approval to the addition of Ashe County Early College to Policy 4326 *Student Drug Testing* as presented by the Superintendent. Adding the additional school did not change the intent of the policy.

A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the following Proclamation of September as Attendance Awareness Month as presented by the Superintendent.

#### **FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

#### **Proclamation of September as Attendance Awareness Month**

**WHEREAS** regular attendance is essential to grade-level reading, academic achievement and graduation,

**WHEREAS** early chronic absence – missing 10 percent or more of school days for any reason including excused and unexcused absences, or just two or three days a month – is associated with lower academic achievement, truancy in middle school, and school dropout,

**WHEREAS** regular attendance puts children on track for becoming proficient readers by the end of third grade, decreases their likelihood of being retained, and supports the development of social-emotional skills needed to persist in school,

**WHEREAS** all students – even those who attend regularly – are affected by chronic absence because teachers must spend time reviewing for students who missed lessons,

**WHEREAS** chronic absence is an early warning indicator that can reveal that a student needs help long before test scores or grades do,

**WHEREAS** chronic absence exacerbates the achievement gap between students in low-income communities, many of whom are students of color, and their peers. Students from low-income communities are more likely face systemic barriers to getting to school and more likely to be impacted academically by missing school,

**WHEREAS** attendance is actionable and districts across the country are increasing attendance by recognizing good and improved attendance, engaging students and families, monitoring attendance data and practice, providing personalized early outreach as needed, and developing systemic responses to attendance barriers,

**WHEREAS** attendance is now a required reporting metric under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act and an area of focus for both the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the North Carolina Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative,

**WHEREAS** improving attendance takes commitment, collaboration and tailored approaches to the challenges and strengths in each community,

**WHEREAS** regular attendance can be significantly increased when schools, families and communities work together to monitor and promote regular attendance and address barriers that keep children from getting to school,

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that Ashe County Schools will stand with the nation in recognizing September as “Attendance Awareness Month.” We hereby commit to focusing on reducing chronic absenteeism to give all children an equitable opportunity to learn, grow and thrive academically, emotional and socially.

A motion by Mr. McClure and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the following personnel recommendations as presented by Human Resources Director Roy Putman.

## **CERTIFIED**

### **Administration**

- Employment of Barry West as assistant principal at Blue Ridge effective on or about September 23, 2019 (prior approval)

### **Teachers**

- Employment of Melodie Salley as music teacher at Ashe Middle effective August 12, 2019 (prior approval)
- Promotion of Crystal Bennett from teacher assistant for exceptional children at Ashe High to teacher for exceptional children at Ashe High pending licensure approval (prior approval)

### **Employee Leaves**

- Request from Ethel Hunter, English teacher at Ashe High, for a medical leave of absence beginning on September 6, 2019 and ending on September 20, 2019
- Request from Brittany Perry, social worker for Ashe County Schools, for a parental leave of absence beginning on or about January 2, 2020 and ending on or about March 31, 2020

### **Substitute Teachers**

- Addition of Hilda Baker, David Davis, Jessica Fender, Cynthia Fowler, Katelan Graybeal, Emily King, Robyn Krider, Diane Littlefield, Caitlin Amburgey, Ana Ruiz and Crystalena Scott to the approved substitute list (prior approval)

### **Prior approval to employ the following vacant positions**

- Substitute teachers

### **CLASSIFIED**

#### **Bus Drivers**

- Reassignment of Sharon Price from substitute bus driver to regular route bus driver (full-time, 30 hours per week) at Ashe Middle effective August 15, 2019 (prior approval)
- Resignation of Ann Clark from part-time regular route bus driver at Blue Ridge effective end-of-day August 30, 2019

#### **Bus Driver Substitutes**

- Addition of James Osborne and Ann Clark to the approved substitute bus driver list (prior approval)

#### **Cafeteria Manager**

- Resignation of Darlene Wetmore as cafeteria manager at Ashe High effective December 20, 2019

#### **Cafeteria Assistants**

- Resignation of Ruth Blair, cafeteria assistant (full-time) at Westwood, effective August 8, 2019
- Transfer of Penny Roten from full-time cafeteria assistant at Ashe High to full-time cafeteria assistant at Westwood effective August 13, 2019
- Transfer of Barbara Kearley from part-time cafeteria assistant at Westwood to part-time cafeteria assistant at Mountain View effective August 13, 2019
- Reassignment of Dreama Blevins from substitute cafeteria assistant to part-time cafeteria assistant at Mountain View effective August 13, 2019
- Reassignment of Heather Cox from substitute/interim cafeteria assistant at Mountain View to full-time cafeteria assistant at Mountain View effective August 13, 2019
- Employment of Jacqueline Tyler as interim cafeteria assistant, part-time (5 hours/day), at Westwood effective September 3, 2019
- Employment of Jessica Howard as cafeteria assistant, part-time (4 hours/day), at Ashe High effective September 10, 2019

#### **Custodian**

- Employment of Billy Ham as 2<sup>nd</sup> shift custodian, 10-month, full-time, 35 hours per week at Ashe High effective August 19, 2019
- Reassignment of James Yates from custodian, 2<sup>nd</sup> shift, 10-month, 35 hours per week at Ashe High to custodian, 2<sup>nd</sup> shift, 11-month, 40 hours per week, at Ashe High effective August 12, 2019

### **Office Support**

- Employment of Kahryn Little as accounting specialist at Central Support Services effective September 3, 2019 (prior approval)

### **Teacher Assistant**

- Transfer of Eddie Taylor from bus driver at Ashe Middle to teacher assistant for in-school suspension at Ashe High effective August 12, 2019 (prior approval)

### **EL Tutor**

- Reassignment of Michele Lemly from substitute teacher to English language tutor (part-time, 16 hours per week) at Mountain View effective August 22, 2019

### **Coaches**

- Addition of Madi Roberts as head JV basketball cheerleading coach at Ashe High effective 2019/20 sports season (prior approval—paid position)
- Addition of Bill Kumerow as head JV baseball coach at Ashe High effective the 2019/20 sports season (prior approval—paid position—Mr. Kumerow was on the August agenda as a volunteer.)

### **Prior approval to employ the following vacant positions**

- Head JV Cheer coach for basketball (paid)
- Head swimming coach (paid)
- Head JV baseball coach (paid)
- Cafeteria assistant, part-time, 4 hours per day, at Ashe High
- Cafeteria assistant, part-time, interim 5 hours per day, at Westwood
- Substitute bus drivers
- Substitute cafeteria assistants

An update on the Communities in Schools (CIS) program in Northwest North Carolina was heard by the Board. The Middle School Site Coordinator Fawn Roark and Executive Director Glendora Yarbrough talked about the impact the program has made on middle school students in recent years. Ms. Roark reported that the program touched 475 students last year. The CIS focus is on student attendance, behavior and academics, and as Site Coordinator, she has made 8,397 student contacts. Tutoring mentors provided over 4,000 minutes in services last year. The program is viewed as a success at the middle school, and efforts are underway to secure additional funding to implement the program in more schools.

Curriculum Director Julie Taylor updated the Board on the 2019/20 Curriculum Initiatives and programs for Ashe County Schools. Many of the initiatives are a continuation from the prior three years, with an emphasis on writing and math in 2019/20. Vice Chairman Beckworth had questions regarding the iStation program mandated by the State in grades K-3 and the class sizes at the high school. Results surrounding iStation is on a wait and see basis, and the class sizes in English II (from 19-25) are a result of the scheduling process.

Endowment Liaison Marcia Elledge reported that the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament netted \$10,370.

Transportation Director Shea Coldiron gave an update on the changes put in place at the beginning of the year to help shorten bus ride times for students, highlighting the details of each. Mrs. Eldreth stated that the ride times are still not acceptable. Mr. Coldiron reported that the cost of adding one bus with an

average route of 75 miles would cost \$38,800.35 and that the impact on current drivers in adding a bus would be loss in time and possibly benefits. Mr. Coldiron did report that some of the changes put in place at the beginning of the year will not work in inclement weather. Mr. McClure requested that Mr. Coldiron continue exploring ways to shorten ride times.

Athletic Director David Koontz and Principal Amanda Hipp gave an update on the policy for home-schooled students participating in high school athletics. Mr. Koontz has contacted athletic directors in our region and conference—most are following the policy drafted by the NC High School Athletic Association and making changes on an “as need” basis. Homeschoolers must register for two classes, sign an intent form and follow the high school’s enrollment and attendance procedures in order to participate in sports. There has not been much interest at this point. Administrators plan to wait and see what happens this year before finalizing a policy for Ashe County Schools.

The Board Chairman asked the Superintendent to investigate the feasibility of having a policy on remote participation in Board meetings. The Superintendent found Policy 2302 from another LEA pertaining to this issue. Technology Director Amy Walker felt that remote access was feasible from a technology standpoint. The Board will continue to research.

The Superintendent reported that House Bill 362 was signed into law in July 2019 keeping the 15-point school performance grading scale rather than transitioning to the proposed 10-point grading scale. School achievement will continue to count for 80 percent and school growth for 20 percent of the total sum. Changes in the Math EOC, EOG and Extend 1 Achievement levels became effective in August 2019—Federal levels are now Level 5, Level 4, Level 3 and Not Proficient—State levels are Level 4, Level 3 and Not Proficient.

The Superintendent and Technology Director Amy Walker discussed the need for implementing a confidentiality agreement between parties who use student data and the Ashe County Board of Education to protect the confidentiality of students. The Board instructed the parties to move forward in developing an agreement.

The Superintendent gave an update on the School Start and End Dates Report as required by Senate Bill 343 and approved by the State Board of Education. School calendar legislation outlines the parameters surrounding school start and end times, including those districts who have a waiver for an earlier start time due to inclement weather. Because there is no definition of a “year-round school,” several districts have adopted calendars that begin prior to the calendar mandate. After reviewing the LEAs’ submissions of school start and end dates, the Department of Public Instruction found that 13 LEAs did not have the statutory authority to start earlier than the date set in law. Ashe County is one of the 13 LEAs due to the fact that the school calendar was aligned with the start of the community college. Ashe County Schools began school for students on Thursday, August 15, rather than Monday, August 19, as approved in the waiver. The State Board of Education sent the report to the State Legislature for review.

The Superintendent offered comments on the following.

- Extended kudos to Ashe County High administration, teachers and staff and local law enforcement regarding the August 29, 2019 incident—formation of special committee to reflect on incident
- Numbers for each Open House at beginning of year were phenomenal
- Testing and Accountability—math scores have been distributed to students—school report card grades/school performance still embargoed—press release for the 2018/19 scores will be soon

- Reminded Board that the bid openings for site work at the new middle school is scheduled for Thursday, September 12, at 3:00 pm in the annex
- Joint meeting with Commissioners on Tuesday, September 17, at 10:00 am in the annex—this meeting was initiated by the Commissioners

The following announcements and items of information were shared with the Board.

- Thursday, September 12—Bid openings for site construction for the middle school project, 3:00 pm, in annex
- Tuesday, September 17—meeting with County Commissioners regarding middle school project, 10:00 am, in annex
- Wednesday, September 25—Region 7 2019 District NCSBA meeting, Hickory City High School, 4:00-8:00 pm—leave CSS at 2:00 pm
- The next regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for Monday, October 7, 2019, beginning at 7:00 pm in the annex.
- National School Lunch Week—October 14-18, 2019
- Monday, October 21—EC Stakeholders Meeting—6:00-7:00 pm @ Ashe Early Learning Center
- Thursday, October 24—Early release for students—Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Friday, October 25—Required teacher workday
- October 2019—National Principals Month
- American Education Week—November 18-22, 2019

At 9:00 pm, the Board took a short recess prior to going into closed session for the purpose of considering a personnel action that involves an officer or employee of this Board [N.C. General Statute §143.318.11(a)(6)] and real estate [N.C. General Statute §143.318.11(a)(5)]. The Board went into closed session at 9:10 pm and returned to regular session at 10:52 pm.

Upon return to regular session, a motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mrs. Eldreth gave unanimous approval to David Koontz serving as the interim swim coach for this school year.

There being no further business, the Chairman immediately declared the meeting adjourned at 10:52 pm.