

BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING  
 4:00 p.m. – Call to Order – Executive Conference Room  
 (Work Session Updates / Closed Session)  
**Thursday, September 2, 2021**  
 5:30 p.m. – Minitorium  
 Broadcast live on BCS Communications YouTube Account

**MINUTES**

**BE IT REMEMBERED:** That the Buncombe County Board of Education met in a regular session on September 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in the Minitorium located at 175 Bingham Road, Asheville, North Carolina and streamed live on YouTube, when the following business was transacted.

The following Board members were present:

Ann Franklin, Madam Chair	Pat Bryant, Member
Peggy Buchanan, Member	Amanda Simpkins, Member
Cindy McMahon, Vice-Chair	Max Queen, Member
Amy Churchill, Member	

Staff present: Dr. Tony Baldwin, Superintendent; Susanne Swanger, Associate Superintendent; Joseph Hough, Assistant Superintendent; Jennifer Reed, Director of Elementary and Intermediate Education; Tonya Robinson, Director of Secondary Education; Barry Pace, Director of Technology; Robert Frisby, Assistant Director of Technology; Stacia Harris, Director of Communications; Ben Rickert, Assistant Director of Communications; Tim Reaves, Communications Specialist; Leslie Averill and Joshua Ponder, Technology Support Specialists; Tina Thorpe, Chief Finance Officer; Tim Fierle, Director of Facilities; Dean Shatley, Attorney and Kim Matthews, Executive Administrative Assistant

**MOTION TO CLOSED SESSION**

Mr. Bryant made a motion to enter into closed session at 4:25 p.m. and Ms. Churchill seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

The Madam Chair will entertain a motion for the Board of Education 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 and confidential personnel information pursuant to G.S. 115C-319-321;
- Under subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged and confidential student information pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 1232g (FERPA);
- Under subsection (a)(3) to discuss matters protected by the attorney-client privilege.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 5:15 p.m. Mr. Bryant made a motion to adjourn the closed session and Ms. McMahon seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

**WORK SESSION UPDATES**

Dr. Baldwin reviewed last year's testing scores with the Board. Results seen across the state show how important in-person learning is. Mr. Earwood will present the district results at the October board meeting. Dr. Baldwin asked Mr. Shatley if the Board needed to adopt a formal written policy regarding the decision of SB 654. Mr. Shatley stated that the Board essentially has done that at the August 13, 2021 meeting and that nothing further is required.

**CALL TO ORDER**

**PRESENTATION OF COLORS / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / NORTH BUNCOMBE HIGH SCHOOL**

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Ms. Franklin stated that due to the Governor signing into law Senate Bill 654 on Monday, the Board will need to add item, Local Face Covering Policies, to the action agenda. There is also an addendum to the Personnel Report to include on the Consent Agenda. Ms. Franklin asked if someone would make a motion to amend and approve the agenda to include these items. Ms. Churchill moved to amend the agenda as above and Mr. Bryant seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS**

- Dr. Baldwin noted that today was the ninth day of the new school year and since day one, August 23<sup>rd</sup> he has been able to visit all forty-four schools. He was pleased to see quality in-person instruction taking place inside classrooms across the entire district! Students and staff have been focused and engaged. Dr. Baldwin also said that he was extremely proud of our students and staff regarding their dedication in following COVID protocols centered around the 3 W's –

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washing hands, waiting to allow spacing and wearing face coverings. Dr. Baldwin reminded all that the use of face coverings not only mitigates the transmission of COVID, but it also impacts the number of students without COVID symptoms who are quarantined for a period of time. In these cases, they are identified as a close contact to a fellow student who has tested positive for COVID. Our principals and staff, especially in elementary schools, monitor how they schedule classes during mealtimes and outdoor recess periods. During these times, face coverings are down and six foot spacing becomes critical. Likewise, the potential is higher for one positive student case to exclude a large number of students who are placed in quarantine.

- Dr. Baldwin stated that while it has not been unusual for our school system to have positive starts in past school years, seeing so many of our classrooms in this first week resemble more like a day one hundred than day one of a school year, makes this start extra special - especially since much of the 20-21 previous year was so disrupted with multiple transitions between all-remote and hybrid instruction! From day one and from Kindergarten through senior high school classrooms, academic recovery is a primary focus. Again, Dr. Baldwin thanked the classroom teachers, support staff (school and central office based) and administrators to make the start of the 2021-2022 school year successful. If there was one common theme he had heard throughout the district, it was how happy our teachers were to have students back in their classroom and likewise, how happy our students were to be back as well!
- Dr. Baldwin said that he would be sharing a few selected power-point slides with the Board later in the agenda from a zoom session held for school superintendents this past Tuesday that was hosted by the State's Department of Health and Human Services. A considerable amount of information was shared by the public health leadership including first and foremost that we are definitely in a COVID surge with the Delta variant that represents 98% of total COVID cases and has proven to be highly transmissible. In addition, new case rates across the state are increasing for all age groups. While vaccinated individuals are not exempt from catching COVID, the state data shows that unvaccinated individuals are four times more likely to get COVID. An update regarding face covering policies in school systems across the state was also given. The current number provided is 106 out of 115 systems now have mask requirements.
- The Return to Learn landing page has been updated with important health and safety protocol information. Go to the [buncombeschools.org](http://buncombeschools.org) website and link on to visit the Return to Learn section to see contact tracing protocols, safe school guidance, and more. Additionally, beginning next Thursday, each school will maintain its own COVID dashboard by posting the number of new COVID cases to its website each week. Principals will send staff and families more information soon. In the meantime, Principals have continued their existing notification protocol by sending an "all call" to staff and families to report any new covid cases associated with school activities. As always, any student or staff named a close contact in an investigation receives specific guidance and next steps.

## GOOD NEWS

- 2022 Teacher of the Year

Stacia Harris, Communications Director, thanked the Teacher of the Year committee for their hard work during the selection process and congratulated all forty-four Teacher of the Year recipients. She then introduced Jason Rhodes, the 2021 BCS Teacher of the Year winner. Mr. Rhodes described the selection process and expressed his admiration and thanks for all that they accomplished to select the seven BCS district winners. Mr. Rhodes then introduced the following district winners:

At-Large District, Arami Holloway Moore, Community High School  
Enka District, Katelyn Braschler, Pisgah Elementary School  
Erwin District, Jordan Braschler, Erwin Middle School  
North Buncombe District, Jennifer Shelley, Weaverville Primary School  
Owen District, William Honey, W.D. Williams Elementary School  
Reynolds District, Maggie Harvin, Fairview Elementary School  
Roberson District, Valley Springs Middle School, Richard Rookey

The Teacher of the Year video highlighting the district winners was then shown.

Dr. Baldwin then announced the 2022 BCS District Teacher of the Year, William Honey of W.D. Williams Elementary School. Ms. Christy Cheek, Executive Director of the BCS Foundation then presented Mr. Honey with gifts for himself and his classroom.

## CURRICULUM FEATURE

- 2021 Summer Academy

Ms. Reed, Director of Elementary and Intermediate Education and Ms. Robinson, Director of Secondary Education presented the Board with information on the 2021 Summer Academy that was conducted in our schools. The information included the state legislation requiring summer schools that gave specific instruction as to funding and expenditures, transportation, in-person learning, academic hours, curriculum offerings and staffing requirements. They also shared the school sites used and the number of students in

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attendance. The programming structure for both K-8 and 9-12 was highlighted as well. Staff have also been involved in reviewing the program and begin to plan for the 2022 summer school session.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

The following spoke against students wearing masks in schools:

Graham Harrison, student at Owen Middle School  
 Barbara Harrison, parent of an Owen Middle School student  
 Maddie Zusack, parent of a Reynolds district student  
 Darren Zusack, parent of a Reynolds district student  
 Paula Akbar, resident of west Asheville  
 Jay Pfeil, Buncombe County resident

The following spoke against students wearing masks and against vaccine mandates:

Steve Parkin, Buncombe County resident  
 Logan Cotti, resident of Madison County  
 Ethan Stevenson, resident of Transylvania County  
 Susan Holliday, resident of Buncombe County

Greg Parks, from the Erwin District stated that he feels the board has not done their job and parents have not been given the chance to give their opinion on topics that effect their children.

Don Yelton, a Buncombe County resident spoke about the population that has been infected with and died from Covid that live within Buncombe County.

Reverend Sarah Wilcox, a parent of children in the Reynolds district spoke to the rising number of pediatric Covid cases and supports mask requirements and vaccinations of those eligible.

Maureen McDonnell, a grandparent of BCS students advocated for teaching children on how to be healthier. She stated that children aren't dying of Covid unless there is another underlying condition, she also stated to being against testing, mandatory vaccines and masking children.

Amy Gordon referenced the County Commissioner's meeting and Stacie Saunders presentation, stating that the statistics provided were incorrect.

Martha Huber a resident of the Owen district stated that she feels that Covid is a hoax.

Tamara Parker, a Buncombe County resident, expressed her concern over the board's raises, expenditure of Covid relief funds, and against the use of mandatory masks.

Josh Sherry, a parent of a Valley Springs Middle School parent expressed concern over not receiving information quick enough when a positive case is in the school.

**ACTION AGENDA**

- Woodfin Elementary School: Easements for Sewer Line Replacement

Mr. Bryant made a motion to authorize the Board Chair and Superintendent to execute a temporary construction easement and permanent maintenance easement on the Woodfin Elementary School campus to MSD for replacement of sewer lines and Ms. Buchanan seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

- Sole Source Vendor Approval: Savvas Learning Company

Ms. Churchill made a motion to approve the purchase of products and services from Savvas Learning Company as a sole source provider for the Investigations 2017 Student Edition Subscription and Digital Courseware product and Ms. Simpkins seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

- **POLICY FOR APPROVAL** – Waive First Reading: Adoption of Policy  
 Policy 8305R – Federal Grant Administration Procurement Procedures

Mr. Queen made a motion to waive the first reading of Policy 8305R and adopt policy and Ms. McMahon seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

- Consideration of BCS' Return to Learn Plans – Local Face Covering Policies Per Senate Bill 654 (added to the agenda)

Dr. Baldwin presented information from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services on the following metrics: daily cases by date reported; positive tests as a percent of total tests; daily number of people currently hospitalized; and what percentage of ED visits this season are for Covid-like illness compared to previous seasons. He also gave them information on the case rate increases by age groups, pediatric case rates and pediatric hospitalizations. Dr. Baldwin also reviewed the change in operations decision that the Board adopted at the August 13, 2021 meeting. Dr. Baldwin also compared the percent positivity rate for the state and county with those at the last meeting showing an increase in both. He also shared the CDC's color-coded map on the level of community transmission showing that Buncombe County and the state are still at high levels of transmission. Next, Dr. Baldwin reviewed the positive Covid case numbers for both staff and students with the Board. Information on Senate Bill 654 was also given to the Board that requires local school boards to vote at least monthly on whether face covering policies should be modified. In conclusion, Dr. Baldwin recommended that the Board maintain its current mask requirement for students, staff and visitors in BCS facilities.

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Ms. McMahon made a motion to continue the face covering requirement for all students, staff and visitors inside of all Buncombe County Schools' buildings and Ms. Churchill seconded the motion.

Mr. Bryant asked the attorney that if the metrics were to get better before the next regular meeting, would the Board be able to meet and vote to modify the face covering policy. Mr. Shatley said that the Board could do so, that the law only says it has to be voted on at least once a month.

Ms. Franklin called for the vote and the motion passed unanimously.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

- Minutes: August 5, 2021 – Special Called Meeting Open Session
- Minutes: August 5, 2021 – Regular Meeting Open Session
- Minutes: August 13, 2021 – Special Called Meeting Open Session
- Personnel Report with Addendum (added to the agenda)
- Approval of Board Member Training Credits
- Advisory Council Members for 2021-2022
- **POLICIES FOR SECOND READING**
  - Policy 1510/4200/7270 – School Safety
  - Policy 2310 Public Participation at Board Meetings
  - Policy 3230/7330 – Copyright Compliance
  - Policy 4270/6145 – Concussion and Head Injury
  - Policy 5000 – Schools and the Community
  - Policy 9020 – Facility Design

Mr. Queen made a motion to approve the items on the Consent Agenda including the Addendum to the Personnel Report and Ms. Buchanan seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

## **INFORMATION AGENDA**

- **POLICIES FOR FIRST READING**
  - Policy 6320 – Use of Student Transportation Services
  - Policy 7232- Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace
  - Policy 7310/4040 – Staff-Student Relations
  - Policy 7510 – Leave

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS / FUTURE MEETINGS**

- The next Board of Education Regular Meeting will be held on October 7, 2021, with Work Session Updates, and Closed Session beginning at 4:00 p.m. in the Executive Conference Room and the Open Session beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the Minitorium at 175 Bingham Road, Asheville, NC 28806.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. McMahon made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m. and Ms. Simpkins seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

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Tony Baldwin, Superintendent &  
Ex Officio Secretary

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Ann B. Franklin, Madam Chair

Minutes for Approval: October 7, 2021  
klm