

SEE CHANGES HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW – MADE AT 10/26/09 BOARD MEETING

**ALLENDALE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES – REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING**

**MONDAY – SEPTEMBER 28, 2009 – 6:00 P.M.
ALLENDALE-FAIRFAX HIGH SCHOOL – MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM**

The Allendale County Schools Board of Trustees Regular Monthly Meeting was held on **Monday, September 28, 2009**. At 6:00 p.m. the Board went into Executive Session to discuss Personnel. The Meeting was held at Allendale-Fairfax High School in the Multi-Purpose Room. The news media was notified and present.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charlie Cave, Vice Chair
Terry Hall
Cheryl Mole, Secretary
Willie Priester, Chair
Alexis Zeidan

FROM THE DISTRICT OFFICE: Dr. Ora L. Watson, Superintendent
Meredith Cooler, Assistant to Supt. Education
Charles Harney, Assistant to Supt. Operations
Kedra Rivers, Personnel Director
Kevin Robin, Interim Finance Director
Patricia W. Pringle, Recorder

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Priester called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

INVOCATION: The invocation was given by Mr. Cave.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Mr. Hall moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Ms Zeidan seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Cave moved to approve the corrected Minutes of the July 27, 2009 Regular Monthly Meeting and the Minutes of the August 24, 2009 Regular Monthly Meeting. Mr. Hall seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Priester asked those submitting Public Comments sheets to keep the comments to 3 minutes and to refrain from calling persons names particularly since this is a public forum.

Ms. Kiwania McKethan said from a parent perspective her daughter and 19 other students graduated from the nursing class in 2009. These students have not been given an opportunity to take their certification. They spent 2 years in a nursing class, passed but have not been given the opportunity to take the nursing test. As a parent she needs to know why. What was the oversight? Who was in charge of this area? The teacher was sick at this time but this is still not an excuse. Her daughter completed her clinical at the nursing home and was offered a job on the spot, contingent upon her completing her test. No job, no test.

Dr. Watson said this is the first she has heard of this and there is no excuse for this to have happened. The CATE coordinator was not doing her job long before the end of the school year. This might have been one of the issues. Ms. Maxwell is the teacher of record. She will check and get Ms. McKethan an answer tomorrow. If there is any way the District can rectify this – the District will. Ms. Zeidan asked what is the time limit after the class that students can take the test. Ms. McKethan said under instruction about 6 months – but they are not under instruction at this time. Dr. Watson said she will check on this and find out what the rules are on this. Mr. Alridge the Principal from the high school is present, she is sure he will get on this. She will rectify the situation.

Ms. Adell Love expressed issues about her contract. The first contract she was given she was the benefits person. Due to an unknown mistake that she was told she made she was moved on July 27th to the 301 Building. Ms. Pringle called her because Dr. Watson wanted her to come over and show Ms. Rivers how to do the benefits. When she got there the bills were not paid for two months, she showed Ms. Rivers how to do this and she caught up the work at the District Office. She has been communicating back and forth with Ms. Rivers to get everything clear. About a week ago she received a letter stating her salary was cut from \$18 to \$13 an hour. Then the courier brought her a contract – the contract said she should sign it by Sept. 23rd. She called Ms. Pringle on Monday and said she needed to talk with the Board to see what was going on. If they did not honor one contract how are they going to honor another? She is not being treated fair and is being pushed around. If she is not good enough for the position then she should not be asked to come and help with it. Ms. Love said she has worked for the District over 25 years and never made any mistakes. Anybody makes one mistake and they are pushed aside like an old broom thrown in the closet – this is not fair. Some one needs to have some consideration for her position. She is at the retirement age and with her salary being cut her retirement is going down real low. Take into consideration the good she has done for the community. She is depending on the Board to do the right thing. Ms. Mole said she had one question for Ms. Love – even though you have been reassigned you are still being asked to do things as benefits administrator. Ms. Love said yes she told Ms. Rivers how to do everything that she could. She feels like she is nobody and being insulted.

Dr. Watson asked Ms. Love how often have she been asked to help Ms. Rivers. Ms. Love said she asked her only one time.

Ms. Kimberly Dunbar said it has come to her attention that 3 year olds at Little New Steps will not be able to ride the regular school bus as has been done in the past. Her daughter is supposed to start Little New Steps next month and she wants to make sure she has the correct understanding. Dr. Watson asked Ms. Youmans if all the children ride the school bus. Ms. Youmans said all 2 and 3 year old ride the Little New Steps bus. Ms. Dunbar lives in the Martin area this is why she is making the statement – to see if her daughter can ride the regular school bus with her son and daughter, because it stops there already. Little New Steps bus can go to Martin and pick up the baby up. Dr. Watson said there has never been any discussion about children going to Little New Steps riding the bus. Ms. Dunbar said she was talking about the regular school bus. Dr. Watson said she will have to ask the State about the regular school bus. Ms. Dunbar said as a 3 year old her other daughter rode the regular school bus with her cousin. Dr. Watson said the child will get to Little New Steps but she will have to check about the rules and liability on students riding the regular school bus who are not enrolled in the as regular students in the District. Little New Steps is our program, it is a childcare center. Ms. Dunbar said she wants the child to ride the regular school bus if possible. Dr. Watson said the District will get the child to school, but it may not be possible on the regular school bus. She will check the liability, but it does not mean the District has not had liability in the past.

Students Corey Robinson and Saleh Zeidan said they are representing the AFHS Debate Team. They are having problems getting to trips, meets and debate materials. They do not have anyone over the Debate Team and asked about a budget to purchase these items. Saleh Zeidan asked about a teacher sponsor – right now none of the teachers feel they should sponsor them, which hurts them as an organization. Dr. Watson asked if they talked with the principal before today. The students said they had not talked with the principal about a sponsorship. Dr. Watson said the Debate Team is an important part of the program at the school – they learn great skills. They will do everything they can to get a sponsor. She spoke with the principal about this today and the principal was not aware of this before today. Saleh asked if they could get a parent to come in and be a sponsor because other schools are doing this. Dr. Watson said she will check on this – the next debate tournament is Saturday coming. The students registered themselves for the last debate event.

Ms. Diane Johnson Pratt said she moved here 2 years ago. She had two children in school here – but now only has one. At AFMS her son has been harassed since he has been here. She had to move him to Jacksonville. She talked with the principal about this and the District Office to try and move him to another district. But she was just given the runaround. Her son was being bullied the whole time he was here. Her son was an A, B student – they moved here because

their father died – and she expected them to do bad. But they did not. Then he started coming home with an attitude because the children were harassing him. It got to the point where her son could not take it anymore. She was given directions on taking her son to Hampton 2 – she knows the District can help get your child in another school district. Dr. Watson said Ms. Pratt may have been one of the parents she talked with. We cannot just transfer a child to a district – must show guardianship – parents must transfer the child. Any information Ms. Pratt got on transferring her child was not a run-around. It was the kind of information you had to have in order to do this. Ms. Pratt said other students had been harassed – the school should do something about this – especially at the middle school. Chairman Priester asked Ms. Pratt if she made everyone aware that her child was being harassed. Ms. Pratt said she told the previous principal and current principal. Her 14 year old wanted to quit school he could not take the harassing anymore. The child is Trevon Pratt who is now in Jacksonville.

Dr. Watson said bullying is something they do not want in the schools. The District has children going to hearings, the alternative school for inappropriate behavior. Kids should not have to suffer in an unsafe environment. She has not heard bullying being a problem at the middle school. Ms. Pratt said she would like something to be done in the schools about harassment.

Mr. Mark Lott said he volunteers at most of the schools. He found out about the students who got promoted and is proud of them. He has gotten several phone calls about gangs and bullying – it does exist and the students who it is affecting they are afraid. He has been in the schools and seen the gang signals, graffiti and items in the pockets. Students fear getting beaten up and this is why you don't hear a lot about it. Dr. Watson said they have had fewer fights on campus this year than in any other school year. Some of the activities may not be taking place on school campus. The District does take bullying, harassing and fighting serious. The District has implemented PBIS rewarding good behavior. There is also a program that takes over-aged children out of the middle school, because these students cause problems. The Alternative School is for students who display disruptive, unsafe behavior. We have gone to great lengths to make sure this school is at the top of the line, the principal is strong and a strong curriculum is in place. One of the things the District is trying to do is change the whole culture of behavior, but it will take the community to help with this. Mr. Lott talked about the gang task force and talked about the importance of the community and the schools working together.

Ms. Lee Harley-Fitts said she wanted to share her concern about Little New Steps from the perspective of Board of Directors for First Step. The State Office expressed concerns – know about funding concerns – several young ladies have babies and we have no place to put them. Little New Steps in Columbia is re-guarded as a state of the arts program, it is renowned and Ms. Youmans does an excellent job with her staff. She knows money will always be an issue, but if we expect our children to be successful we must start at birth. If you have any means of supporting the program and reopening the babies room for the children you will receive a letter

from Columbia First Steps Board of Directors in regards to the room at Little New Steps. She was at the table and listening to the fact that money is an issue. The unemployment rate is 21.5% in the community – it is highly unlikely unless some of us as the working force is able to afford to pay for our neighbors children go get into the program because they cannot afford it. We need to be real concerned about the school district – need to help when you are not in agreement – we must do what is best for the children. Come up with creative ways to handle our differences. Let's look at do you have any money, where can we get money and do it in partnership. Dr. Watson said she had a conference with Ms. Hall this morning and shared this with the Board. Ms. Hall indicated that there are 2 new centers opening in Allendale but because of lack of funding cannot address the 0-1. She has had conversations with members at the State level, which she shared with the Board and many centers are no longer doing 0-1 because of funding. We are in the same position. The Board has been given the information about the position in which we find ourselves. There is a real concern about funding, grants have been taken away, in fact, First Steps should have more money to provide childcare than you had in the past because of the concern. Ms. Fitts said she understands the magnitude of the problem, but she asked if any stimulus funds could have been used for this program. Dr. Watson said no – stimulus funds only came thru Title I and IDEA. She tried to use McKinney Veto funds only got \$81,000 dollars – for students who are deemed homeless to let their children come into Little New Steps. But she had many conversations with the McKinney Veto people and finance and was told they could not use the funds this way. So the District is not overlooking or disregarding the need.

Chairman Priester said they appreciate the comments from everyone they serve. We are here for the students and doing what we can to help make the best possible decisions. These are difficult times financially. Things they may have been able to do in the past but because of funding issues they cannot do them this year.

Mr. Hall moved to amend the agenda to go into executive session discuss Ms. Love and the debate team. Ms. Zeidan seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0 yes. Dr. Watson said the debate team item cannot be discussed in executive session.

GOOD NEWS

Allendale Elementary Student Promotions – Ms. Leath, Principal said student Jaide Youmans is currently in 2nd grade but was a kindergarten last year. Jaide was given a battery of tests that showed putting her in 1st grade would have been a waste of time. She is reading on a level 28 which correlates to the end of 4th grade.

Student Symone Jones was given a battery of tests in kindergarten. She was tested and found out – she was in pre-k last year but she skipped kindergarten and is a 1st grade student this year. Symone is on a level 15 reading which means she is at the end of 1st grade.

AFHS Student Griselda Miranda and her parents were present. Mr. Everett with Special Projects said with assistance from the AFHS Booster Club and community effort from the first

home game – after hearing about Griselda accident – she was presented a check for \$605.00. Mr. Everett said the community along with the school has been supportive of the family. Other collaborative agencies helped with the wheel chair and transportation to and from her doctor's appointments. She is a cheerleader, member of the JROTC, Senior Class and SGA president.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

SCSBA 2009 Certification of Delegates for Delegates Assembly – Chairman Priester said each December delegates assembly meet and ACS have 1 individual acts as person who vote and district only have one vote. Ms. Mole moved that Ms. Zeidan serve as the delegate. Mr. Hall seconded. The vote was 5-0 yes. Mr. Cave moved that Mr. Hall serve as the alternate delegate. Ms. Zeidan seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0 yes.

SCSBA 2010 Calendar of Events – Boardmanship Institute – Chairman Priester asked that the Board let Ms. Pringle know which conferences they will be attending in a timely manner.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEM

Discipline Reports: For information only. Chairman Priester said the forms for August – this being a short month – hope that with the institution of PBIS will see more months that look like this. Ms. Zeidan asked how PBIS was coming along, any problems and has it been implemented in each school. Dr. Watson said it has been implemented in every last one of the schools and it is doing very well. The only concern she has is with the implementation at the high school. She has talked with the principal about the number of discipline referrals, but there are other things that play into this. Most of it has to do with the delivering of instruction. She went in the AES Tiger bucks rooms – girls 2 wheeler bike and boys 2 wheeler bike to buy with Tiger Bucks. So there is a huge incentive for kids to do well. Mr. Hall asked about the Tiger Bucks is there a standard in the District or does each school set the standard. Some schools say they don't give out Tiger Bucks. Dr. Watson said each school set their own standards for giving out Tiger Bucks. You cannot standardize the program. Mr. Hall said he heard a teacher say well this stuff is too much I'm just going to stop giving them out. Ms. Leath said you can determine when the school store is open and each class brings their students and you have 200 Tiger Bucks in a week – we know something is wrong with the way teachers are distributing them. So the administrative team can tell if a teacher is giving out too many Tiger Bucks. Mr. Alridge said they require teachers must sign the Tiger Bucks – this allows some way of tracking.

Ms. Mole asked about AFMS Level 3 offenses – 9 for the 7th grade – what has been done to try and reduce this because this was not a whole month of school. Mr. Newsome said they have done mentoring with the students – they do a check and connect – those students that are getting more referrals. They are using the PBIS model, and they can tell what time the disturbances are occurring, what they are and where they are occurring. They have only had one fight this year.

When the bell rings someone is on every hallway. Dr. Watson encouraged the Board to visit the schools to see what is taking place. It is a positive atmosphere so far. Ms. Zeidan said for the month of October she would like to be in all the schools and this serves as her announcement of her visits.

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

ACTION

Denmark Tech – Dr. Walt Tobin, Jr. Interim President said he is here tonight as a bridge builder. Denmark Tech did not have many partnerships in the 3 county areas – Bamberg, Barnwell and Allendale Counties. He made the round of counties to see how we could support each other – no opportunities for citizens to get workforce development and training. The proposal would use the Career Center in the evening to providing training for adults in Allendale County. Phase I welding – certified welders can earn \$45,000-\$70,000 annually. Phase II is industrial maintenance – they are hiring for these positions in the nuclear facilities. Denmark Tech will provide the equipment and instructor – and the District will provide space and electricity. They would like to offer these programs to high school students in the afternoon – dual credit – offer scholarship – the programs would be free of charge. If these work they can do things with criminal justice since Allendale has a prison. Chairman Priester asked about the timeline for developing the first phase. Dr. Tobin said he could have it up in 2 weeks. He has been in the building a couple of times and talked with the principal and Dr. Watson. Dr. Watson said it is about \$300,000 worth of equipment. Dr. Tobin said they received a grant from the Dept. of Energy. Ms. Zeidan asked him with the students that had taken the nursing class could he help them with this if they needed remediation or needed some other type of class because they said if they were in class they could take the nursing test. And he said yes. He would like to have a public forum to announce the program and Denmark Tech's presence in Allendale. Many people coming in need remediation so courses could be offered in reading, math and English. Ms. Zeidan said with welding and industrial maintenance do the person have to have a high school diploma. Dr. Tobin said no – but they would have to have basic reading and writing. The program does come with national certification, so students can use these credentials anywhere. Chairman Priester said they want to approve the idea in principal and then work on getting an MOA. Dr. Watson said her recommendation is to approve this and get the equipment in the next 2 weeks and then they will get an MOA. Ms. Zeidan motioned to give preliminary approval dependent upon the MOA to get moving. Mr. Cave seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0.

2009-2010 School Calendar Additions (ON CALENDAR SEE +): Dr. Watson said not on the original calendar was a report card date in January and the high school final testing was moved to the 24 instead of the 28th. Last report card date was added. Nothing changed in terms of vacation days and time off or contract days. Ms. Zeidan said looking at the holidays – Christmas

and spring break – will this include Little New Steps employees. Dr. Watson said no, the center will be open. Mr. Cave moved to accept the recommendation. Ms. Zeidan seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0.

Proposals for Capital Expenditures Recommendations: Dr. Watson said some of the suggestions for the expenditure of the \$39,000 include: a) All white boards at AES would take most of the money – about \$37,000; b) Air conditioning in the gym at FES - \$25,000; c) Marquees need to be replaced at AES and AFLC; d) The funds could be spent in combination or a major project. Chairman Priester asked if the Board wanted to act on this list or prioritize what is needed. He said FES last year at graduation – if you were there, you would want to put air condition in the gym. Locks on the entry doors at AES – could do the entry doors at AES and the air conditioning at FES. Ms. Zeidan moved to use the \$39,000 to give entry doors in Building 2 fixed at AES and air conditioning in gym at FES. Mr. Cave seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0 yes.

Mr. Hall said if funds were remaining could it be given to the debate team. Dr. Watson said this is a club which is financed differently. Dr. Watson said they will contact the contractors and start the project immediately. They are also working on the roof at AFHS.

Parks and Recreation MOA: Dr. Watson said she spoke with County Administrator Tim Bennett – this MOA is for the football games they have on Saturdays. The agreement also includes practice on the field. There has not been an MOA in the past, but this is a positive partnership, we have some assurances. Chairman Priester asked for clarity – there is no particular time constraint – would this not be an issue. Dr. Watson said the games were added and the dates of the games are listed and this would be non-intrusive on anything the District may have. And the time restraints have not been an issue in the past. Ms. Mole moved to accept the Parks and Recreation MOA. Mr. Cave seconded. The motion was approved by a vote 5-0.

SC EOC Committee Proposed Student Performance Standards on PASS: Dr. Watson said last week she went to a subcommittee meeting in Columbia where they discussed the cut scores for the new PASS test. The State Board and State Administrators were concerned as a group about the proposed cut scores. There were many questions about the number of levels that were presented and how that would impact districts across the State. The concern is that it will negatively impact districts across the State and a significant level – negative impact on ACS and districts such as ours. You may have read Supt. Lee’s concerns about it over in his district. Dr. Watson said she talked and shared her concerns with the subcommittee members. We are working hard in Allendale County to move our students in a positive direction academically. The cut scores would negate any positive changes in the District and any signs that the District is moving forward. It appears that the EOC – the PASS is a criteria reference test – it is only supposed to test what has been taught at that grade level and before. The EOC appears to want

to make the test a criteria and a norm reference test. They have asked the test makers to include more difficult questions – so there is an indication of who the top students are in a class. There was another meeting today that she did not attend so she does not know what the final indication is. But they are rushing to establish the cut scores – the cut scores will affect school districts for the next 5 to 10 years. She will keep the Board updated on this item. One of the reasons they are rushing to a decision is that one of the State employees said if they don't have a decision by February 1st – he does not have many people working in his division and they have to get the Report Cards printed. So they must get everything loaded by February 15th to get the Report Cards printed. Chairman Priester asked about the 1 to 3 point system are they leaning more toward the 1 to 5 – the 1 to 3 is not good for the District. Dr. Watson said she did not know but would check and keep the Board informed.

Clean Sweep Award – Mr. Harney said this school did not get the award at all last year – and the award for the month went to Allendale-Fairfax Middle School. Principal Mr. Newsome accepted the award.

Personnel Report: Ms. Rivers, Personnel Director asked the Board to accept the ratification of the teachers discussed in executive session. Mr. Cave moved to accept the recommendation. Mr. Hall seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0 yes.

Dr. Watson said they discussed two members of the staff and she made the recommendation for approval that the Allendale County Schools Board of Trustees that Mr. L.M. employment with the District be terminated. This recommendation is subject to the Board's prerogative to hear the matter should Mr. L.M. request a hearing before me and is dissatisfied with my recommendation. Mr. Cave moved to accept the recommendation. Mr. Hall seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0 yes.

Dr. Watson recommended to the Allendale County Schools Board of Trustees Ms. C.H. employment with the District be terminated. This recommendation is subject to the Board's prerogative to hear the matter should Ms. C.H. request a hearing before me and is dissatisfied with my recommendation. Mr. Cave moved to accept the recommendation. Ms. Mole seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0 yes.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Dr. Watson reported that the District has been looking for a finance director and have not received one qualified, experienced, certified applicant. But Mr. Robinson has agreed to remain with the District. Mr. Robinson said the Board received the Budget Change Report for the month of August. Also in the packets is the Budget Report by Fund for the month of August. The total budgeted revenue is \$13,689,002.00 – plus year-to-date the District has received \$873,480.14. About 94% of this is from State revenues. On page 6 – the Report by Fund – for general fund the total budget is \$13,689,002.00 and thus far \$1,077,471.85 has been

expended year-to-date. Dr. Watson said since Mr. Robinson has agreed to stay she will bring to the Board a copy of any agreement they come to for the Board's approval.

SCHOOL NEWSLETTERS: AFHS "The Tiger Times News" and AFHS Agenda is good looking and has a lot of good information in the agenda. A District newsletter will be coming out once a month.

Mr. Hall moved that the Board go into executive session at 8:30 p.m. to discuss personnel. Ms. Mole seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0 yes.

No action was taken on the item discussed in executive session.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.