

The Amherst County School Board met in regular session on Thursday, August 25, 2016, in the Board Room of the School Administration Office, Amherst, Virginia at 6:02 p.m.

PRESENT: W. Michael Henderson, Chairman
 Priscilla M. Liggon, Vice Chairman
 Jennifer E. Cumby
 Francisco D. Mayo
 Randy V. Summers
 Craig S. Terwilliger
 Abby J. Thompson

 Nathan Gowdy, Student Representative

ABSENT: None

Mr. Henderson called the meeting to order, asked that a moment of silence be observed and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Henderson asked if there were any changes to the agenda for the August 25, 2016, regular School Board meeting. There were none.

Mr. Henderson asked if there was a motion to approve the agenda for the August 25, 2016, regular School Board meeting.

Upon motion by Mrs. Liggon, seconded by Mr. Terwilliger and unanimously carried, the Board approved the agenda of the August 25, 2016, regular School Board meeting.

Mr. Henderson stated the next item on the agenda was public comment.

Mr. Henderson asked if anyone wished to address the Board. No one addressed the Board.

Mr. Henderson stated the next item on the agenda was approval of the consent agenda.

Upon motion by Mr. Summers, seconded by Mr. Mayo and unanimously carried, the Board approved the following consent agenda: minutes of the August 11, 2016, regular School Board meeting, confirmation of the Superintendent's personnel actions for the period August 8, 2016, through August 19, 2016, and approval of requests to home school students under the Code of Virginia religious exemption clause.

Mr. Henderson stated the next item on the agenda was an update on accountability measures.

Dr. Nichols stated Dr. Norman would provide an update on accountability measures.

Dr. Norman shared the following information with Board members:

When the final results were revealed last week Amherst County Public Schools saw little variation in student performance when compared to 2014-2015 data. ACPS remained consistent over the last several years increasing in the areas that were specifically targeted and seeing slight drops across the division in difficult reporting categories for the content of math.

Division Federal Accountability (Embargo Lifted)

As a division under the Federal Accountability guidelines ACPS showed advancement only in the area of reading with students identified in Gap Group 1 (Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners and Economically Disadvantaged Students), Gap Group 2 (Black) and the Subgroup of Economically Disadvantaged.

- In the content area of Reading, even though we were 3 points below the state average of 80% with a strong 77% for all students, the three student groups mentioned above each gained 2 points. In the Subgroup of Students with Disabilities the drop was slight moving from 47.09 last year to a 46.53 – still a 10 point growth from 2014 and currently higher than the state average of 46%.*
- In math, overall student performance went from a 78.13 to 75.36, close to a 3 point drop. ACPS is currently 5 points below the state average of 80% with a 75% overall pass rate. Again, the above mentioned subgroups showed tremendous growth in 2014 and have plateaued.*

Due to the change from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) the 2016-17 school year will be considered a transition year. Federal Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) no longer apply to schools – unless they are in the bottom 15% in student performance for reading or math. If a school is identified as a low performing school it will be considered for designation of Focus or Priority Status.

Division State Accreditation (Still Embargoed)

Preliminary (Not Officially Released Data) shows that Amherst County will have seven schools Fully Accredited, one Approaching Accreditation, and two Partially Accredited. The three schools not Fully Accredited (Amelon, Central and Madison Heights) have a preliminary designation of To Be Determined Status (TBD).

- Math: All 10 schools scored a 70% or above and are accredited in the area of math.*
- Reading: Continues to be an area for the three schools TBD Status did not meet the required overall 75% pass rate.*

The three elementary schools with TBD Status continued to show student progress.

- Amelon improved in both reading and math, remained the same in science, and dropped in the area of history.*
- Central improved in math and science, while declining in both reading and history.*
- Madison Heights improved in reading and history, while showing a loss in the areas of math and science.*

The Division Instructional Team, along with the principals of Amelon, Central and Madison Heights, have applied for Reconstituted Status with Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and will be notified in late September if the plans have been approved.

Advanced Courses

The Advanced Placement Courses showed a slight decrease in student enrollment from 122 students to 109, with students taking 165 exams last year. The total number of AP students with a score of 3 or better on the exam was 74 students (68%, higher than the state average of 66%).

Overall Remarks

During the 2015-2016 school year the Instructional Team concentrated on student engagement, critical thinking, and student sustained reading. It was the goal of the team to ensure that every teacher captured the attention and focus of all their students in activities that help them progress in their learning.

Overall in the division we understand that closing the achievement gap for students, whether they are disadvantaged, black, ELL, or have a disability is a priority. As you can see with the scores from last year we increased in the area of English to close the gap in four of the seven areas and in the content of math it coincided with our overall scores as we saw a minimal drop in each subgroup.

To address this ACPS has implemented several division wide initiatives that focus on building student/teacher relationships of respect, provided training on research based instructional strategies, and problem solving strategies that help our students be the critical thinkers they need both in and out of school.

Dr. Norman informed the Board that additional information will be provided at the September 8, 2016, regular School Board meeting.

Board members reviewed and discussed the information provided. No action was taken by the Board.

Mr. Henderson stated the next item on the agenda was an update from the Human Resources department.

Dr. Nichols stated Dr. Rogers would provide an update from the Human Resources Department.

Dr. Rogers provided an update of the following information:

- Open enrollment for Health Insurance closes Friday, August 16, 2016. To date 19 employees have enrolled in the Health Savings Account Plan.
- Pleasant View Elementary School Transition Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 30, 2016, at 10:00 a.m.
- Professional Development Plan has been posted on the website under the Staff Tab.
- Student Enrollment information will be provided at the September 8, 2016, regular School Board meeting.

Mr. Henderson stated the next item on the agenda was budget monitoring reports and other financial reports for the 2015-16 school year.

Dr. Nichols stated Mrs. Crouch would discuss the information regarding the financial reports for the 2015-16 school year.

Mrs. Crouch provided the following recap of the 2015-16 school year:

- Health Insurance rates decreased 13.6%.
- Fuel prices were lower which created a savings.
- Electricity costs were down due to fuel prices.
- Heating oil was lower which created a savings.

Mrs. Crouch stated with the savings the Board approved to purchase school buses, maintenance vans, resurface gym floors, coat epoxy on the girls' and boys' locker rooms at Amherst County High School, seal coat parking lots at certain schools, repair tracks at Amherst County High School, Amherst Middle School and Monelison Middle School, remove tennis courts at Amherst County High School, and paint certain classrooms at six different schools.

Mrs. Crouch stated the balance remaining for the 2015-16 school year was approximately \$433,189. The balance will be verified once the audit has been completed. Mrs. Crouch stated the remaining balance will be placed in the School Construction Fund in the County Budget.

Mrs. Crouch asked the Board to consider taking action to transfer \$120,000 from heating oil (5102) to replacement of school buses (8105). By making the transfer, category 3000 would no longer have a negative balance.

Mr. Henderson asked if the Board wished to make a motion.

Mr. Summers made a motion to transfer \$120,000 from object code 5102 object code to object code 8105. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Cumby.

AYES: Liggon, Henderson, Summers, Cumby, Mayo, Thompson

NAYS: None

ABSTAINED: Terwilliger

Mr. Henderson stated the next item on the agenda was an update on the school activity funds for the 2015-16 school year.

Dr. Nichols stated Mrs. Crouch would share information regarding the audit.

Mrs. Crouch stated that Board members had been provided a copy of the School Activity Funds Audit for the 2015-16 school year. Mrs. Crouch expressed appreciation to the principals and school secretaries/bookkeepers for their hard work in maintaining the school activity funds. Mrs. Crouch stated the auditors provided comments in the report; however, there were no signs of misuse of funds. Mrs. Crouch stated all schools had been provided information regarding their individual school audit. The comments had been reviewed by the principal and secretary/bookkeeper.

Board members reviewed and discussed the information provided. No action was taken.

Mr. Henderson stated the next item on the agenda was an update on facilities.

Dr. Nichols stated Mr. Cocke would provide an update on facilities.

Mr. Cocke stated the projects at Amelon Elementary School and Madison Heights Elementary School were just about complete. Mr. Cocke stated there may be a delay of 30 to 60 days on the projects for Central Elementary School, Amherst Middle School and Amherst County High School because of the next phase of funding.

Mr. Henderson stated the next item on the agenda was proposed revisions to the Amherst County Public Schools Policy Manual.

Dr. Nichols stated information was provided to Board members regarding revisions to policies under Administrative, Instruction, and Support Services. Dr. Nichols asked that Board members review the revisions and consider approval at the September 8, 2016, regular School Board meeting.

Board members discussed several of the proposed policy revisions; however, they did not take action. The Board will consider approval of the revised schedule for Board meetings at the September 8, 2016, regular School Board meeting.

Mr. Henderson asked Dr. Nichols if he had anything to share.

Dr. Nichols informed Board members that he met with Mr. Marks, Chairman of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors, concerning the article in the newspaper regarding test results. Dr. Nichols stated he reviewed the information that Dr. Norman provided Board members with Mr. Marks. Dr. Nichols stated he also expressed appreciation to Mr. Marks and the other members of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors for their support on the PPEA project.

Dr. Nichols reminded the new Board members that senior staff will meet with them for a half-day training on Friday, September 30, 2016, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Dr. Nichols stated the School Board Retreat is scheduled for Wednesday, October 19, 2016, from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Dr. Nichols shared information with the Board regarding training for the Superintendent and all Board members through the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA). Dr. Nichols stated the training will cost \$1,000 and all Board members have to be in attendance. Dr. Nichols stated he will follow-up with VSBA for dates and times. Mr. Summers stated he would not be able to participate in the training.

Dr. Nichols shared information with the Board on revising the Board meeting schedule and student discipline meetings for the 2016-17 school year.

Mr. Henderson asked that all Board members review the suggested changes to the Board meeting dates and times and provide input at the September 8, 2016, regular School Board meeting.

Mr. Henderson asked if anyone wished to address the Board. No one addressed the Board.

Mr. Henderson stated the next item on the agenda was information from Board members.

Mrs. Liggon stated she was excited about the football season. Mrs. Liggon stated she believed that the first week of school was good.

Mr. Summers thanked the administrative staff for the job they do for the students.

Mrs. Cumby stated her children were excited that the tennis courts at Amherst County High School were coming down.

Mr. Mayo thanked the staff for all of the information provided. Mr. Mayo asked if there was a long term plan for technology. Dr. Nichols asked Dr. Norman to provide Mr. Mayo a copy of the Technology Plan.

Mrs. Thompson stated she was very excited about the trends in the testing information that Dr. Norman provided. Mrs. Thompson stated she was also excited that there were funds for capital projects. Mrs. Thompson asked if there was any other support the Board can provide to improve the scores at Central Elementary School. Mrs. Thompson stated she understood that a technology elective was taken away at one of the middle schools. Dr. Nichols and Dr. Rogers informed Board members that the technology elective at Monelison Middle School had been combined with art to enable this class to be a feeder class to Amherst County High School.

Mr. Terwilliger asked which schools have heating oil. Mr. Cocke informed the Board that heating oil is at Amherst County High School, Amherst Middle School and Central Elementary School. Mr. Cocke informed the Board that Amelon Elementary School is now using propane. Mr. Terwilliger stated he was informed that Auto Mechanics I is no longer offered at Amherst County High School. Dr. Rogers stated she was not aware that it had been eliminated, and would find out more information and report to the Board.

Mr. Gowdy stated he believed the first week of school went very smooth. Mr. Gowdy asked if the administrative staff believed that Thinking Maps was affecting the test scores. He said that for him, Thinking Maps has helped him with his organizational skills; however, some of the students at Amherst County High School do not see the benefits.

Dr. Rogers stated that Thinking Maps is a another type of strategy. Dr. Rogers stated that Thinking Maps has a five year plan for implementation and Amherst County Public Schools has completed in year two of the plan. Dr. Rogers stated because of other factors that occurred Amherst County Public Schools has not been able to implement year three of the plan. Dr. Rogers stated she did not believe there was enough data to know whether or not test scores have been impacted by Thinking Maps, and it is difficult to disaggregate all of the impacting factors.

Mr. Gowdy asked if Thinking Maps would be renewed in five years.

Dr. Nichols stated that at the end of five years, Thinking Maps will be a part of what is done every day.

Mr. Gowdy stated that the facilities improvement at Amherst County High School was good.

Mr. Henderson stated he did not have any additional information to share.

Mr. Henderson asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Upon motion by Mrs. Thompson, seconded by Mr. Terwilliger and unanimously carried, the Board adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.



Teresa C. Crouch, Clerk
Amherst County Public Schools



W. Michael Henderson, Chairman
Amherst County Public Schools