

Regular Session Board Meeting Highlights
January 11, 2021

The Gates County Board of Education met in regular session on Monday, January 11, 2021 through a remote meeting using the Zoom format. This was agreed to by the board members in order to follow safety guidelines. Chairman Ray Felton called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. The following board members were present: Mr. Ray Felton, Mrs. Glendale Boone, Mr. Leslie Byrum, Mrs. Sallie Ryan and Mrs. Amanda Pacitto.

Mrs. Glendale Boone made a motion to enter into closed session to discuss personnel as outlined in North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6). Mr. Leslie Byrum seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion carried unanimously. Board Members entered into closed session at 9:08 a.m.

Mr. Leslie Byrum made a motion to go into open session. Mrs. Glendale Boone seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion carried unanimously. Chairman Felton reconvened open session at 10:01 a.m., with the following board members present: Mr. Ray Felton, Mrs. Glendale Boone, Mr. Leslie Byrum, Mrs. Sallie Ryan, and Mrs. Amanda Pacitto.

Mr. Leslie Byrum made a motion to approve the amended agenda with the addition of Consent Agenda Item No. Twenty-Four – Provide COVID relief leave to employees under the Federal Leave Act and the Contagious Disease Policy Act. Mrs. Amanda Pacitto seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion carried unanimously.

There was a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

There were no Public Comments.

Superintendent Report - Dr. Barry Williams:

I reached out to the United Way Worldwide, the Business Roundtable and the CDC Foundation called America's Mask Challenge which offered an initiative to provide every student, teacher and staff with face masks. Gates County Schools was selected to receive 11,000 masks through the Challenge. The students, teachers and staff in your district will each receive one package of 5 masks. America's Mask Challenge is covering the cost of the masks and delivery to one location in your community to support the schools in your district.”

COVID Vaccination Clinic - working to get a COVID Vaccination Clinic set up for Gates County Public Schools. At this time, he has 66 staff members interested in the shot and has been in contact with our health department to get something set up within the next week or two. It may be possible to get something set up for each individual school.

As we returned from Winter Break it has been busy on the COVID front. Although we have not had many positive tests this week we have had numerous staff members that need to quarantine because of possible exposures. We have had 2 staff members test positive with COVID before they returned to work this week and 1 high school basketball player test positive.

Basketball has been shut down at the high school for at least 2 weeks and around 10 other players and the coach will need to quarantine. Mr. Harrell has already reported everything to the NCHSAA and we will be able to make up any games we miss because of the shutdown.

Transportation

We are constantly trying to complete routes for the Drivers with returning students listed.

Teachers

Let's be clear, teachers are facilitating, directing, guiding, and managing. But this is only a fraction of what teachers do. The really hard work is assessing, planning, structuring, designing, instructing, engaging, evaluating, re-instructing, enhancing, correcting, engaging, acknowledging, praising, dialoging, questioning, connecting and synthesizing. Our teachers are teaching in the most challenging environment we could have imagined.

I am glad more and more people are recognizing what teachers do in terms of instruction and learning. If ever there was a year to make Teacher Appreciation Week the biggest celebration ever, this is the school year. I don't even know where to begin to say my words of gratitude to our professional colleagues, and to all teachers in Gates County Schools – Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!

During the Board Report, board members concurred with what Dr. Williams said about our teachers and staff, who have gone above and beyond. Some board members expressed excitement about the students returning to school for face-to-face instruction and asked the staff to reach out to the community and the board for assistance. They also asked everyone to be careful about the safety guidelines in their private lives as well as at school. Mr. Felton thanked Dr. Barry Williams and Laura Dickerson for securing grants for the schools.

Mrs. Sandra Pittman, Finance Officer, gave the Financial Report and provided an update on New Beginnings Daycare and Out-of-District Tuition. We are on target with the budget at about 51%. All the COVID funds have been spent, even though there was an extension granted at the last minute. We have received the Audit draft, and she is working with the auditors to present to the Local Government Commission, and will be presented to the board at a future meeting.

Unfinished Business:

Mr. James Earl Brinkley has approved the farm lease and will sign this week.

The following Consent Agenda Items were approved:

1. December 14, 2020 Regular Session Minutes
2. January 4, 2021 Special Called Session Minutes
3. Policy 1300 – Governing Principle – Parental Involvement
4. Policy 1310-4002 – Parental Involvement
5. Policy 1500 – Governing Principle – Safe, Orderly, and Inviting Environment
6. Policy 1600 – Governing Principle – Professional Development
7. Policy 1700 – Governing Principle – Removing of Barriers
8. Policy 1725-4035-7236 Title IX Sexual Harassment – Prohibited Conduct and Report Process

9. Policy 1726-4036-7237 Title IX Sexual Harassment Grievance Process
10. Policy 2500 – Hearings Before the Board
11. Policy 4023 – Education for Pregnant and Parenting Students
12. Policy 4202-5029-7272 – Service Animals in Schools
13. Policy 4328 – Gang-Related Activity
14. Policy 4333 – Weapons, Bomb Threats, Terrorist Threats and Clear Threats to Safety
15. Policy 4335 – Criminal Behavior
16. Policy 4345 – Student Discipline Records
17. Policy 4353 – Long-Term Suspension, 365-Day Suspension, Expulsion
18. Policy 7130 – Licensure
19. Policy 7503 – Teleworking
20. Policy 7820 – Personnel Files
21. Policy 8510 – School Finance Officer
22. Budget Amendment No. 3 – State Fund
23. Budget Amendment No. 3 – Local Fund No. 8
24. Federal Leave/Infectious Disease Leave for Employees

New Business:

Mr. Leslie Byrum made a motion to delete the last sentence of Policy 2200 – Election of Officers/Organization of Board – and make it retroactive to December 1, 2020. Mrs. Boone seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion was unanimously approved.

During the discussion concerning returning to face-to-face instruction, Board members expressed many concerns they had heard from parents with staggering the return of the elementary students. Board Members are concerned about the staff being exposed, and about the lack of staff to cover classrooms if we have quarantines. It was asked what the board could do to make the staff feel more comfortable with students coming back. One teacher said that having the vaccine would help. There were also concerns about the emotional state of our students. The elementary principals agreed that bringing the Pre-K through 1st grade students back first would be better, since these students have not had time to transition, and extra staff could be utilized to make this easier on everyone.

Mrs. Sallie Ryan made a motion that when we determine the return date, that Pre-K through 1st grade students return one week earlier than the 2nd through 5th grade students. Mr. Leslie Byrum seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote and the motion carried unanimously.

Patrice Matthews, parent, requested to speak to the board. The board agreed to allow her to address the board. She told of the situation with her son who has tested positive for COVID.

Mr. Leslie Byrum made a motion that Pre-K through 1st Grade students return to face-to-face instruction on January 12, 2021, followed by the 2nd – 5th Grade students on January 19, 2021. The middle and high school students will return on January 26, 2021. Mrs. Sallie Ryan seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion carried unanimously. Mrs. Glendale Boone did note that she felt we should re-visit this after we see how it goes when the students return.

The following personell items were approved:

1. NEW HIRES

- Douglas Smith – Long Term Substitute Math Teacher at Central Middle School – Effective 1-4-2021

2. RESIGNATION

- Alisha Melton – Learning Support Assistant – Effective: 12-29-2020

3. INTERNSHIPS

- Emily Harper – Buckland Elementary School
- Kendall Rountree – Technology Department
- Candace Jordan – Exceptional Children’s Department

In Other Business the following items were discussed:

- The regular February session will be held on Thursday, February 4, 2021. We will use the Zoom format to conduct the meeting remotely. Closed session will begin at 9:00 a.m. and Open Session at 10:00 a.m.
- The board adopted schools for the 2nd semester as follows:
 - Mrs. Pacitto – T.S. Cooper Elementary
 - Mrs. Boone – Central Middle School
 - Mrs. Ryan – Gatesville Elementary
 - Mr. Byrum – Buckland Elementary
 - Mr. Felton – Gates County High

Mrs. Glendale Boone made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Sallie Ryan seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Chairman Felton adjourned the meeting at 11:29 a.m.