

Henderson County Board of Public Education
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING – CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATE
GENERAL MINUTES
March 16, 2020

The Henderson County Board of Public Education met in a special called business meeting on March 16, 2020, in the Boardroom of the Administrative Offices located at 414 Fourth Avenue West, Hendersonville, N. C.

Board Members Present: Blair Craven, Chairman; Rick Wood, Vice Chairman; Michael Absher; Dot Case; Mary Louise Corn; Jay Egolf; and Amy Lynn Holt

Administrative Staff Present: Bo Caldwell, Ed.S. Superintendent; John Bryant, Ed.D., Associate Superintendent, Administrative Services; Jan King, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction; Scott Rhodes, Chief Human Resources Officer; Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer and Rick Fender, Chief Technology Officer.

Attorney Present: None

CALL TO ORDER – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chairman, Mr. Blair Craven called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and requested that everyone present stand for the pledge of allegiance to the American Flag.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Mr. Craven acknowledged the receipt of the meeting agenda and asked for a motion to approve. Mrs. Mary Louise Corn moved that the agenda be approved as presented. Mr. Rick Wood seconded. *(Unanimously approved.)*

Mr. Blair Craven took a moment to thank the Leadership Team for their diligent work since Governor Roy Cooper closed all public schools in North Carolina, as of March 14, 2020. He added that we are working hard to get the right answers and we will continue to do what is best for our students in Henderson County. He introduced Superintendent Bo Caldwell to begin the update.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

A. HCPS Response to COVID-19 – *(Superintendent Bo Caldwell, Leadership Team)*

On Saturday, March 14, 2020, Governor Cooper announced an executive order closing all K-12 public schools as a precautionary measure against the transmission of novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Beginning March 16, 2020, Henderson County Public Schools is closed for all students for at least two weeks. This closure affects all school programming, including before- and after-school activities, all athletic and extracurricular practices and competitions, and all weekend events. Superintendent Bo Caldwell stated that the sole purpose of the meeting was to provide School Board members with an update of what has transpired since the school closure mandate. Mr. Caldwell said a Principal's meeting was held on March 16, 2020 at 8:30 am, in the Central Office Board Room, to update the principals. He stated the same information would now be shared with the Board.

Dr. John Bryant stated that the documents created for the Principals meeting are intended to be guidance for staff. They should be considered 'live documents.' The documents could be updated throughout the day and that information will be pushed out to staff as quickly as possible. He added that updates are coming in from federal and state levels daily.

Dr. Bryant stated that all staff groups received guidance via email and School Messenger on Sunday, March 15, 2020 regarding their Monday/Tuesday responsibilities. Henderson County Schools is operating under DPI guidance and have designated Optional Teacher Workdays (TWD) all this week.

Dr. Bryant said the FAQ document is a shared document for Principals to post questions and receive answers from the leadership team in real time. This document serves to drive official messaging.

Dr. Bryant referenced the Executive Order dated March 14, 2020, from North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper, Prohibiting Mass Gatherings and Directing the Statewide Closure of K-12 Public Schools to

Limit the Spread of COVID-19. He added that systems were asked to consider what their responses would be to child care and child nutrition needs.

Dr. Bryant stated that we have scheduled a standing meeting each day this week, March 16- March 20, for all Principals and Directors. The goal of daily meetings is to communicate and update administrators on a daily basis.

Mr. Craven asked about the FAQ document and asked if Board members could have access it? Dr. Bryant stated that the FAQ document would be shared with the Board after the meeting.

Mr. Absher asked if all days this week are optional work days. Dr. Bryant replied, yes. Mr. Absher asked about the plans for next week. Dr. Bryant stated they are not prepared to answer questions about next week at this point. Mr. Caldwell added that due to the unknown length of school closure and the ever changing environment, our priority is to get the process up and running this week and introduce how we will be transitioning to the *Learn from Home* initiative. Mr. Caldwell added, we are seeking advice from Campbell Shatley on a work from home option for staff.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt mentioned proposed legislation concerning staff pay during the crisis and asked about pay options. Superintendent Bo Caldwell replied that we are monitoring the ever-evolving guidance and we are trying to make the best decisions we can with the information that is available. He added that there are a lot of questions where we are having to wait to receive answers and logistics.

Mrs. Holt mentioned the recent Presidential request to limit group exposure to under 10 people. Mr. Caldwell mentioned that there are many real scenarios to consider, such as how many students might show up at a feeding site at a given time. We are feeding our students, if we receive guidance from DPI, then we may need to make changes. Mr. Caldwell continued, saying that he will discuss with the principals at tomorrow's meeting.

Mr. Blair Craven responded that we need to "find a way to pay folks no matter what."

Mr. Blair Craven and Ms. Dot Case asked what the timeline is to get all teachers ready for remote learning? Mr. Bo Caldwell responded that we are following DPI guidance and we will be working with principals to identify who is eligible and ready to work from home. Mr. Caldwell mentioned the launch of *Learn From Home*. Our soft launch of *Learn from Home* is planned for Wednesday, March 18, 2020. He added, that approval for staff members to work from home will be a principal/teacher decision at the school level and will be addressed on a case by case request.

Ms. Dot Case asked if all employees can use the K-5 school childcare? Dr. Bryant and Mr. Caldwell replied, yes. Mr. Caldwell added that we are trying to expand this childcare offering to frontline health care and emergency care responders, so they are able to go to work as well. More details to follow.

Mr. Craven asked how many school sites are set up for childcare? Dr. Bryant stated that 11 of our 13 elementary schools, are ready. The 2 elementary flex schools are on brake for intercession. Dr. Bryant stated that we are tracking potential costs as we will seek a potential reimbursement from the state.

Mr. Michael Absher asked if younger kids could stay in classrooms? Mr. Caldwell replied, no. He added there is too much work for the teachers to do to push out *Learn from Home* but we are working with employees for special scenarios.

Mr. Jay Egolf offered for his wife to come in and help since her employer and childcare location has been closed. Mr. Caldwell stated that he appreciated the offer but said we want to start by keeping our employees at work. He added that we may need volunteers in the future.

Mr. Absher mentioned using bus drivers to help.

Dr. John Bryant reiterated Mr. Caldwell's point that we want to match the needs with our employees to keep them in paid positions.

Ms. Case asked about PSAM and PSPM? Mr. Caldwell stated that we do not have the capacity to open for others right now. He stated our priorities are to cover the child care needs for our staff first then, frontline medical people and EMS workers that need to be at work.

Dr. Jan King and Mr. Rick Fender gave updates on the *Learn from Home* process. She stated that over the weekend a press release for parents was finalized and the press release was sent out on Monday, March

16, 2020. Dr. King stated that learning will look differently for all ages. She said that students with zero connectivity at home, will receive paper and pencil assignments.

Dr. King shared the Learn from Home process. K-2 grade level bags will be sent home containing writing prompts and math games. Dr. King reiterated, this is not just busy work. Grades 3-12 will be moving instruction to a virtual setting. Dr. King stated that on Wednesday and Thursday of this week (March 18-19) schools will be open from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm for parents to come to their school to borrow devices and pick up other materials their student will need from school. There will be limitations on the time allowed in the building and the number of people allowed in at any time. All teachers are required to communicate with their students that they will be available for four hours daily between the hours of 7:45 am and 3:45 pm, to discuss assignments and to help with student and parent questions. Teachers should have lessons available for all students to access by Friday, March 20, 2020. Dr. King added that Mr. Rick Fender's Technology staff have produced training links and they are posted on the Technology Department page.

Dr. King continued by saying a dedicated email address has been created for parents and students to send email questions to, Learnfromhome@hcpsnc.org, and she added that her office will disperse the questions to the appropriate department for them to answer the request.

Dr. King stated that our school Media Specialists will be helping to break down Chromebook carts, as needed, so the devices can be deployed to students. She added that Technology created a parent survey to help us obtain a number of devices that could be needed.

Mr. Blair Craven asked how many devices? Mr. Rick Fender stated the numbers are not in yet. Mr. Caldwell added that we will deliver a device to all students that need one.

Mr. Craven asked if students have zero connectivity at home, how often would they need to come and pick up work? Dr. King stated that right now, work is being sent home to cover 2 weeks.

Mr. Caldwell added that we realize that some students have no internet access at home and we have already made requests to outside organizations for grant monies to purchase hot spots.

Dr. King reiterated that we will accommodate every request for a Chromebook in grades 3 -12.

Dr. Jan King state that NCDPI has given guidance on EC procedures. She added that NCDPI has been very responsive toward EC services and have provided updates on a daily basis.

Mr. Blair Craven asked how we will handle classes that can't be taught online? Ex. Woodworking. Dr. King responded they will be given assignments that will provide practice in reading and writing.

Mr. Michael Absher asked how will we handle kids who don't want to do their work? Dr. King replied that those situations will be handled with patience and grace.

Superintendent Bo Caldwell asked Dr. John Bryant to provide an update on plans for Child Nutrition.

Dr. Bryant stated that the plan is to ramp up the Meals on the Bus program and activate school feeding sites as Grab and Go meal sites. He stated that starting tomorrow, March 17, 2020, all elementary sites except flex schools, will have Grab and Go meals for students ages 2-18. Hendersonville Middle will serve lunches as well. School feeding sites will be open from 11 am until 1 pm. He added, there are relaxed guidelines that are afforded to us because we are in a state of emergency. Dr. Bryant reiterated that we would like to use the yellow buses to deliver meals, devices and instructional materials to homes as needed. Bryant complimented Robert Rolfe and his staff for the responsiveness to providing meals at Child Care today and being ready to serve meals in the community tomorrow.

Mr. Absher asked how outside groups could help?

Dr. Bryant replied that they should contact our Education Foundation who will coordinate donations to already established distribution sites such as IAM and Storehouse.

Mr. Rick Wood commented that some local businesses are really stepping up to help feed children during the closure.

Ms. Case asked how people will come and get the food at schools? Dr. Bryant responded, they will be directed into the school's vestibule and a child nutrition staff member will help them.

Mr. Craven asked if we have we been in contact with our vendors? Dr. Bryant stated that "Mr. Robert Rolfe confirmed that we can feed our kids for 3 months with the current inventory." Mr. Bo Caldwell

added, this is why we are serving hot meals; Some of the cold meal items can be hard to get from vendors now, but we have the canned goods on site.

Mrs. Mary Louise Corn expressed concern that as we transition to work from home, how students might access their counselors and social workers? Dr. King responded, our counselors and social workers are not just being available, they will also be making calls to check on students.

Mr. Michael Absher asked, If schools stayed out, would we continue *Learn from Home*? Dr. King replied, Yes, we would make every effort to provide continuity of learning

Mr. Blair Craven mentioned the changing nature of the situation.

Superintendent Caldwell stated that we will all need patience and flexibility when asked about prom, graduation, EOGs, EOCs, etc. Mr. Caldwell added, there are some questions we just don't have an answer to right now with the everchanging needs of the situation.

Mr. Jay Egolf stated he is "blessed to be part of a group such as this...beneficial to our kids and students of HCPS."

Mrs. Mary Louise Corn echoed pride in this community and in this school system.

Ms. Dot Case expressed concern for some of our students who will miss that relationship piece with teachers. Mr. Caldwell agreed and affirmed the power of the student/teacher relationship.

Superintendent Caldwell reiterated the purpose of the meeting and our goal of taking care of our students.

Mr. Michael Absher thanked Mr. Craven and everyone for working together in these unprecedented times.

Mr. Bo Caldwell thanked his Leadership Team for all of their time and efforts they have dedicated to this issue.

Mr. Blair Craven thanked our parents and kids for being flexible and working with us. He also thanked our teachers, staff and our community members and leaders.

Mr. Rick Wood thanked the Leadership Team for the BOE informational update, which will help them answer the questions they have been getting. He also acknowledged Mr. Bill Moss from the Hendersonville Lightning for sharing the meeting information.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Michael Absher moved that the meeting be adjourned. Seconded by Mr. Rick Wood. (*Unanimously approved at approximately 6:05 pm.*)

Minutes approved: May 11, 2020