

P.G. Super News

Renee P. Williams

Prince George County Public Schools

February 15, 2019

Important Dates:

March

Music in our Schools Month; National Nutrition Month; Youth Art Month; Irish American Heritage Month; American Red Cross Month; Social Work Month



March 2

Read Across America (Dr. Seuss's Birthday)

March 4-8

National School Breakfast Week; National Foreign Language Week

March 10

Daylight Savings Time Begins

March 11

Johnny Appleseed Day

March 11

School Board Meeting

March 17

St. Patrick's Day

March 10-16

National Agriculture Week

School Board News

The School Board held its regular meeting on February 11, 2019.

Special Recognitions

⇒ February is School Board Appreciation Month. **Dr. Pennycuff** read the Certification of Recognition signed by **Gov. Ralph Northam**. She also stated our board members develop policies and make tough decisions on complex educational and social issues influencing the entire community. Their job is to establish a vision for the education program, design a structure to achieve that vision, ensure schools are accountable to the community and strongly advocate continuous improvement in student learning. That job entails an endless string of meetings and school functions, reams of reports, agendas, proposals and other information to read and study and a host of difficult decisions to make. They bear responsibility for a \$67,754,569 budget, 6,400 students, 878 full-time employees, and 14 buildings. They preserve the core of our democracy—public education.

⇒ The VSBA designates February 18-22, 2019 as School Board Clerk Appreciation Week, with a goal of building awareness of the role board clerks play in assisting school board members, superintendents, and our local schools. **Becky Kirk/Clerk**, and **Stephanie Estep/Deputy Clerk** were presented with Certificates of Appreciation for their continued support of the board and their dedication and hard work for public education.

⇒ The school board recognized **Glenda Bishop (15)**, **Debra Keener (21)**, and **Kornelia Plasencia (22)** for their many years of service (in parenthesis) in education.

Presentations

• **F.W. Lewis** presented the Calendar Committee's draft proposal for the 2019-20 school year. He stated the calendar is very similar to the current calendar of 180 instructional days, with 10 built-in inclement weather days. He went over each month

Presentations (continued)

and explained holidays, teacher workdays, development days, etc. A final draft will be brought to the board for approval at the March 11, 2019 meeting.

• **Susan Braswell** introduced **Laura Serfass**, music teacher who has been with the division for three years and during this time she has grown the chorus program, created a Ukulele Club and formed many partnerships with other schools to promote Arts in our school system. **Ms. Serfass's** students learn music through the Orff Schulwerk approach, music education where each child is actively engaged in the music-making process. Students sing songs, play instruments, and create their own songs and decide what instruments should be played and when to play them. South's PAAS students performed for the audience by singing and accompanying themselves on instruments. The drumming piece was composed, but the students decided how to present it by improvising and creating their own rhythms on the spot for a very entertaining number.

• **Chrystal Barnwell** stated that Walton's goal is to create a positive learning environment that is student-centered. They are promoting and teaching the 21st Century Skills to accomplish these goals and are focused on developing morally good people who can deal with complexity and collaborate with others to make things better for everyone. They are dedicated to igniting the passion for self-directed learning and providing opportunities for creativity and problem-solving by teaching the skills that can easily adapt to our changing times. They are giving our students the keys to success while still delivering meaningful curriculum with outstanding instructional practices. **Christine Carr** prepared a video that captured how the Walton staff is making all this happen in the lives of our students at Walton Elementary. Julie Connolly stated

School Board News

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**WE APPRECIATE
OUR SCHOOL
BOARD!**

The Virginia School Board Association annually observes February as School Board Appreciation Month. Prince George County Public Schools wishes to acknowledge School Board members and their commitment to Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade.

This year's theme – "**Leading for Success**" – reflects the top priority of local school board members as they advocate for public education with local, state, and federal leaders on behalf of all students.

The month-long observance is an opportunity for our school division and community to build a stronger understanding of the crucial role school boards assume in a representative democracy. School boards voluntarily tackle the enormous job of governing multi-million dollar public school divisions, while preserving the core of our democratic values.

Walton students will host the school's first Coding Field Day on June 6, 2019. All are invited to see the 5 C's in action (collaboration, creativity, citizenship, critical thinking and communication). Board members were presented with gifts in support of School Board Appreciation Month.

- **Monique Barnes** presented an alternative method to traditional credit cards by substituting with P-cards or Procurement cards. This is a program through the Bank of America, contracted through the Commonwealth of Virginia. A P-Card looks and spends like a credit card but it allows the division to receive rebates on items and services for which the card is used for purchases. The rebate percentage could be close to 1.5 percent but rebates are in a year's area. There are no late fees, finance charges or any fees to overnight a card or completing international transactions. There is not a credit limit, except established by the budget. She also explained the process to use a P-card.

Public Comments

- ^ Several people spoke about the mold and air quality issues at Walton Elementary School. **Kelly Reiersen** has had several medical issues since start of the year. School staff was alerted and it was discovered that her classroom tested for levels of mold. She shared her concerns about the room issue and she thanked staff for the recent progress made in testing and cleaning her room and hopes the updates will continue to alleviate the mold issues. **Kate Gibson** did not realize the level of concern in the classroom until the first letter from school stated some classrooms contained mold and her child's classroom had been moved to a temporary location. She was concerned about the lack of communication and that parents should be provided a full disclosure of the results of the current testing results. **Colleen Jones** spoke about the lack of communication on rooms that tested positive for mold and indicated the mold affected her child's allergies.

She requested results of the January 29 tests and how these results differed from the current test results, including information on how many rooms were identified, how air ducts and classrooms were cleaned, and instructions to prevent this from happening again. **Candace Hauser** stated her children have been attending Walton School for the last three years and her concern is about the safety of her children. The kids have to go outside of their classrooms for everything they do and in weather conditions such as rain or snow. Sometimes the sidewalks are slippery due to rain or ice. The open style campus poses security issues, safety hazards associated with parent pick up, blind spots in the parking areas and now the mold issues. The principal is doing the best she can with all of these issues, but we need a new school built.

School Action Items Approved

- ◆ Incentives to Recruit and Retain Bus Drivers
- ◆ Release of Harm
- ◆ Signing Bonus for Speech Pathologists
- ◆ Renewal of Pierce Group Consulting Services
- ◆ Policy DJC-R—School Division Credit Card Use
- ◆ Semi-Monthly Accounts Payable Disbursements

Discussion Items

- * Financial Statement for January 2019

Superintendent's Report/Info Items

- Current enrollment as of February 5, 2019
- 2018-19 Expulsions and Reinstatements
- Email congratulating **Tonya Humphrey** and **Dustin Coleman**—\$500 Grant
- VSBA Newsletter
- Southside Regional Spring Forum March 7, 2019 @ Powhatan High School
- VSBA Hot Topic—Wytheville, March 13, 2019
- VSBA Webinar—Combating the Stigma of Youth Mental Illness—March 27, 2019
- NSBA Conference—Philadelphia, PA March 30-April 1, 2019
- VSBA Hot Topic—Charlottesville, April 22, 2019

School Board News

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School Board Member Comments



Mr. Eley thanked **Mr. Cox** for championing the clean-up efforts at Walton School. He kept the board up to date on the situation over the last few days and hopes the issues have been resolved. The Board is not taking this situation lightly and we are doing what needs to be done to correct it and keep the students and staff safe. The school board may have been recognized tonight but he stated, “We can’t be recognized without recognizing our staff and students as they are the reason we do what we do”. He also commented on the great presentations presented by the schools this evening.

Mr. Foster thanked the parents for speaking tonight and he said we now have answers to **Ms. Jones’** questions and information will be shared with parents. He thanked **Mrs. Barnwell, Mrs. Connolly** and staff for their patience while working through this situation. When he was in college there was a motto he used, “In diversity there is unity”. He has rewritten that to now read, “In adversity there is unity”. It takes more than one voice to build a new school and it is the time to unify voices to engage the Board of Supervisors and community stakeholders to build a new, safe, non-campus style school. “The time is now, we’ve got to move” to get a new school built. He addressed **Mr. Cox**, stating he is the chairperson at the right time and in the right place sharing his expertise in safety. He also thanked **Mr. Rhodes, Mr. Turner**, and the staffs of The EI Group, Inc. and Froehling and Robertson, Inc., for their continued cleaning efforts over the weekend.

Mr. Stevenson dittoed what other board members said. He also encouraged parents to reach out to the Board of Supervisors during their public comment period tomorrow night. “Share your same concerns you shared here tonight”! He also said the school board would move forward to invite the Board of Supervisors to a joint meeting and allow the public to



L to R: Rob Eley, Kevin Foster, Robert Cox, Lewis Stevenson, Chris Johnson

Prince George School Board “Leading for Success”

*Thanks for caring about our
children’s education.
We applaud you for your
vision and inspiration
to help shape a
better tomorrow!*



*Next School Board Meeting
March 11, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.*

School Board Member Comments (Continued)

Mr. Stevenson (comments continued): speak at that time. He read a statement from social media attacking **Mr. Cox** and himself criticizing this person for “ignorant statements”.

Mr. Johnson was also complimentary of **Mr. Cox** for taking time off from work Friday and Monday to lead the charge. He was receiving messages as early as 5:30 a.m. on Saturday morning explaining steps being taken to clean the building. He is grateful to the teachers reaching out to the board with their concerns. “Do what’s right, do your best and treat others the way you want to be treated” and “We are doing what is right for our students and staff”. Beazley Elementary School is the same age as Walton, and the same testing will be done at that school for precautionary measures to ensure Beazley does not have any mold issues. He appreciates everyone for their efforts to clean the schools for teachers, students and staff.

Mr. Cox commented on upcoming calendar meetings: Budget presentation on February 12 at 5:30 at the School Board Office, Town Hall meeting at Moore Middle School on February 26 beginning at 6:00, student award and recognitions on March 5 at Prince George High School starting at 6:00 followed by a work session at 7:00 that evening. Other work sessions are scheduled throughout the month and posted to the district’s website calendar. Concerning the Walton situation, he felt he needed to take ownership and be involved with the cleanup process and has been on site each day since Friday and will continue to be present for Tuesday’s cleaning and testing and on Wednesday for the staff meeting before employees start up their workday. He also reiterated that the board has an open door policy and encouraged employees to contact them for any reason. “We are here to support you and we will get through this”. Walton School is scheduled to re-open on Wednesday and we will continue to monitor this situation.