

Three Contenders for Director of Schools

Written by Jessie Williams
Tuesday, February 18, 2014



Macon County School Board members met in regular session last Thursday evening, February 13, narrowing down their search for the next Director of Schools to three contenders – Tony Boles (current Macon County commissioner and RBS High School science teacher), Shawn Carter (current Supervisor of Instruction for Macon County Schools) and Matt Eldridge (former Overton County Director of Schools).

Board members arrived at these three candidates by each naming three of the nine interviewed contenders they would like to re-interview and tallying the three most listed names.

Boles, Carter and Eldridge will go through a second round of interviews on Tuesday, February 18, before a final Director of Macon County Schools is selected by the board.

Three Macon County High students – Ryan Minchey, Michelle Smith and Rachel Underwood – and the parents of Michelle Smith, Mr. & Mrs. Jody Smith, spoke to board members concerning the way that GPA's are calculated in order to rank the top ten students of the graduating class.

According to those students and parents, the current GPA calculations reward those students who take an easier academic path and unjustly discriminate against students choosing to take a more academically challenging path.

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It was also stated that students who received at least one B during their high school career were ranked higher than students with straight A's due to pass/fail classes (fourth block sports and teacher's aids).

"I'm asking the board to change this policy... So that current juniors' and sophomores' class ranks and GPA's are evaluated fairly," said MCHS senior Minchey. "Unlike us. Which I personally feel like we've been discriminated against for choosing the more academically challenging path."

Each of the speakers stated that while they didn't want to take away from any of their fellow classmates' achievements, they believe that some students should've had higher rankings than others.

"Even the students who benefit from this ranking system – the students in the top ten – have truly been punished because they had to choose as freshman whether they wanted to pursue academically challenging courses or whether they wanted to be ranked in the top of their class," said MCHS senior Smith.

Smith's mother urged board members to amend the current policy in order to prove that education matters.

The only board member to comment on the topic was Rebecca Tuttle, who stated that these students will go on to accomplish great things 'without regard to a number or placement assigned to them right now.' No further discussion was had.

The current formula for calculating GPA's affects this year's senior class, the 2014-2015 senior class and the 2015-2016 senior class. The school board voted some time ago to change the GPA policy beginning the 2016-2017 school year.

Also during last week's meeting, Supervisor of Attendance Brenda Eller informed the board that

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Macon County has exhausted all of its 'stock piled' days up until parent/teacher conferences. In order to make up some of those days, Eller suggested that students and teachers attend school on February 17 (President's Day) and February 26 (parent/teacher conferences). Otherwise any other missed days of school due to weather will have to be taken off of Spring Break.

Board members agreed with Eller's suggestion, voting to approve the revision of the 13-14 SY calendar to include attendance on those two days.

If no more snow days are accumulated, or if more snow days are accumulated, the school calendar will have to be revised again to be sure students are in attendance for a total of 180 days.

In other business:

- School board members voted to approve the consent agenda (leave requests, trip requests, minutes from previous meeting).
- The board voted to approve a resolution honoring the Macon County High School Marching Band. The resolution applauds the band's accomplishments for the 2013-2014 School Year under the direction of band director Joey Wilburn and assistant band director Jennifer Holmes. The MCHS Marching Band received the title of 2A State Champions during the 13-14 SY.
- Red Boiling Springs High School principal Don Jones requested that RBS science teachers be able to design the floor plan for the school's science lab. Board members agreed to his request.
- The revision of Policy 6.4031 (head lice) was approved on second and final reading.
- Board members tabled the approval to donate a metal building to the Lions Club until the March meeting so that Maintenance Supervisor Randy Robinson could be in attendance.

- Board members voted to raise the pay for substitute bus drivers from \$40 a day to \$45 a day in order to try to get more hired. It was explained that many full-time bus drivers have been sick and more subs are needed. The sub positions are also offered to teachers.
- Board members voted to drop discussion of the CTE position, leaving the position information unchanged.
- The board voted to approve the school calendar for the 2014-2015 School Year. The approved calendar was voted on by Macon County teachers, who opted to have school on Veterans Day (175 yes, 30 no).
- Board members voted to declare library items in the Macon County Junior High School storage to be 'surplus' so they can be auctioned off.

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- An 8th grade dance fundraiser to raise funds for the MCJHS cheerleaders and tennis teams was approved by the board. The dance will be held March 1, 2014.