

ECU Community School Advisory Board
August 12, 2021
9:02 a.m. – 10:08 a.m.
VIRTUALLY on Microsoft Teams

Presiding: Dr. Art Rouse, ECU Community School Advisory Board Chair

Board Members in Attendance: Dr. Kristin Gehsmann, Dr. Africa Hands, Dr. Ethan Lenker, Dr. Chris Locklear, Mr. Robert Moore, and Dr. Alana Zambone

University Counsel in Attendance: Ms. Patrice Goldmon

Guests in Attendance: Ms. Tracy Cole, Mr. Scott Gomez, and Mr. Rick Yakubowski

Special Guests in Attendance: none

Board Members Absent from Meeting: Dr. Elizabeth Hodge

Call to Order: Dr. Art Rouse called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and thanked everyone for attending.

Approval of the Minutes: Dr. Rouse then called for a motion to approve the revised minutes from the last meeting. Dr. Alana Zambone made a motion to approve the revised minutes from the previous meeting. Dr. Ethan Lenker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Approval of the Agenda: Dr. Rouse then called for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Robert Moore made a motion to approve the agenda. Dr. Africa Hands seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously via roll call vote.

Public Expression: None.

Updates to the Board

- A. Community School Operational Update: Dr. Rouse noted that this is the 5th year of operation for the school, and all available space is occupied. ECU is still working with PCS to get the washer and dryer hooked up and operational. South Greenville Elementary has been very accommodating in sharing theirs with the Community School.

- B. Personnel Report: Ms. Tracy Cole noted that there have been several personnel changes since the last meeting. One 1st grade (Amanda Jackson) and one 2nd grade teacher (Megan Sealy) have each resigned, and the Special Education teacher's contract (Debbie Hardwick) was not renewed. Randoria Atkinson was hired as the IHC Director and will start on August 16th. There are two recommendations for hire waiting for approval for the 2nd grade position and for a teaching assistant position. There are still vacancies in 1st grade, 3rd grade, and the Special Education teacher. Due to these vacancies, there will only be one 1st grade classroom with 24 scholars in the class. There will also be only one 2nd grade classroom with 24 scholars in the class. Both of these combined classrooms will each have one teacher and two teacher assistants. There are several positions that have yet to be posted: 3 reading specialist positions, a school nurse, and a special education teacher assistant position. Dr. Ethan Lenker asked for clarification on the number of students in the 2nd grade classroom. Ms. Cole said there would be 24. Dr. Lenker asked if the IHC position had been posted for 5 years without being filled until now. Dr. Art Rouse responded that there had been a few people hired for the position, but none had stayed. He explained that the goal has always been wraparound services. This position has always been a challenge because the preference is for someone with community connections. The current hire for this position is a former student worker. Dr. Rouse went on to explain that he is working diligently to address personnel needs. He is trying to get ECU to post positions sooner. The goal is and has always been small class sizes. Dr. Lenker said that he has talked to the General Assembly about class sizes, which are an on-going problem. It is always difficult when students must be moved after school has already started. He commended Ms. Cole for her decisions. Mr. Rick Yakubowski stated that he is also working on employee recruitment issues. He plans to have a range of 3 standing positions that are open for recruitment online: classroom teacher, teacher assistant, and substitute teacher. This way, if a teacher leaves, the position is already posted and can begin recruiting immediately.
- C. Finance Report: Mr. Yakubowski presented the budget reports. He ran back through the current budget that was approved at the last Advisory Board meeting last May. This year's budget totals \$2,093,733. Money that is provided by the State and Local ADM covers only 40-50% of this budget every year on average. Federal funding is about 11% of the budget, and what we receive from the UNC system is about 11%. Twenty-four percent of the funding comes from ECU. The budget provided to each Board member electronically also includes additional tabs that address personnel and operations in more detail. Last year ended with expending \$1.9 million dollars that included \$100,000 from ECU, of the \$250,000 that had been allotted. This year's budget is slightly higher to account for the IHC position and the additional classroom teacher for 3rd grade being hired this year. Mr. Yakubowski then explained additional funding for the coming year via the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds. There is \$200,000 in ESSER II funding and approximately \$430,000 in ESSER III funding for the coming school year. The ESSER III funding will be used to hire 3 literacy specialists in time limited positions because this is grant funding. ESSER II funding was going to be used for hiring a school nurse. However, Ms. Cole recently opted-in through the Department of Health and Human Services for funding to provide nursing support. The school will receive that allocation of approximately \$200,000. Thus, the use of ESSER II funding is going to be reexamined. Because all ESSER funding is under a federal grant from the DOE, all positions supported by ESSER funds will have to be time limited. Dr. Alana Zambone asked what the time limit would be for the literacy specialists. Mr. Yakubowski responded that they were limited to 2 years, through September of 2024, which is the limit for ESSER III funding. ESSER II funding ends in September of 2023, so this funding is essentially for this year and the following school year. Dr.

Gehsmann asked if the people hired for the literacy specialists positions will have master's degrees and endorsements as Reading Specialists. Dr. Rouse responded that ECU is trying to hire people with the highest credentials possible. Ms. Cole added that she worked closely with Dr. Kimberly Anderson, a professor in Literacy, English, and History Education to write job descriptions that would include those credentials. Dr. Rouse also noted that ECU bought out Dr. Anderson's time so that she could work in a greater capacity at the Community School to help with teaching literacy. Dr. Lenker asked if Dr. Anderson will be available to provide professional development at South Greenville as well. Ms. Cole replied that there is already a plan for LETRS training, so she needs to consult with Dr. Anderson. Additionally, Dr. Anderson is one of 8 Literacy Fellows in the UNC system who helped create the Literacy Framework, so Ms. Cole is very excited to have her on board. Dr. Gehsmann suggested trying to hire reading recovery-trained teachers who have worked in early literacy. She also has ideas on recruiting for these positions. Dr. Rouse asked her to email those suggestions to him or to Ms. Cole since her microphone was not working; all of her comments were being read from the chat section of the Teams virtual meeting.

- D. Legal Report: Ms. Goldman explained that there was no update for this morning.
- E. Principal Report: Ms. Tracy Cole shared the Principal's Report. Ms. Cole noted that the previous school year ended on a strong note, on June 24th. The staff finished their work for the year on July 9th. One hundred percent of the 3rd through 5th graders took the first administration of the reading, math, and science End-of-Grade Tests. This was a challenge due to COVID. All test data is preliminary and will be approved in September. Initial reviews of the data show increases in student proficiency in reading and math when compared to the results from 2018-2019. As of today, there are 123 students committed to attend for the upcoming school year. The school's capacity is 125, so there are only 2 spots open right now. Last year, the school offered virtual and in-person instruction due to COVID. This year, there will only be in-person instruction offered, except for very special circumstances due to illness or quarantine. This year, masks will be required for scholars, faculty, and staff, regardless of vaccination status. Physical distancing guidelines have been aligned with CDC suggestions. There will be hand sanitizer stations throughout the building and extra masks available for anyone who needs one. The faculty and staff will review and model all protocols and safety expectations for scholars when they return. Last year, the Community School had no confirmed cases of COVID from August through March; from April through June of last year, there were only 4 confirmed cases among its students. This year will also include COVID testing, developed by a partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services and a state-contracted vendor to provide on-site testing. This will save families from having to find COVID testing sites on their own. Ms. Cole expressed her gratitude for the water bottle filler that was purchased by ECU and installed by PCS. Ms. Cole also expressed her gratitude for the continued partnership with Pitt County Schools, which is extremely supportive of child nutrition, facility, and transportation needs for the school. She noted that Dr. Lenker and Dr. Lassiter visited ECUCS on June 14th when Chancellor Rogers visited the school. Ms. Cole and Ms. Covington, the Principal of South Greenville, continue to collaborate and are co-sponsoring a collaborative event with both schools: a rally with 100 Men in Ties and Women in Pearls to welcome the scholars back to school. There are school supply drives being sponsored by the ECU Faculty Senate and the Education Living Learning Community for both the Community School and South Greenville. The Community School is working with Dr. Rita Sullivan in the Library Studies division to launch a Digital Library collection for scholars, faculty, and staff this year. The school is also working with the Pirate Play group with the School

of Allied Health and Sciences. The ECU Honors College has committed to serving as Reading Buddies, collecting for the school's food pantry in the Spring, and committed to one or two service days on campus. Beast Philanthropy continues to provide weekly food distribution to the families of both the Community School and South Greenville. Beast Philanthropy also donated clothing to the school's clothing closet this summer. Faculty and staff will report on August 13th. The Open House this year will be August 19th from 4-6:30pm, in person. The first day of school is August 23rd that includes the 100 Men in Ties and Women in Pearls Greeting to welcome the students back for the new year. Mr. Moore asked for verification on the Open House on the 19th. Ms. Cole reiterated the date and hours for the event. Mr. Moore noted that Pitt County has not yet mandated mask wearing for its students. He asked about the possibilities of Community School scholars mingling with un-masked students from South Greenville. Dr. Lenker responded that the Board of Education is meeting next week to decide on COVID procedures; Dr. Lenker intends to push for mask mandates on buses, even if masks are not required in the classrooms to avoid such a situation. Ms. Cole noted that the only mingling that could or does happen is on the school buses. Otherwise, the students of these 2 schools have separate buildings and separate meals times; additionally, students will be eating in classrooms and not the cafeteria this year. Dr. Gehsmann asked for an update on the Kids Read Now program. Ms. Cole responded that the program kicked off on May 17th with 60% of students attending. Every student received a book with a code to receive the next book. Ms. Cole noted that Dr. Atkinson and Dr. Crow from the LEHE Department have been very helpful with this program and even helped to arrange with the post office for the books to be picked up and delivered to the Community School for distribution since several families have mailboxes that are too small for books. Students who complete reading all 9 books will be celebrated in school. Ms. Cole also noted that Dr. Gehsmann asked in her chat comments if Reading Plus will be available for students again this year. Ms. Cole explained that Dr. Gehsmann helped find this program, and the Community School plans to continue using it with scholars in grades 2-5. The use of Reading Plus last year provided exceptional data about the reading fluency and vocabularies of the Community School scholars. So, the Community School will be using Reading Plus again this year. Dr. Hands asked if the Principal's updates were available to be emailed to the board members. Ms. Cole responded that she had emailed her notes to Mr. Scott Gomez and asked that he forward those notes to each board member. Dr. Gehsmann shared an article about masking in schools digitally for each board member to peruse. Dr. Gehsmann congratulated Ms. Cole and the Community School faculty for sustained commitment to the literacy program. This is a 5–10-year endeavor; the results demonstrate the commitment of the faculty and the families also. Dr. Gehsmann advocated for ECU to continue the financial commitment to continue using these literacy programs which require a sustained commitment of time to be beneficial. She also noted that new faculty will require the use of recursive professional development when onboarding new faculty.

Discussion Items

- A. Adverse Weather Policy—Dr. Rouse stated that Ms. Patrice Goldman and Ms. Cole have worked on this policy together. Ms. Goldman explained that the decision to draft this policy was to alleviate problems created by the fact that the Community School shares a building with Pitt County Schools. The current policy for ECU employees does not accurately cover the employees of the Community Schools. This new policy emulates the policy in use by Pitt County Schools but still follows the ECU policy. Dr. Rouse noted that he needed to follow Dr. Lenker's lead on this since he is more familiar with both policies. Dr. Lenker said that the new policy looks fine.

- B. Board membership—Dr. Rouse stated that Dr. Chris Locklear is working with the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor to get a new member for this advisory board from the Board of Trustees. Dr. Rouse is also working on recruiting a new board member from the educator preparation faculty. Both Dr. Gehsmann and Dr. Zambone said they were each happy to continue serving on this board. Dr. Rouse thanked each of them for their expertise and service. Dr. Locklear noted that Megan Ayers has identified a Board of Trustees member who will be serving on the advisory board. He will connect her with Mr. Gomez for that information.

Action Items – None

Closing Comments: Dr. Rouse offered one comment regarding the renewal of the statute that created and commits to continuing all Lab Schools in the state. He shared that the Community School is entering its 5th year of the MOU with Pitt County; he and Dr. Lenker are working on the new MOU for the next 5 years. A parallel process is underway between ECU and the UNC Systems Office with the Board of Governors. It is awkward to be working on the next 5 years while still waiting for the renewal of the Lab School statute from the Board of Governors. There should not be any issues with renewal. It should be approved at the end of the month, and we should be notified of the renewal in October. Mr. Moore asked if there are doubts about funding getting reduced or increased for all state Lab Schools. Dr. Rouse said that both are indeed possible. Dr. Rouse is working with the Provost and the Chancellor and has received commitments from both to increase resources (human and financial) as needed. Pitt County Schools is also committed to this partnership. Ms. Goldmon added that the requirements to petition to the Board of Governors for approval to renew is based on statutory requirements, not due to anything that the Lab Schools has done or not done. Because there are Lab Schools all over the state that are supported by the legislation, there is no expectation of not being approved to renew. Dr. Rouse noted that Western Carolina is also going through this renewal process this year; it is required by the statute. Dr. Rouse then called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Moore made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Zambone seconded the motion. Thus, Dr. Rouse adjourned the meeting at 10:08 a.m.

Next meeting: November 18, 2021, 9:00 a.m., location TBD