

**Scott County School District 2
School Board of Education Meeting
Central Office Board Room
375 East McClain Avenue
Scottsburg, IN 47170**

Board Work Session

**Board Minutes
June 5, 2017**

Board Work Session - Noon

- I. Call to Order
Mr. Kendall called the Board Work Session to order at noon with all members present.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Recognition of Visitors
Mr. Kendall thanked those who were in attendance to discuss the Elementary Teacher Request Policy and those who had called or emailed their concerns. He stated that the Board would like to speak to their thoughts on the policy, which might address many of those concerns, and move the visitors section to the end of the agenda.
- IV. Consideration of Modification to the Agenda and Approval
Mrs. Soloe made a motion to approve the agenda with the placement of the Visitors' Window being the only modification. Mr. Mays seconded and motion carried 5-0.
- V. [Professional Leave Request](#)
Dr. Slaton recommended approval of the request to take the SHS Special Education students to compete in the Special Olympics in Terre Haute June 9-11. Mrs. Roberts made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Mays. Motion carried 5-0.
- VI. [Elementary Teacher Request Policy](#)
Mr. Kendall opened the floor for Board members to state their thoughts on the Elementary Teacher Request Policy. Mrs. Roberts began by saying that she felt there should be a collaborative process between school staff and parents. She stated that school staff may not be aware of the backgrounds of some of the students (i.e., traumatic events, medical issues, learning delays, personality conflicts, etc.), which might be beneficial in determining which teachers may be better suited to deal with certain students. She understood the need to balance classrooms but believed parents should be allowed to have a say. She

added that communication on the front end would help us do what is best for kids in the long term. Mr. Moore and Mr. Mays agreed.

Mrs. Soloe agreed that it is important to be as informed as possible about the students in order to make the best decisions for them. She also felt it was important to trust in the recommendations of the students' past teachers. Mrs. Soloe felt there should be educational reasons for parent requests rather than just because they might want a certain teacher.

Mr. Moore questioned whether parents talked to their children's current teachers about which teacher they should have the next year. Mr. Kendall stated that each elementary probably did things differently and asked Mr. Rose to explain the process. He responded that this year the elementary principals and teachers met and built equitable class lists based on a large variety of data. He added that there was more data available about student growth and achievement than ever before. The plan was to randomly draw teacher names to assign to the classes in order to address the Board's concern that everyone be treated fairly.

Mr. Kendall stated that a memo was sent last year informing parents that if they had teacher requests there had to be an educational reason for that request and that it was going to be the last year to allow requests. He added that when he asked how many teacher requests were received last year he found that JES, LES, and SES ranged from 20 to 35 requests, however, VFES had 145 requests. He stated that he had concerns with such a high number and felt that having that many requests would basically be like telling other kids that they have to have a certain teacher regardless of their individual needs. He agreed that collaboration between all parties is needed but added that 145 teacher requests out of 330 students is unreasonable. He noted that even though JES and SES have higher percentages of special needs, they had considerably fewer parents requesting teachers. Mr. Kendall felt it was important to define an "educational need" and to designate who would be charged with determining whether requests met that criteria. He also stated that the original intent of the Board was that the appeals process after class lists were made would be sufficient to give parent input, but upon further consideration, felt that there should be some type of process on the front end to provide that information prior to classes being assigned.

Mr. Moore asked Mrs. Barrett if certain grade levels had higher numbers of teacher requests at VFES and she responded that some grades did have more requests than others. Mrs. Roberts asked if she could qualify how many of the requests were true needs and Mrs. Barrett stated that she didn't believe many of the requests were warranted.

When asked about the process Vienna used for creating class lists Mrs. Barrett explained that she met with all of the teachers for the current grade levels along with the special education teacher and every student was individually reviewed. They considered data regarding special needs, high abilities, at-risk students, behavior, academics, gender, peer groups and other specifics to determine if there was a teacher the student should or should not be assigned. They tried to equalize class lists using the data.

Mr. Kendall asked that beginning next year, soon after spring break, parents are given an opportunity to meet with the principal about issues they would like taken into consideration prior to assigning their students to classrooms (not necessarily choosing the teacher). Realizing that parents know their children and that

teachers, counselors and administrators know how children act while at school and may have other considerations, this would empower parents to come to the table and allow teachers and administrators to do their part in assuring that every student's needs are met to the best of our ability.

Mr. Mays agreed that classrooms need to be balanced to make it fair for teachers and that parent concerns should also be taken into consideration. He added that if there is a teacher that parents continue to try to avoid, the administration needs to try to determine the cause of those feelings.

Mrs. Yost mentioned that what parents see on social media is not always indicative of what is happening in the classroom. There is the perception that some teachers almost recruit using social media while others may be just as good in the classroom but not communicating that through social media.

Mr. Kendall stated that Scott 2 has done a good job of changing the perception of our school District and that we may need to look at ways to address the perception of our teachers and the reasons why people may not want certain teachers, stating that part of that is perception. He added that we also have to be fair to our teachers in order to continue to attract the best, noting that we do try to recruit the very best teachers and many teachers choose to teach at Scott 2 even though they live in other districts, because of the great atmosphere here. He noted that it is certainly not fair to a new teacher if parents request not to have them just because they don't know them.

Mrs. Soloe stated that sometimes social media is not fair to teachers and if there are legitimate issues with a teacher the principal needs to be made aware of those issues.

Dr. Slaton thanked everyone in attendance and those who had provided input. He stated that he appreciated all that Mr. Rose had done to work on this process. He added that numerous teachers had communicated that they felt the process used this year was the best ever. Dr. Slaton stated that he does not want to take parents completely out of the equation, but the challenge is how to manage this now, prior to the last contractual days for our elementary principals, in order to be ready for the start of school. He proposed providing some type of form to elementary parents to complete if they have issues they would like taken into consideration when assigning their child to a class. Those forms would need to be returned within 10 days in order for Mr. Rose to vet the requests and notify parents of the decision as to whether or not their request was approved. If not approved parents who feel strongly will have the opportunity to appeal that decision. It was pointed out that only parents who go through the pre-application process will have the option to appeal a decision.

The consensus of the Board was that the current class lists can be kept and adjusted according to parent requests deemed appropriate. The Board also wants to do away with the "random drawing" of teachers for those lists. They also asked that no one dominant teacher is allowed to make class lists and that the principal should be the final word.

At this time the floor was open to visitor remarks. SES parent, Mrs. Lyndi Hughbanks asked if Scott 2 had researched how other districts handle teacher requests. Mrs. Roberts responded that Scott 2 is challenged by having multiple elementaries. Mr. Kendall stated that he would rather try the process devised this year,

see how it works and make adjustments as needed.

JES parent, Mrs. Tiffany Bishop, questioned if medical issues would be considered educational needs and the response was that they definitely would meet the criteria. SES parent, Mrs. Crystal Noble, agreed that medical issues should be considered and teachers trained on how to deal with issues in their classrooms.

SES teachers, Mrs. Michelle Moon and Mrs. Christy Semmont, commented that addressing parent considerations on the front end rather than through the appeals process would work better for teachers with children in the district to avoid hard feelings amongst their colleagues when requests are made.

VES teacher, Mrs. Heather McCoskey, stated that there were teachers who did not attend the work session because they were nervous to do so with some of the parents. On behalf of some of the teachers, she thanked Mrs. Barrett and the Board for allowing them to have a voice in creating the class lists. She added that a lot of issues between teachers in their building have been created because some teachers feel they are better or worse teachers than others due to so many parent requests. She added that it is also incredibly difficult for the principal. She closed by saying that the teachers have the students' best interest at heart and they are able to see them in a different aspect than parents.

VFES parent, Mrs. April Stutsman, stated that she did not understand why teachers would not feel comfortable because she felt they could all behave like adults. She added that some teachers had asked them to be their voice because they felt uncomfortable coming to the Board. Mr. Kendall responded that he did not know why they would feel that way since this Board had been very open about asking for teacher input. He stated that they would like employees to use the chain of command, but if they don't feel comfortable doing that they should bring their issues to the Board. CTA President Bagwell stated that from a legal standpoint there are certain things in board policy that specifically require going through the chain of command. Mr. Kendall responded that if that is the case, the Board would not enforce that policy. Mr. Moore added that he prefer it be called chain of communication.

VFES parent, Mrs. Peggy Nunley, remarked that it may help to change perceptions if parents were welcomed into classrooms to observe first hand. She stated that parent visits seem to be welcomed in lower grades but not in higher grades which means parents only hear what their children report.

VFES parent, Mrs. April Stutsman added that elementary aged children are not mature enough to articulate things, so parents should be able to advocate for their kids. She stated that teachers like having all of the control, but her child is her priority and that it is very unsettling that schools do not want parent input as required through Title I. She felt parents were misled into thinking they were not allowed in classrooms.

Mr. Kendall wanted it stated for the record that there is no double standard, stating that he does not make teacher requests as a Board member. He added that every Board member, with the exception of Mrs. Roberts who was absent, voted to proceed with the Elementary Teacher Request Policy and after the initial policy was formed decided that it would be better to add something to address parent input on the front end rather than only through the appeals process. He stated that there would be a first reading of the updated policy on June 12 with a second reading at the following meeting. Mrs. Stutsman asked if the parents should

attend those meetings and Mr. Kendall stated that the agenda would be posted by noon on Thursday so everyone would have access to the policy. If there were any issues with the posted policy, parents are welcome to attend and/or contact the administration or Board with their concerns. He added that forms will be available to parents on Wednesday and parents who have educational needs they would like considered when their child is assigned a teacher.

VFES parent, Mr. Joel Nunley, stated that he was very encouraged by this meeting and agreed that the big issue was collaboration.

Mrs. Soloe stated that the letter originally sent to elementary parents about the new policy was not meant to undermine anything.

VFES parent, Mrs. Beth Robison remarked that she and the other parents in attendance were acting as the voice for all children and just trying to come up with a solution. Mr. Mays responded that the Board was also concerned about those students whose parents are not there for them and that he felt a good compromise had been reached.

VII. Adjourn

Mrs. Roberts made a motion to adjourn at 1:30 p.m. Mr. Mays seconded and motion carried 5-0.

Jason Kendall, President

Josh Mays, Vice President

Ron Moore, Secretary

Christy Roberts, Member

Andrea Soloe, Member