

Teacher Advisory Council
12.13.16 – 3:30 p.m.
Minutes

Present:

Cartner, Larry
(Superintendent)

Lassiter, Steve
(Asst. Superintendent)

Sanders, Joanne
(Chief Academic Officer)

Boone-Thompson, Elsie
Davis, Linda K.
Fulford, Monica
Griffith, Millie
Hinton, LaQuitta
Hughes, Shelby
Jackson, Sarah
James, Jennifer
Lilley, Linda

Palmer, Alicia
Rountree, Eugene
Santana, Myraida
Sutton, Katrina
Wooten, Elizabeth

Dr. Cartner opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Time was provided for members to read the responses to questions submitted prior to the meeting. Dr. Cartner asked members to send questions as they receive them instead of sending all at one time.

Dr. Cartner asked if there were questions about the handout (*"A Note About Sick Days"*) attached to the TAC Q&A document.

A question was asked about the need for doctor notes and what would happen if one was not provided. An example was shared that if an employee had a child sick with a virus, it would not necessarily require a visit to the doctor but would require the employee to stay home.

Dr. Cartner responded that it is up to the principal to require or not require a note. He indicated if one was requested and not provided it could be considered insubordination and the employee could receive a written reprimand. He further commented that if it was an employee that did not have a history of absences then the principal would likely waive the doctor note. He indicated principals are not out to "get you," but are trying to avoid inappropriate use of sick days.

Dr. Cartner asked TAC members to help him with the "Note" and indicated he is not trying to make anyone mad, but the Salary & Benefits Manual is very clear on use of sick leave. He discussed the tone and content of the "Note" and shared that he needs teachers to know that the community is talking about teacher attendance; the Board has talked about it formally and informally and that it was discussed during the Strategic Planning process. He shared that students have better attendance than teachers. Since August teachers have used 1096 sick days (these are only sick days, no other types of leave) and that is over 6500 hours of lost instruction.

He discussed taking sick leave under false pretenses is equivalent to fraud. He indicated it only takes one person to see you out shopping or vacationing and for them

then to ask if you were on sick leave for it to become at a minimum an uncomfortable situation and at worst case a career altering situation.

A question was asked about what type of leave teachers could take if they had to take a day and did not have a note from a doctor (example of helping elderly parents, attending other functions, etc.)

Dr. Cartner responded that teachers have personal leave days (require 5 days advance notice to principal).

A suggestion was made that principals may need to ask “why” folks are taking so many sick days – there may be reasons and if they really shared the “why” they are not wanting to be at work it might be eye-opening.

A comment was made about not being able to get doctor appointments after working hours and having to take ½ day of leave.

Dr. Cartner responded that last year he talked with Sentara about this issue and they informed him that evening appointments were made available and are still available. Evening appointment slots frequently go unfilled.

A TAC member shared that Patient First (urgent care office in Virginia) takes school employee insurance and charges a doctor visit co-pay instead of urgent care co-pay.

A question was asked if attendance is better this year than last year.

Dr. Cartner responded that he has not asked for a comparison at this point, but anecdotally he can't say it is getting worse or better. *Update: Attendance is indeed better this year than the same time period last year. Last year for the same time period, we lost 7100+ hours of instruction. This year, we lost 6500+ hours of instruction.*

Dr. Cartner asked TAC members to think about people in their building and what type of questions they might have – are they covered in the “Note.”

Comments in response to Dr. Cartner were:

- *Over the years, various administrators have allowed use of sick leave for lots of different things....*
- *The tone is good, but the guilty ones will not like what it says.*
- *The guilty ones will have negative comments.*
- *You will hear, “so are you going to tell me I have to bring a note....”*

Lassiter commented that the expectation is for people to come to work and that regarding notes it is up to the principal as to whether or not he/she will require anyone to bring a note. Principals can use their discretion.

A TAC member inquired as to where or not an administrator can tell you that you have to come to work sick and if you take a sick day and do not go to the doctor can they ask for a note after the fact.

Lassiter responded that if you are sick principals will not make you come to work and that if you were sick and did not go to the doctor, the principal could ask for other documentation (i.e. note from employee).

Dr. Cartner indicated that he is not trying to put people in a position that they do not tell the truth and he understands that not everyone goes to the doctor every time they get sick. He indicated that if they call in sick, they can't be out shopping, playing golf, etc. just because they want a mental health day.

Dr. Cartner shared and reviewed a draft 2017-18 calendar school year calendar. He discussed the school calendar rules and regulations. For 2017-18 school cannot start prior to August 28th and must end by June 8th. 215 days (student days, workdays, 10 built-in annual leave days and 11 holidays) must be included in the calendar. The number of student days drives the number of teacher workdays. As student days go beyond 180, the number of teacher workdays decreases.

He indicated early release days could be added in February or March if needed.

He asked TAC members to take the calendar and discuss it with staff at their school. He indicated if they wanted a blank calendar to use to design a calendar he would be happy to send one.

A suggestion was made to make June 12th an optional workday instead of a required workday.

Dr. Cartner asked members to bring suggestions/comments back to the January meeting.

Dr. Cartner asked for questions/comments/concerns.

A question was asked about Benchmark results and when they would be given to teachers.

Sanders responded that there was an issue with student reports and they were delayed, but that teachers should have been able to view results immediately. This was confirmed by others.

Dr. Cartner wished everyone a wonderful holiday and encouraged them to enjoy time with family and friends, but to also spend some time by themselves.

The meeting adjourned at 4:29 p.m.