



**Emergency Meeting  
03/13/2020 01:00 PM**

Board Room  
712 North Eugene Street  
Greensboro, North Carolina 27401

**Meeting Minutes**

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**Attendees**

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**Voting Members**

Deena Hayes - Chair, District 8  
Linda Welborn - Vice-Chair, District 4 (arrived at 1:01 p.m.)  
T. Dianne Bellamy Small - District 1  
Darlene Garrett - District 5  
Byron Gladden - District 7 (arrived at 1:03 p.m.)  
Khem Irby- District 6  
Winston McGregor - At-Large (arrived at 1:01 p.m.)  
Anita Sharpe - District 2  
Pat Tillman - District 3

**Also Present**

Superintendent Sharon L. Contreras, PhD  
Attorney Jill Wilson  
Tamara Holloway, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

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- I. Call to Order  
Chairperson Hayes called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
  
- II. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence  
Chairperson Hayes called on Pat Tillman to lead the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.
  
- III. Approval of Agenda

Chairperson Hayes asked board members to review the agenda and called for a motion to approve or revise it.

Motion made by: Ms. T. Dianne Bellamy Small

Motion seconded by: Ms. Anita Sharpe

Voting

Ms. T. Dianne Bellamy Small - Yes

Ms. Darlene Garrett - Yes

Mr. Byron Gladden - Not Present

Ms. Deena Hayes - Yes

Ms. Khem Irby - Yes

Ms. Winston McGregor - Yes

Ms. Anita Sharpe - Yes

Mr. Pat Tillman - Yes

Ms. Linda Welborn - Not Present

*The motion passed upon unanimous voice vote of 7 to 0.*

IV. Superintendent Authority for Actions Related to COVID-19

Chairperson Hayes called on Superintendent Contreras and Chief Operations Officer Angie Henry.

Ms. Henry began by stating that as the district is continuing its preparations on COVID-19, administration is bringing this request to the Board suspend Board policies, as appropriate, in order to allow the Superintendent to be able to take necessary actions to keep Guilford County Schools (GCS) staff and students safe. These include, but are not limited to, policies related to student attendance, the academic calendar, purchasing, community use of facilities, and employee absences.

*Motion was made by Winston McGregor, seconded by Pat Tillman, that the Board authorize the Superintendent to temporarily waive Board policies as necessary to implement appropriate response measures regarding potential risks and legal actions associated with COVID-19, with the understanding that the Superintendent will keep the Board informed on any such actions.*

Motion made by: Ms. Winston McGregor

Motion seconded by: Mr. Pat Tillman

Voting

Unanimously Approved

*The motion passed upon a show of hands of 9 to 0.*

V. Virtual Board Meetings Due to COVID-19

Chairperson Hayes called on Chief of Staff Nora Carr to present a recommendation that Board hold its meeting online in accordance with guidance from the Governor's Office and the North Carolina Department of Public Health.

Dr. Carr began by stating that, in order to limit the spread of COVID-19, administration is recommending that the Board consider moving to a online (virtual) format for its meeting, effective immediately and for the foreseeable future, in alignment with guidance from the state officials that public gatherings be limited. Staff would work to make sure that the technology is accessible to as many people as possible and adhere to North Carolina open meetings laws.

*Motion was made Anita Sharpe, seconded by Winston McGregor, that the Guilford County Board of Education hold its meeting online only in alignment with guidance issued by the Governor's Office and North Carolina Department of Public Health to limit large gatherings and public meetings to help slow the spread of COVID-19.*

Motion made by: Ms. Anita Sharpe

Motion seconded by: Ms. Winston McGregor

Voting

Unanimously Approved

*The motion passed upon a unanimous show of hands of 9 to 0.*

VI. School/District Closings

Chairperson Hayes called on Superintendent Contreras to discuss considerations for school closings.

Superintendent Contreras began by stating that the district's endeavor is to keep staff and students safe. Administration is following current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Other factors are also taken into consideration when deciding whether to close schools.

Chief of Staff Nora Carr stated that there is a role for school closures as part of a larger community mitigation strategy. Chief Student Services Officer Wanda Legrand continued with an overview of the CDC's criteria. Dr. Legrand stated that when the district receives information from schools related to students or staff who are exhibiting symptoms, those who have traveled to areas the CDC considers "high risk,"

or those who have been in contact with people exhibiting symptoms or have traveled to "high risk" areas, administration contacts public health officials immediately who then provide suggested next steps. Those suggested next steps are then presented to the Superintendent's Cabinet and the appropriate protocols are put in place. Dr. Carr added that research shows that short-term school closures early in a pandemic do not impact the spread of the virus, which is why the CDC is putting more emphasis on hand washing and sanitation. School closures are likely to hurt the district's most vulnerable students the most: those in poverty, and those who receive medical support at school. Additionally, there are hourly employees who when they don't work due to school closures they do not get paid.

Superintendent Contreras reiterated that GCS has students who reside in group homes and homeless shelters where they are required to leave during the day, as well as students who are experiencing domestic violence at home. Additionally, if students whose parents are health care providers or first responders have to take off work to care for their child, there is diminished capacity in the community to treat and respond to those affected by the virus. Superintendent Contreras emphasized that if the district has to close schools, it will be because there is a risk to students' health by being at the school building, not simply because other districts are closing.

Superintendent Contreras stated that another consideration is how to provide online learning opportunities to students who do not have access to technology or internet connectivity at home. She informed the Board that the district has spent about \$3 million to purchase 5,300 iPads that could be loaned to students; however, that won't be enough to cover the need. According to Census data, approximately 23 percent of GCS families do not have access to the needed technology or connectivity, thereby denying them a free and appropriate education. Superintendent Contreras called on Legislative Committee Chair Darlene Garrett to provide an update this issue.

Ms. Garrett stated that she has been in contact with State Senator Michael Garrett who contacted the lobbyist for Spectrum to ask if they could provide assistance in providing connectivity to families of students on free and reduced lunch. Spectrum currently has a number of hotspots, primarily in the city, that they would open up for use by everyone. Where there are no hotspots, Spectrum will provide broadband access for 60 days free of charge to GCS families.

Superintendent Contreras reported that the district is making plans in the event of district-wide school closures. Staff is looking at a hybrid model where most school buildings would close, but a few would remain open to serve the children of health care workers and first responders, students without access to distance learning technology, and medically fragile students should their parents so desire.

Administration is also working to make sure school nutrition workers and bus drivers do not go without pay by providing opportunities for them to provide food for families and then deliver them into neighborhoods.

In the case of a district-wide closing, GCS currently has a platform called Canvas where students and families can access lessons uploaded by their teachers.

The Board's Legislative Committee will work with Guilford County's delegation in the General Assembly, the North Carolina School Board Association and the National School Board Association to seek assistance from legislators on a variety of issues. Among those: pay for staff if they are furloughed, technology and connectivity issues for students, transportation of meals, issues related to the academic calendar and testing, funding and reimbursement issues for the district.

Board discussion focused on the following issues:

- Superintendent Contreras acknowledged that issues related to graduating seniors is a priority.
- Superintendent Contreras emphasized to families that they always have the right to keep their student home from school for reasons they deem appropriate. In the case where there is not a school/district closing, staff is awaiting guidance from the State Board of Education in regards to coding for attendance purposes.
- Board member Winston McGregor encouraged families to urge their representatives in the General Assembly provide quick action on issues related to graduation and attendance.
- Chief Operations/Financial Officer Angie Henry reported that the district is tracking all expenses related to COVID-19 in order to be ready to account for them if/when they seek reimbursement from state and local sources; until then, expenses are coming from the current budget. Superintendent Contreras requested that the Legislative Committee include support for educational relief at the federal and state levels in its agenda. Ms. Henry reported that there was approximately \$7 million in unencumbered fund balance to cover expenses in the event the district was not reimbursed.
- Superintendent Contreras encouraged families with students with underlying medical issues, which place them at high-risk, to work with their schools and medical providers on the proper documentation.
- Chief Academic Officer Whitney Oakley provided an overview of the online learning platform, Canvas, currently used by GCS. On Canvas, teachers can upload content, videos of lesson modeling, chat with students, among other functions. Some teachers are already using Canvas in their instruction. The district will continue professional development, as well as training for families and students.

- Chief Student Services Officer Wanda Legrand reported that her department is already working with community partners to best focus community resources. Any community organization that wished to assist should feel free to contact the Office of Student Services for more information.
- Dr. Carr reported that the District Relations team is posting the most up-to-date information available to students and staff on the district's website, social media, TV station, as well as various other communication avenues. Superintendent Contreras urged families to log on to their PowerSchool accounts to ensure their school(s) have their most current contact information.
- Gateway Education Center and Northern High, out of an abundance of caution, were closed for cleaning after the district learned of someone who is associated with the school was self-monitoring due to possible COVID-19 exposure.
- Guilford County Emergency Management Management Director Don Campbell was invited to come to the podium to speak on the county's response. Mr. Campbell reported that Guilford County is already in contact and working in partnership with agencies across the region, state and nation. All jurisdictions are collaboratively focusing on what steps are necessary to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a pandemic.
- Chairperson Hayes cautioned that there will be equity issues around transitioning from in-person to distance learning that will need to be addressed.
- GCS Health Director Yvetta Grier stated she supports the district's following of current state and federal guidelines.
- Superintendent Contreras stated that this situation is unprecedented. The district is working diligently working to make sure that it has and is using the most accurate and up-to-date information. Every department and school is updating and creating contingency plans. The district will continue to follow guidance received from local, state, federal and international partners.

## VII. Legislative Considerations

The Board's Legislative Committee was tasked with considering the legislative issues discussed for its consideration at the earliest convenience.

## VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, at 2:16 p.m., *motion was made by T. Dianne Bellamy Small, seconded by Winston McGregor, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed upon unanimous voice vote of 9 to 0.*

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Secretary/Superintendent

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Secretary