

Board O'Gram

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Report of Rome Board of Education — Action Compiled by Dr. Robert A. Young, Director of Title I / Testing

Sixth Month of Attendance: Dr. Cooper reported the attendance for the sixth month of school. West End Elementary School had the highest elementary school percentage of student attendance at 97.41 percent. Rome Middle School had 96.23 percent of student attendance for the sixth month of school. The highest percent of staff attendance was West Central Elementary at 98.14 percent.

New Personnel: On a Collins/Wilson motion, the Board unanimously approved Dr. Cooper's personnel recommendations: Certified Employment 2011-2012: Brent Bell/RHS

Focus on Student Achievement – West Central: Dr. Janice Merritt presented the Focus on Student Achievement for West Central Elementary School. Accompanying Dr. Merritt from West Central were: Teresa Fricks, Jim Bowen, Jennifer Uldrick, Beth Rogers, Stephanie Dennis, Ruth Cipolla and Kim Brown.

To begin her presentation, Dr. Merritt stated that West Central has been named a Title I Distinguished School for nine consecutive years. She reviewed West Central's CRCT scores and identified the grade levels of which she was especially proud. She also identified the areas that need additional work. Most of the scores showed an upward trend over the past several years. The Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) in reading and English language arts (ELA) were reviewed. The scores of West Central students are above the required levels and they are working toward 100% achievement levels.

Professional learning and coaching is one of the primary ways that West Central's staff is working to improve. The staff holds monthly meetings in both math and ELA. Book studies in math include *Error Patterns in Computation* by Robert B. Ashlock and *Classroom Discussions: Using math talk to help students learn* by Suzanne Chaplin. The math book studies are focused on increasing level three math talk and on assisting with differentiation. In the area of English language arts (ELA), the staff is studying *Reading with Meaning* by Debbie Miller, *The Book Whisperer* by Donalyn Miller, and *Strategies that Work* by Stephanie Harvey. ELA book studies are focused on increasing reading comprehension and the love of reading.

The critical element in any improvement effort is to know where you are at any given time. To do this, one must have ways to assess progress and properly analyze the data. Data is gathered from several sources and then needs-based intervention groups are formed. Dr. Merritt identified the indicators for intervention in literacy and math. In literacy, the indicators are norm-referenced testing, phonemic awareness/phonics – PSF, NWF, LNF – DIBELS, informal phonics inventory, fluency – ORF – DIBELS, and comprehension – diagnostic reading assessment (DRA). In math, the indicators are norm-referenced testing, math talk learning community – formative assessment, basic fact fluency, and Kathy Richardson's diagnostic interviews & Marilyn Burns' "Do the Math".

One important ingredient for a successful school is to have lots of community involvement and celebrations. Dr. Merritt discussed several ways in which West Central celebrates students, parents, and their community. She concluded her presentation with a two-minute video, in which students explained what they were doing in intervention lessons. The video also showed examples of interventions taking place with professional educators. The video ended with the Rome City Schools' mission statement: All students will graduate from Rome High School ready for college or work.

Standards-Based instruction in Elementary Writing: Cassie Parson, Literacy Coach at West End Elementary, presented on standards-based instruction in elementary writing. Parson first discussed the strategy of using the coaching model in Rome City Schools. RCS is providing an ongoing, job-embedded professional learning strategy for teachers. The implementation cycle is to provide a model of classroom strategy for the teacher. Then the coach and teacher "team teach" a lesson. The teacher then teaches a lesson using the new strategies and the coach provides feedback and support. Once the three steps are completed, the cycle begins fresh with a new effort and focus.

One of the best ways to teach writing is to have the students read the type of writing that they are attempting. Teaching conventions within the context of writing takes on five elements: invitation to notice, invitation to imitate, invitation to write, invitation to combine, and invitation to edit. Following these steps, the students will work through the process of writing and receive meaningful and powerful feedback that will help them become resourceful writers.

Author Dr. Kate Wood Ray talks of the immersion and inquiry framework. There are five steps to this strategy: gathering texts; setting the stage; immersion; close study; and writing under the influence. According to the presentation, the way to best write is to live the writing process. Reading thoughtfully is critical to writing. In conclusion, Mrs. Parson answered the question, "Why is there an emphasis on writing?" with a quote from the Writing Next Report, "Writing well is not just an option for young people - it is a necessity. Along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy."

SPLOST III Report: Dr. Cooper gave an update on the SPLOST III revenues. He stated that the January 2011 collections of \$380,878.40 were \$121,851.10 below projections for the month (\$502,729.50). Dr. Cooper showed some field report photos and reviewed the progress of the auxiliary gym and the band and choral room expansion at Rome High School.

2011-2012 Lunch Prices: On a Swann/Wood motion, the Board unanimously adopted Dr. Cooper's lunch price increase recommendation as presented by Brandy Money, the Rome City Schools Nutrition Program Director. Mrs. Money stated that the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act was passed on December 2, 2010. The law requires programs increase paid student lunch fees to meet the equivalent of federal reimbursement of a free meal, which is \$2.74. Rome City Schools has not had a price increase for school meals for the last sixteen years. Starting in August 2010, lunch prices will increase for all grade levels by \$0.15. This means the elementary lunch will become \$1.25, the middle school and high school lunch will become \$1.50. The federal government will set a timeline for all schools in the country to meet this requirement.

A Vision for Public Education: Equity and Excellence: Dr. Cooper presented a video entitled *A Vision for Public Education: Equity and Excellence*. The video was sponsored by Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) and Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA). The video is the culmination of a two-year vision study made by school board members and Georgia superintendents throughout the state. The vision project director is Dr. Bill Barr. In December 2010, phase one of the study was completed. A report was developed after two years of work and included 45 specific recommendations which were organized into seven education system components: early learning and student success; teaching and learning; teaching and learning resources; human and organizational capital; governance, leadership, and accountability; culture, climate, and organizational efficacy; and financial resources.

According to Dr. Barr, the next step is the most critical. Phase two includes dissemination of the information, study of the recommendations by local districts and their communities, and, finally, implementation.

This phase will require the involvement of all education stakeholders in the development of what education should look like in the future in Georgia.

Announcements: Under other items, Dr. Cooper announced several activities:

- Rome City Schools' spring break is scheduled for March 28-April 1, 2011.
- Rome High School will host the annual Night of Dreams at The Forum on Saturday, April 9, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.

Other Board Actions:

- On a Jones/Huffman motion, the Board unanimously adopted, on Second Reading, the 2011-2012 School calendar as presented by Dr. Cooper.
- On a Collins/Swann motion, the Board unanimously adopted the *A Vision for Public Education: Equity and Excellence* resolution as presented by Mrs. Sims.
- Mrs. Sims appointed Dr. Jones as the Rome City Schools delegate and Mr. Wood as alternate delegate for the 2011 GSBA delegate assembly in Savannah, Georgia on June 17, 2011.