

RANDOLPH COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Public Hearing---“5th Grade Academy Project”
Thursday, January 23, 2014
Minutes

The Randolph County Board of Education held a public hearing on Thursday, January 23, 2014 in the auditorium at Randleman Elementary to receive comments regarding the Randleman Middle School “5th Grade Academy Project”. Board Members in attendance were as follows: Emily Coltrane-Chair, Todd Cutler-Vice Chair, Tracy Boyles, Gary Cook, Matthew Lambeth, and Tommy McDonald. Also present were Superintendent, Stephen Gainey, and the Leadership Team.

Opening comments

Emily Coltrane, Board Chair, welcomed those in attendance and presented opening comments. Ms. Coltrane stated note cards were distributed to those in attendance to submit any questions. The questions and answers will be posted on the RCSS website. The Board Chair announced the date of Thursday, February 6, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in the Central Services Board Room for a Board of Education Special Called Work Session to review and discuss the feedback received from the public hearing.

Ms. Coltrane, Board Chair, turned the meeting over to the Superintendent, Stephen Gainey.

Superintendent’s comments

Dr. Gainey thanked Ms. Coltrane. He expressed his appreciation to those in attendance at the public hearing. The following is an overview presented by the superintendent. Randleman Elementary currently has 827 students on campus, and the facility was built for a capacity of 645 students. The facility currently has 15 trailers with an entire grade level in the trailers. Due to the overcrowding issues, there are three options to consider: 1) Do nothing and leave everything as is (15 trailers, over 800 students); 2) Redistricting by moving 70 to New Market, 100 to Level Cross, and 16 addresses to move to Grays Chapel; and 3) “5th Grade Academy” Project at Randleman Middle. The Superintendent stated the addresses moving to Grays Chapel will probably happen to clean up a particular area in transportation/district lines. Dr. Gainey expressed concerns of option two with reassignments/redistricting. He discussed this being a tough option to even consider. Based on the three options, information regarding RMS “5th Grade Academy Project” was presented to the board at the November work session as an option to explore. Upon review of the information, the board agreed to this was an option to explore. In December, more information was brought back to the board for their consideration and review. The plan presented to the board was a 22 item budget list. The superintendent addressed some of the concerns that had been expressed from the community as follows:

- We will work to keep 5th graders separate, but can't promise they will never interact.
- 5th graders will continue to ride the elementary buses. Students will be shuttled back and forth to the schools.
- Daycare will still be available to 5th graders at Randleman Elementary.
- “Girls on the Run” program will still take place.
- Students will still be a part of Battle of the Books, ROAR, and Lego robotics.
- Yearbooks will be a decision between the two principals around August/September.
- 5th grade teachers will be going with the students.
- Concerns of the current facilities at Randleman Elementary will be looked into.

This is a temporary plan to assist with the overcrowding issue until funding is available again to build schools. Dr. Gainey stated the public hearing tonight is part of the process to be transparent and to receive feedback. He then turned it over to the Board Chair to proceed with public comments.

Ms. Coltrane, Board Chair, then began the public comment portion of the public hearing. She called for the first speaker, Joanna Goodyear.

Ms. Goodyear stated she has a daughter who is a rising 5th grader. She expressed concerns and fears of her child moving to the middle school. Ms. Sypole, Principal, had already helped her with a lot of her concerns. Ms. Goodyear stressed the students need to be separated at the 5th grade academy, but feels this would be very hard to accomplish. She understands this would be the better option of the three, because she doesn't want the students separated from friends through redistricting. Finally, she stated she would rather her daughter not go to a 5th grade academy at the middle school.

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The Board Chair then called for the second speaker, Dawn Betts.

Ms. Betts thanked the faculty and staff at Randleman Elementary. She is a retired teacher from Randleman Elementary and is currently working as an interventionist for 4th and 5th grade. Ms. Betts stated she had recently discussed the 5th Grade Academy with a board member, and is in favor of the academy. Change is difficult, but she truly feels this would be a good move and the children will be fine. Ms. Betts also discussed concerns of areas in need of renovation at Randleman Elementary. She made a suggestion of leaving the trailers that have existing restrooms to keep students from going inside the building for restroom facilities. Finally, Ms. Betts challenged the board members to visit Randleman Elementary to see the facilities and trailers.

Board Chair called for the third speaker, Ellen Lucas.

Ms. Lucas shared that some of her concerns and questions had already been answered. She is unsure if students are emotionally ready and feels students are being expected to grow up too fast.

Board Chair called for the fourth speaker, Angela Cole.

Angela Cole stated it would be an inconvenience for students to be redistricted. In the event that students are not separated she shared her concerns. She referred to her research of the effects of 5th graders in middle school settings. Ms. Cole referenced a publication from the Terry Sanford Institute, “Should Sixth Grade be in Elementary or Middle School? An Analysis of Grade Configuration and Student behavior” (Publication date---2/9/07). She discussed the adjustments for student transitioning at younger ages, the risk academically, along with the negative influence of middle school.

Board Chair called for the fifth speaker, Colleen Mitchell.

Ms. Mitchell thanked the board for their efforts and recognized Ms. Sypole and Mr. Hamilton for all they do for students. The students, parents, and teachers were congratulated for their efforts in overcrowding conditions. Ms. Mitchell stated she is the chair for “Success by 6” and a part of the Randleman Business Women. She expressed how much she values education and feels it is time that Randleman Elementary School experienced a safer and more pleasant environment. The 5th Grade Academy would be a positive move to relieve the overcrowding situation.

Board Chair called for the sixth speaker, Kristy Yates.

Kristy Yates shared some of the same concerns including the maturity level and extra-curricular activities. She stated better planning should have happened earlier on. The trailers are not anything new at Randleman Elementary. A suggestion was made for the money spent on the academy and the rent on trailers to be used for a payment on an addition.

Closing remarks

In conclusion, the Board Chair announced the end of the public hearing. Ms. Coltrane asked those in attendance to turn in their note cards with their questions to the staff members located at either door. The Board Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

The public hearing ended at 7:00 p.m.

Board Chair

Board Secretary