Meeting December 17, 2012

Concerns:

1. Feeling Overwhelmed – The stress and amount of work required of each teacher is too much. This is leading to low morale and to people leaving the profession prematurely.
2. Time (goes with the feeling of being overwhelmed) –Teachers are still being asked to do more and more without taking anything away. I am afraid that with all the collection of data and the extra record keeping along with the additional items we are to be doing in the classrooms (SIMs and CLC) that the students will begin to suffer. Teachers have to make choices about time and it is coming out in the classroom. We really need time to work together planning units, developing curriculum and looking at available resources. It is really not fair to continue to think that we can do all of this after school.

*Response: CCEA suggested the formation of a committee to look at what we currently are doing and make suggestions of items we could “take off the plate.” Dr. Johnson said she would look into it. We discussed what was so stressful and taking up so much time. Unfortunately, we cannot do away with the evaluation tool. We need to take a look at our data keeping and see if there is a way to make it easier.*

1. Professional Development – having the textbook people come back in may have been a waste of time. Many felt that they did not get anything new that it was just a repetition of previous meetings. Teachers thought that they were coming in to show them how the series works, what to do and how to do it. (There is also the problem of having technology tools not be available for use with the new series.)

*Response: Pearson let them down – the training was supposed to be different. We discussed the possibility of going back to the choices for Professional Development. When faculty was asked before they had very few respond to be presenters. There are experts within our staff they need to come forward so we can offer choices.*

1. Evaluation – People need to be “on the same page.” It becomes really important with more than one person evaluating in the buildings and they are not both doing the same thing. What can we do if the person evaluating us believes that everyone has some room for improvement? It has upset some that supposedly the central office has said everyone is proficient.  As a result, exemplary is not being given for individual standards.  People recognize that it will be tough to get a ranking of exemplary but do not understand why individual standards can't be exemplary.  Also, if it is okay to give developing/needs improvement, then it should be okay to give an exemplary.  As usual, most will get proficient same as satisfactory under the old system.  Nothing has changed with the new tool.  It is okay to give a negative (developing/ needs improvement) but not okay to give a positive (exemplary).  I have concern when a principal says developing/needs improvement is okay/fine.  It isn't going to be once you add up all the numbers and that person doesn't get at least 2.7 to be proficient but instead is developing/needs improvement overall in their ranking.  Oops! Now you’re under a plan of improvement??? Oops! Now the legislators say you can't have another of those developing/needs improvement or you will lose your job???  Not happening yet but will it???

*Response: It is not the intention of the CO to prevent anyone from receiving exemplary. They will speak with the Principals about this. Our evaluation tool does not have the two needs improvement and you are out clause. We will need to watch the legislators to see what they do.*

1. Teacher Round Table – Teachers feel as if this is no longer real open communication. When questions have to be submitted to the building principal, then edited before being sent or even returned because “we will not discuss this;” then the two way communication has ended. The TRT was begun in order to give people a voice .

*Response: The Round Table cannot be used as a “gotcha” tool by people who wish to remain anonymous. It is intended to be a place to discuss system wide concerns. These are the reasons that questions have to be submitted prior to the meeting. It is possible that we could go to a direct submission of questions if people have to sign their names to their question or concern.*

1. Money - If we do go over the “fiscal cliff” what is our plan? What is your vision of how things are going to go? Will we be Riffing people? We also need to find a way to actually give a raise that is not taken away by all of the set cost (Health Care, dental, FICA, VRS.)

*Response: We are all hoping that there will be a “deal” struck before this is allowed to happen. If there is no agreement then we stand to lose between 600 and 800 Thousand dollars. We could probably cover positions until the end of the year. However, it does mean that we would have to cut items for the next year. The area that could see the most impact is Special Education and Title1.*

1. When are self-contained Sp. Ed. Teachers supposed to take lunch? Many have to help with lunch for their students and are not getting an unencumbered lunch time; isn’t this a work violation?

*Response: The people this affects needs to let HR know. The CO was not aware this was happening and yes, it is a problem. Please, have those with this issue contact Dr. Timmons.*

1. For the new teachers that need to pass Praxis Content Knowledge, Reading for Virginia Educators and Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment.   
   They are being told if they do not pass them by a certain date (end of December for one and the end of January for the other one) that they go on sub pay until they pass all three. I understand that they cannot be rehired for next year if they have not passed before contracts come out. However, to penalize them more when they already have to pay to take the tests and all the stress of not passing. We do expect them to continue to do a teacher’s job.

*Response: They are trying to work with teachers on this. There are services available for people who need some help in passing the Praxis test. They have also extended action (in some cases) until after the next test. These things are handled on a case by case basis. Unfortunately, regulations do not allow for unlicensed teachers to be in the classroom full time. By not passing the Praxis, that individual is not licensed to teach. The CO offers sub pay so that those people who may be struggling with the test to at least get some pay and to maintain the job. The other option is to post the job and see if they can get a licensed person to apply for the position.*

1. There seem to be some that are treated differently by administrators. In some cases it is a favoritism shown and in others it is a feeling of being “picked on.” What can we do to ensure everyone is treated the same?

*Response: Dr. Johnson will discuss this with Principals at their next meeting.*

1. Custodial Concerns
2. Why isn’t there any heat at night for the custodians?
3. Why do custodians on the elementary level have to work until 9:30 at night when nothing is going on after 8:00?
4. Custodians cannot shampoo rugs, strip floors or put fans on wet carpets. They can only dry the top of carpets while the bottom is still wet, creating mildew.
5. Why can’t custodians get substitutes when they are out sick? Teachers get substitutes but custodians don’t.
6. People get harassed when they are out on medical leave and even provide a doctor’s note.
7. Why do custodians have to punch a time clock when others do not?
8. Why do people in authority not know how to communicate?
9. Why is there prejudice against the low ranking employees?
10. Why do people get dismissed from the system and come back and get promoted?
11. Why doesn’t the Superintendent hold a meeting with each department of the school system once a month? It used to be that way.
12. Why do custodians have to take their vacation days prior to June 30 of each year? They don’t have substitutes during the year and most of them can’t take off because they are being harassed about taking off. June is the busiest time for custodians so they can get a head start on summer cleaning.

*Response: Dr. Johnson and Dr. Timmons will share these concerns with Gary Parkinson. They do not have many answers to these questions as he is in charge of Maintenance.*

*a. They will look into having no heat at night.*

*B .Do we have all custodians working the same hours? Dr. Johnson and Dr. Timmons will ask about this.*

*C .Is the wet carpet due to a lack of appropriate equipment for the job? If it is, put in a request for what is needed.*

*D. CO does not call a substitute if it is only one day because we can cover the loss. However, if it is more than one day they do call a substitute in. They are looking to hire more part-time custodians to help with coverage.*

*E. They will look into any harassment. An employee just needs to let them know it is happening.*

*F. Custodians are hourly employees. The time clock is to monitor over time.*

*J. The custodians have representatives on the classified round table. Classified Round Table meets once a month – find out who the representative is from your school and give them your questions or concerns.*

*K. Vacation for the year must be taken prior to June 30 because that is the end of the year. July 1 marks the beginning of a new year. It can be taken anytime between July 1 and June 30. The only thing they do not allow is for several people in the same building to be off at the same time. Remember vacation days can be saved and accumulated.*

Thank you for the meeting, I look forward to speaking with you again.