

# Despite Delays, School Board Still Pursuing Reorganization

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County school board members took a second look Tuesday night at a plan to reorganize the central office instructional staff adopted last December but not set into motion, and made only one change on a 3-2 vote.

The plan provided that all employees whose positions were eliminated would have hiring "priority" on all jobs within the school system for which they qualify.

The amendment adopted on recommendation of consulting attorney Richard Schwartz and board attorney Glen Peterson states the plan is "not intended to infer or entitle any greater rights than provided by state law".

The RIF policy gives "career" teachers—full-time classroom teachers or supervisors of teaching with current class A teaching certification and tenure—priority for positions for which they are qualified that become available over the three years following their dismissal. If that teacher is offered a job for which he or she is certified and refuses it, the board takes that name off its list of available employees.

Board members Thurman Gause and Yvonne Bright voted against the amendment, which was introduced by Bill Fairley and adopted without public discussion after an executive session to discuss "attorney-client personnel matters."

Bright was the only board member to vote against the plan in December, saying the decision was being made too hastily. Gause said he voted for it in December with the understanding it was only "preliminary".

Gause said his no vote Tuesday was in support of Superintendent Ralph Johnston, who he said had recommended holding off on the plan until adoption of the budget and getting the results of a requested state audit of the central office operation. Gause also claims several lawsuits against the board are "on hold" pending the board's action Tuesday.

Board member Polly Russ said she is still hoping the plan will be put in place in time to prepare for the 1994-95 school year, but acknowledged the board did discuss Tuesday some of the concerns Gause mentioned.

Johnston said Tuesday night he doesn't have a timetable for implementing the plan, but would be talking with the board about it.

"I'm not sure when it will be put into effect," he said. "Much of it is tied to the budget process, and we need to see what happens there."

When the board adopted the plan in December, the stated intent was to allow time for reorganization to take place by the start of the new fiscal year on July 1. Assistant Superintendent Jan Calhoun and Johnston had said they expected most planning and personnel decisions to be made as early as January and February.

Few of the seven changes outlined in the plan have occurred and the formal notification process required when eliminating any positions has not begun.

Nelson Best, director of athletics, health, physical education and driver's education retired earlier this year. His was one of the five county-funded jobs eliminated under the plan.

Others are director of library/media, now held by Edna Gause; supervisor of middle schools, held by Bob Rhyne; supervisor of high schools, held by James McAdams; supervisor of elementary schools, held by Christine Hall.

Some of their duties would be assumed by no one, reflecting changes in school system priorities, while other responsibilities would be picked up by remaining central office personnel or school-based staff.

The plan also creates two director slots for elementary and secondary education and three 11-month teachers on special assignment (of no more than three consecutive years) working with school staffs as "school improvement specialists".

The draft 1994-95 school budget proposes extending contracts for high school and middle school assistant principals from 10 months to 11 months, another part of the plan. The goal is for them to assume some of the services previously handled by central office staff such as opening and closing school and summer staff development activities.

New Accreditation Approach  
County high schools will take a

different approach this coming year in seeking reaccreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

On a motion by Fairley, the board agreed for the high schools to switch from a traditional 10-year re-accreditation process to an annual "school renewal" approach that meshes with existing school improvement and performance-based accountability efforts.

"We have to meet the same SACS standards," said Calhoun. "The only difference is that we will be looking at the schools on an annual basis not every five years, which I think will be more effective."

A school's progress in meeting five broad goals would be monitored and schools that fail to meet their goals over a three-year time period would lose accreditation.

Under a traditional plan, schools are reviewed by an accreditation team at five-year intervals and on 10-year intervals must complete extensive self-studies at a cost of up to \$12,000 per school. The county high schools were up for 10-year reaccreditation this coming year.

Calhoun estimates the "school renewal" process will cost between \$300 and \$500 per school each year.

SACS accreditation is a voluntary process that assures participating schools meet established standards. While most states now have their own standards or improvement programs in place, Calhoun said schools have been reluctant to drop regional accreditation, believing it is still generally expected by colleges and universities.

#### Bids Tabled

Action on bids for additions to West Brunswick and North Brunswick high schools were tabled for a second time while board members pinpoint a source of additional funds.

"There seems to be a lot of confusion here on what direction we're going," Chairman Donna Baxter said as she suggested waiting until the board has answers to its questions. "I'm hesitant to obligate this board or a future board to spending funds we don't have."

Both projects are scaled-down attempts to meet the more pressing space needs of the two schools by adding six classrooms at North and eight at West if funds allow.

Bids came in higher than expected, and school board members aren't certain more money is available. County commissioners had designated \$543,021 for the North expansion and \$774,254 for West, but West will require another \$227,000 if eight classrooms are built.

They want to find out from commissioners if money can be drawn from a county reserve fund or if commissioners would object to use of one source of state school funds for the project next year. Finance Officer Rudi Fallon said the schools should receive about \$300,000 in "ADM" capital outlay funds next year, with the actual sum based on student membership.

Otherwise the only option may be to proceed with one project and delay the other.

Assistant Superintendent Bill Turner said a decision needs to be made quickly because the bids are good only until June 3.

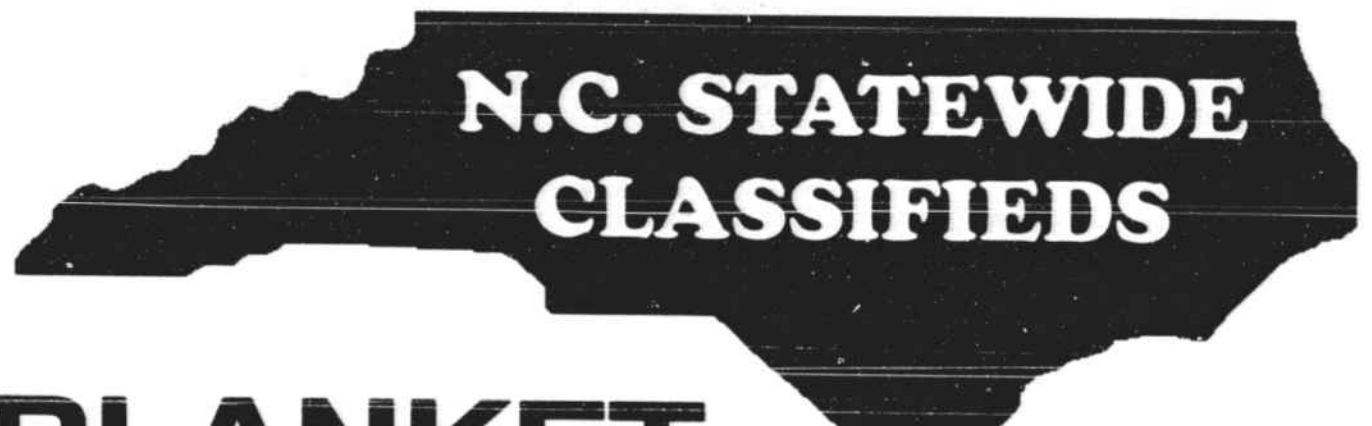
In other business the board:

- approved routine personnel actions and authorized the finance office to sell a large group of surplus items "as is" at public auction on June 4. Most of the equipment isn't in working condition but have salvageable parts.

- awarded the in-car driver education contract for next year to low bidder Jordan Driving School for \$100 per student. Diamond School of Driving, which now provides the training, submitted the highest bid at \$140 per student. This year it received \$137 per student. The school system expects about 741 students to take driver's education next year.

- heard from Assistant Superintendent Oscar Blanks that the "Children in Crisis" committee will begin organizing May 25 as a "Communities In Schools" program and is working on developing plans, seeking money and locating a site or sites to provide an alternative school setting next year for students who don't fare well in a traditional school. Blanks said prospects are good for receiving a state crime prevention grant. He expects alternative school to replace or reduce the existing extended day programs at the high schools.

NOW YOUR AD CAN REACH  
**ALL OF  
NORTH CAROLINA**  
**FOR ONLY  
\$200**  
**25 WORDS**  
\$6 each additional word



**BLANKET  
NORTH CAROLINA**  
**OVER 120 NEWSPAPERS**

(For more information, call this newspaper or...)

**SIMPLY FILL OUT THIS FORM  
AND SEND WITH YOUR CHECK.**

(No Phone Orders. Larger order forms are available from this newspaper.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Advertising Copy: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**THE BRUNSWICK BEACON**

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING DEPT.  
P.O. BOX 2558, SHALLOTTE, NC 28459  
**(910)754-6890**