

## Classified Communications Group Minutes September 10, 2024

### **Melissa Izatt, Chief Human Resources Officer**

Welcome New Members, Introductions and Responsibilities

### **Dr. Jean Luna-Vedder, Director of Schools**

Thank you for agreeing to do this. We really appreciate the exchange, the input and hearing about how we can continue to improve. Just a few quick updates going on at the district level. Enrollment is sitting right about 40,000 students. If you count our Pre-K students we are over 40,000. If you do not count our Pre-K, we are just under. We are hitting that threshold and as we continue to grow. A part of that is additional schools. We officially closed on another piece of land last Friday. That is the land for Freedom Elementary slated to open 26/27 timeframe. We will continue to track that work with the County Commission to determine the right time to build Freedom Elementary. Communications is working hard this year on a kindness campaign and each month has its own theme. You might have seen the cute Hello posters that encourage saying hello to one another, to just be kind. At middle schools we have expanded the CTE program to focus on incorporating additional career ideas. They are doing units and hands on activities like fake arms and taking blood pressure and doing all kinds of things, to learn and make informed decisions on career technical education before they get to high school. One other thing is bus drivers. That is one area that we have grown a ton and made some significant gains. When you hear us say our bus drivers are 82% staffed that sounds fantastic compared to 50% a couple years ago. The reality is we're still about 50 drivers short. On a daily basis we're feeling the impact. We have to remember that we have gained buildings and kids. We've gained a lot more routes. We've gained a lot more neighborhoods and spaces, so continuing that's a huge focus for us and we're really working on it. We were just talking to Senior Leadership on Monday about all the things starting to get people to apply. How can we get them trained and up running even quicker? That is a spot we are going to continue to work on. All of you at the buildings be nice to our bus drivers, offer them a water or popsicles when it is hot. We do not want to just recruit but also retain.

### **Melissa Izatt, Chief Human Resources Officer**

Classified Staff Appreciation Day

- September 18 – Mechanics, Bus Drivers and Bus Aides
- October 23 – Business Affairs, Onsite and Volunteer Recognition

### **Sharing a positive story from your school/location**

**Liberty Bus Complex:** I came to the school system to drive. I closed my company after 21 years and I found Liberty. Haley, Steve and Georgina are the reason why people stay. It's odd to say we're small bus drivers but we carry a heavy load. It's not a job, it's family and that makes all the difference in the world when you're looking at job retention. You can't find a bus driver at Liberty that's not there to step up on the radio when needed.

**Alternative School:** We have threes churches that donate fuel bags, and they have been wonderful doing that. So, we appreciate that every single one of our kids goes home with a fuel bag. That is pretty awesome.

**Norman Smith:** We are doing something different this year and some of the staff are teaching career exploration and introducing the different careers today for students to get to explore different things and think outside the box and not necessarily, the ones that they know already. It is doing good.

**Kirkwood Complex:** We had a welcome back picnic bbq. It was great to get the three schools together to welcome each other and be able to welcome our new little Cobras.

**Northwest High:** Thanks for the opportunity to have Engage and the amount of people that came. I appreciate the support for the volleyball team with the concession stand. It was wonderful to see everybody just engage and it was positive. Just wanted to say thanks because I know you guys spend countless hours making sure that we're able to still get opportunities over the summer. If you were there and PD, I mean, it was incredible how smooth everything went, but you really could feel the positive energy just about everybody coming in and interacting and supporting each other and excitement for the classes and the learning. So, it was a really cool.

**Kenwood Middle:** We have started our after-school program in clubs to enhance our student achievement goals. At the beginning of the school year we had approximately 100 men and women from the community to welcome the students back and encourage them along the school year. We also had backpacks donated from various organizations. That creates excitement too, obviously the backpacks, but then having other people, they're just cheering them on, getting them ready to go for the year. Knowing that people that they may not know are showing up for them.

### Classified Questions

#### **Why is there no hot water in the restrooms?**

Norm Brumblay, Chief Operations: Most restroom across the district have access to hot water and all areas at NPMS do have water heaters with circulation pumps. Our records indicate that we recently found a bad ignition module a main building water heater at NPMS that may have prompted this question. The water heater has been repaired and is back on line. NPMS should currently have hot water, but if it seems unavailable, have the custodian submit a work order for Maintenance to check.

#### **Can we get the blue recycle bins back?**

Norm Brumblay, Chief Operations: Municipalities are finding it more and more difficult to maintain recycling services due to high costs and volatility in the recycling supply and demand chain. Bi-County Solid Waste does not recycle white paper anymore resulting in the removal of the blue recycle bins. Materials placed in blue recycle bins would now follow the same disposal process as non-recyclable materials.

**Firstly, I would like to thank and acknowledge the huge strides CMCSS has made with the cola wage increases that has benefited all employees. As we know, many classified positions in high schools pay higher than those in elementary and middle schools due to the heavier workload. For instance, bookkeepers in high schools typically make more than their counterparts in elementary & middle schools. However, it seems that registrars do not experience this same increase in compensation despite the significant differences in their roles between high schools and middle/elementary schools. Given these differences in responsibilities and workload, it begs the question as to why there isn't a compensation difference for registrars between high schools and middle/elementary schools. It is important to acknowledge the hard work and dedication that registrars put into their roles, regardless of the level of school they work in. Fair compensation for their efforts should be reflective of the differences in workload and responsibilities between high schools and other schools.**

Erica Christmas, Director of Classified Employment: First, I need to clarify that we do not have positions that are just registrar. All the administration position are Administrative Assistant II positions. At the high school level we do have a longer calendar which translates to compensation

in that regard. It is a little difficult to answer this question because registrar type duties are not recognized as being a stand-alone position and duties are assigned differently depending on the school.

**Does Special education services outrank Ell services in any way, shape or form? Are they equal in the eye of the law mandating the services?**

Dr. Schanda Doughty, Chief Academic Office: Special education and English Learner (EL) are both based in federal laws. The Tennessee Department of Education provides guidance regarding the implementation and monitoring of both federal laws. Special education and EL can work in tandem to address a student's specific needs. To the extent that one is in conflict with the other, the student's respective teams can work together to determine an appropriate resolution on a case by case basis.

**I believe that classified staff need at least two days to prepare before students come back before the first half day.**

Dr. Schanda Doughty, Chief Academic Office: This is something that we can look at moving forward. However, this does have budget implications and we have prioritized a COLA for the last several years.

**Is there a way to have a longer timeframe to complete the registration process?**

Christopher Causey, Chief of Staff: This is a question that will be discussed with SLT. Student Services is not in charge of establishing the calendar for registration. The Administrative Assistants High School returned to work on 7/15/24 and the Middle/Elementary returned 7/22/24. The building opened to the public 7/29/24. High School Counselors returned 8/1/2024. Teachers Returned 8/5/24 and 1<sup>st</sup> day of class for 8/7/24. This schedule will be reviewed before next school year.

**What can be done to ensure there is continuity across all schools for acceptable forms of residency.**

Christopher Causey, Chief of Staff: The Administrative Assistants need to follow the following;

- Two (2) Proofs of Residence:
  - Mortgage Verification (with name and address)
  - Tax Receipt (property taxes or personal property taxes)
  - Current Rental Agreement (naming tenants)
  - State/Federal Records (Federal Tax, Soc. Sec, Child Assistance Records)
  - Utility Bills (electric, gas, water/sewer, landline phone, waste disposal)
  - Current Car Insurance or Vehicle Registration (with name and address)
  - Internet, Cable, Satellite (with name and address)
  - Employment Records (with name and address)
  - Government Issued Photo ID (with name and address)
- Please reference the Student Registration Link at [www.cmcss.net](http://www.cmcss.net) There is not one answer that fits all. Each case is different based on evidence and documents received. Therefore if you have specific questions about a situation I can respond about that situation.

**Can we get a better explanation of Proof of Residency on the district website so we can all be on the same page?**

Christopher Causey, Chief of Staff: Under STS – F031 Statement of Residence should explain how each school should be accepting Proof of Residency. We have yearly training to address inconsistency.

**Why don't we get proper training in the front office to do our jobs efficiently, it seems there needs to be actual classes on all things office?**

Dr. Schanda Doughty, Chief Academic Office: Depending on the role and need, additional training may be provided by a number of different district supports. For specific requests, please contact Andrew Streeter (Professional Learning Coordinator for Classified Employees) and he will do his best to connect you with the appropriate support.

**Can we get an engage class on how to do a cum folder? It seems that they are not all done the same.**

Dr. Schanda Doughty, Chief Academic Office: The Professional Learning Team is always seeking feedback on additional learning opportunities, especially for ENGAGE. We will take this request into consideration and will work to provide an opportunity that includes this responsibility. As the requests for ENGAGE are sent out, please be sure to provide as many specifics as possible and we will do our best to provide high-quality opportunities to meet your need(s).

**What is the procedure to receive more detailed training for New Hires, especially in the Guidance Office and Bookkeeping Office. The time currently utilized for training is not enough time to comprehend all the information involved in performing the job duties.**

Dr. Schanda Doughty, Chief Academic Office: Depending on the role and need, additional training may be provided by a number of different district supports. For specific requests, please contact Andrew Streeter (Professional Learning Coordinator for Classified Employees) and he will do his best to connect you with the appropriate support. Also, Kathy Donahue and Theresa Bilon have expressed that they are willing to provide 1:1 training for new employees in certain areas as well.

Jeff Taylor, Chief Financial Officer: I know this is the third year we've held a four-day training for new bookkeepers. We're always looking for ways to improve that. I know with the staff that we have there with Deede Bagwell's staff, they're always willing if you have questions or if something gets missed in that training. They are more than willing to come out there and work with you on training. So, feel free to call them at any time if you have questions so they can help.

Deede Bagwell, Accounting Manager, ISA: We will train you on the basics during the summer but it is different when you are sitting at that desk, with the phone is ringing, the teacher standing there and a bus showing up for a field trip. It is hard. So, it is a hands-on learning experience. We are there to help you all you, have to do is let us know.

**It has been very difficult to contact anyone in the HR department. Specifically, classified employee reps.**

Erica Christmas, Director of Classified Employment: I would like provide you my prospective. It is a crazy time of year and we are trying to get new employees onboarded and into their schools as quickly as possible. I will say that sometimes, it can be longer to get someone on the phone because our reps are out recruiting. I have two reps out today recruiting at a job fair at Fort Campbell. Jacklyn's coordinating testing for the TA's that have applied for positions in your schools. So, they're stretched thin and basically when you say hard to contact a classified Rep that's basically three people for the entire district, so I would ask for a little bit of grace. Also, I would suggest that if you call and leave a message, maybe follow up with an e-mail to say, "I left you a message just to let you know, please get back with me as soon as you can." I never want you to feel like you are tattling on someone but please e-mail me, [Erica.Christmas@cmcss.net](mailto:Erica.Christmas@cmcss.net). It may be something I can step in and help with just to make sure that you're getting the answers to the questions that you have. It's not getting anyone in trouble or anything. It is our number one priority to give good customer service. I know my reps would feel very down by the fact that

they've let someone down. It is our top priority. So please reach out and let us know if you are having any trouble. If this is a specific situation, just let me know.

Melissa Izatt, Chief Human Resources Officer: Customer Service goes for the whole department. If you need anything HR related and not sure whom to ask, just find somebody on our website and ask. We will get you to the right person. We push that as a team, we may not individually have the answer but we will get you connected to somebody who will.

**As an EA, we return to school at the same time as students. It is hard to get everything set up and ready (examples: laptop distribution, getting cafeteria table area set up for students, hanging hallway signs, building foyer displays, scanning classroom libraries) that is needed upon return with all the trainings that are required & such. Is there any way our return date can be a couple days prior to students returning.**

Dr. Schanda Dougherty, Chief Academic Office: This is something that we can look at moving forward. However, this does have budget implications and we have prioritized a COLA for the last several years.

**If custodians get paid for coming in on their off time, why are others not getting paid when they have to come in on their off time (fall break, Christmas break) they are offered comp time with no minimum. If bookkeepers have to do a deposit over breaks for various sporting events, why can they not charge the sport. If a custodian comes to work a tournament on a weekend they charge the sport overtime but bookkeepers cannot charge for having to come in over a break and do a deposit.**

Erica Christmas, Director of Classified Employment: This sounds a little bit like there's a specific situation, so I'd love to be able to address that if there's a specific situation. Just please reach out to me about it. But first and foremost, you should be reporting all the time worked to your supervisor. I do know that if a custodian is compensated as part of a sport, that arrangement is specific to the Facilities Use Agreement. With bookkeepers needing to make deposits, you should be receiving time for that when you're having to do any of those work-related duties. So again, if I'm missing something that's unique to this situation, I would just ask that person to reach out to me.

**Why do school board members not come and visit the schools in their district? And if they do, they stay in the front office. Shouldn't they see what all is going on in the schools?**

Christopher Causey, Chief of Staff: School Board members are always invited to come to the schools. A few of them have fulltime jobs so their visits are sometimes limited to after-school or evening events. When administrators reach out to inform them of special events, our board members make an effort to be there.

**Can we get our board funds sooner? High school comes back a week before everyone else. It will help if we can get our funds a week or 2 within school starting.**

Jeff Taylor, Chief Financial Officer: From the business affairs side, this is a little bit more difficult because on our end, what we're having to do through the month of July is close out the previous fiscal year. So, we're busy doing that pretty much the entire month of July and a lot of the ISA accounts, of course they can't be closed out until the bookkeepers return at the start of the next school year. Also, when we have a year like this year where we didn't even get the budget approved until July 15th, that slows the process down even more. In the past I've been speaking with Jessica and some of my staff that I think they've tried to get it to the schools around the 20th of August. I think the 29th this year we took them and hand delivered them to everyone. I think last year was the 11th of September. The ultimate goal is to get them at least around that week of the 20th to the schools so that they can get those spent. Also in speaking with Jessica regarding

this, I think the bookkeepers were told if they need to purchase supplies to start the next school year that they are able to purchase at least one or two months worth of supplies for the next school year, but they just need to make sure that they are ordered and received before the school year closes out.

**How are we approving special transportation for FIT students zoned for a school but just choosing to go to a different school but can't get a bus stop for our own zoned students?**

Norm Brumblay, Chief Operations: Approval and placement of FIT students is specifically outlined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This Federal law leaves CMCSS with no discretion in approving transportation for FIT students or determining what schools they attend. In some cases where a child has an IEP, there are additional special education regulations that the Transportation department must also comply with regarding school placement.

Otherwise, all transportation routing is done according to the Student Transportation (TRN-A003) Policy. District policy allocates one stop for each eligible student. Special exceptions to this policy can be considered for hardships, special programs of choice, or through the employee prerequisite process (HUM-A059)

**I have been working a few sport gates the last three weeks and the push back when we enforce the clear bag policy and no re-entry is immense. Visitors make it sound like WCHS is the only school enforcing it. I pulled up the policy last night from 23/24 and noticed it only mentions football and basketball games. Why isn't it the same across the board regardless which sporting event? And shouldn't all schools in the district be on the same page? Can the district please send out the policy again to all the parents? We do have signs posted but people don't read it.**

Anthony Johnson, Chief Communications Officer: To address the last part of the question if you saw the family newsletter, we highlighted the spectator policies we've had in place again. To revisit the history of this, immediately after that we met with law enforcement agencies, emergency management, and emergency medical to conduct an after-action review to talk about what we could do to improve safety. It was a recommendation from all agencies there that we move forward with those policies, the clear bag, the no reentry, and the no unaccompanied youth for all of our activities that have a large number of people from the community attending. It was the recommendation at that point to say high school basketball and football games; we then expanded that to middle school as well, which are held at high school stadiums and gymnasiums. But one thing that we have at the very bottom of that policy is the principals at each school can make the determination to extend these to any event. I've seen at some schools they even enforce those policies for concerts or whatever it might be, where you're going to have a large number of people from the community coming in where it's a little bit harder for law enforcement or school administration school staff to police that. When it comes down to the consistency piece, the district policy is all high school football and basketball games. If it's not being implemented, notify your administrator that you've got a concern about that. If you have other activities at your school where there's a large crowd coming from the community, and there are safety concerns, talk with your administrator about that. I will say one thing I hear is it's not always necessarily visitors from in the district that have the concerns but the ones that come from outside the district. Because some smaller communities, they don't have those policies, so they get upset. They show up and find out that they can't bring in their duffel bag or whatever. When we were one of the first ones to implement, but now most large districts across the state are enforcing. In fact, many of them have asked, hey, can we borrow your policies? My recommendation is if it's a continued concern at your school, make sure that your athletic director and your coaches are communicating with other schools ahead of time indicating we have these policies and they will be enforced at the building.

**Can the option to takes days off without pay be added to Kronos?**

**Melissa Izatt, Chief Human Resources Officer:** No, there's not just an option of days without pay. Employees have personal and sick leave days. A lot of times people say, well, I'm out of personal, but I don't care you do not have to pay me. That's not an option. But there are some instances where there might be a once in a lifetime event and there is no leave. It would have to qualify under that, and it goes through the leave portal. No employees should be taking additional leave, knowing that there's no balance. If you're the person that oversees the Kronos for your supervisor, they should be aware of that. Communicate with HR if it gets to that point. We do know circumstances happen where leave is exhausted and it may be for a variety of reasons, but typically that's tied to some type of leave that is in the portal. If you have questions about that, just reach out. The principal should not approve leave if they know there's not a leave balance. Say that somebody had surgery and so they used all their sick leave then they have the flu or something like that there would be documentation that the principal would request, but it just wouldn't be an open-ended day without pay. The reason that we have that is we have to be able to staff for our students. Your principal or supervisor is responsible for managing leave requests.

**Does technology when they issue a new computer to a brand-new student provide user name and password information?**

**David Holman, Chief Technology Officer:** When the building desktop support technician issues the computer that should be with it.

**Why in the world did we only have a week to get almost 400 registrations completed this year? Where did our other week go?**

**Christopher Causey, Chief of Staff:** This is a question that will be discussed with SLT. Student Services is not in charge of establishing the calendar for registration. The Administrative Assistants High School returned to work on 7/15/24 and the Middle/Elementary returned 7/22/24. The building opened to the public 7/29/24. High School Counselors returned 8/1/2024. Teachers Returned 8/5/24 and 1<sup>st</sup> day of class for 8/7/24. This schedule will be reviewed before next school year.

**When will the trench in parking lot at the corner of Gracey and Stafford St be filled in and fixed?**

**Norm Brumblay, Chief Operations:** The District did not receive any System Wide Site money for paving repairs for the 2024-25 funding cycle. Operations will level the trench across the parking lot until proper paving resources can be acquired for this and other potholes across the district. Thank you for bringing this to our attention.