

Calendar Impact, Budget Issues at WHS Forum

Written by Gary Childers

Thursday, 16 May 2013 08:22

The Watauga County Board of Education fielded a wide variety of questions during a town meeting held at Watauga High School Tuesday evening. The first question of the evening was asked by a parent whose daughter is currently taking Advanced Placement tests for college admission purposes. Her concern was that due to the days missed because of inclement weather students in Watauga County are competing with students in the other parts of the state that have had approximately four more weeks of instruction. This led to explanations of two of the major factors that inhibit the county to be able to run their instructional calendar in unison with schools systems that are not impacted by inclement winter weather. These factors are the limit the state places on when school's can begin their instructional year and having to close schools during inclement weather. To address these concerns it was suggested that parents contact their legislative representatives and ask them to grant individual school systems the flexibility to start when it was best for their system. It was also suggested that the school system's administrators develop more proactive approaches for minimizing the impact of inclement weather such as keeping schools open more days using more restricted bus routes and making up days on Saturdays as soon as they are missed instead of waiting until they've fallen behind. The other major topic of the meeting had to do with funding issues. Questions were asked, and Board members were encouraged, to find ways to provide more support for the arts, students with accelerated academic abilities, at-risk and disenfranchised students, alternative programs, technology, and instructional materials. Board members and school administrators explained the prohibitive costs of providing additional or new initiatives in all of these areas with newly appointed interim superintendent, Dr. David Fonseca, outlined a number of funding realities facing the school system.