

Chalkboard

By

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Believe it or not, in only a few days the first quarter of Gentry Public Schools' fiscal year 04 will be ending, that period of time is from July 1 to September 30. As you read this, students will have been in classes almost five weeks.

It has been a bit of hustle and bustle. Major events already in the record books are 9 football games, three payrolls, a parking lot Pep Assembly, the first wave of state reports (Cycle 1), the Benton County Fair, football Homecoming, one fire drill, Open House, Senior Pictures, a special school board election in July, a bond sale, four school board meetings including the Annual Report To The Public, "Picture Day", Grandparent's Open House, two days of Parent-Teacher conferences, a regular school board election, and a day long visit by State Senator Kim Hendren. Understand, of course, that is just highlights. I wonder sometimes when the teachers have time to teach.

In that regard, the Gentry School Board made a positive step this school year in terms of complying both with the spirit and letter of Act 1398 of 2003. Act 1398 reads "AN ACT TO PROVIDE TEACHERS WITH ADDITIONAL TIME FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS: *SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 17, Subchapter 1, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows: 6-17-116. Non-instructional duties. (a)(1) The purpose of this section is to provide additional time for instructional purposes and to reduce the amount of time for non-instructional duties. (2) Any teacher assigned more than sixty (60) minutes of non-instructional duties per week shall be contracted with in accordance with § 6-7-807(g). (b) For the purpose of this section, "non-instructional duty" means the supervision of students before or after the instructional day begins or ends for students or for the supervision of students during breakfasts, lunches, recesses, or scheduled breaks.*

In response, the Gentry School Board adopted the following two new clauses in its 2003-04 salary schedule to meet the letter of the law. "Certified employees who perform a service for the school district outside their contracted instructional day that is not already compensated by a stipend, which requires certification to perform, and the service is in the teacher's

field of certification, shall be paid at either his/her per diem rate or per hour rate based on an eight hour day calculated from his/her per diem rate.” The second clause read, “Certified employees who perform a service for the school district outside their contracted instructional day, that is not already compensated by a stipend, is in excess of 60 minutes per week and which does not require certification to perform, shall be paid at either the per diem rate or per hour rate based on an eight hour day calculated on an aide’s position at Step 0.”

More importantly the board complied with the spirit of the law by adding two new aide positions on the staff specifically hired to supervise students during non-instruction times such as recess, lunch, and so forth. The board’s action was designed to give primary and intermediate teachers more time to either teach or time to use in planning to teach.

A parting thought—“It takes many brush strokes to paint the portrait of a child---some of those strokes are applied while the child is in rapid motion!”