The four have combined for over 130 years of teaching in area schools

By Jan Schultz
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Some very familiar faces behind the teacher's desks at Chase County Schools will be absent from the staff next school year.

Dr. J. Gordon Christensen, Vicky Fine, Cathy Howard and Jane Lenners all submitted their resignations effective at the end of the 2008-09 school year.

The CCS board of education approved them all at their meeting Tuesday, adding a "with gratitude and appreciation" in their motions.

The four have combined for just over 130 years of teaching at schools in the CCS district.

Christensen will complete four decades of teaching here this year, starting in a newly-created K-6 vocal director position in August, 1968. He's taught here consistently since then, except for a year of sabbatical leave.

Fine, a fourth grade teacher this year, will finish 31.5 years at Chase County Schools after this school year. She joined the staff in January, 1978.

Howard will complete her 29th year at Chase County this spring, arriving in August, 1980. She is a high school English/speech teacher, and has also directed the one-act and three-act productions, as well as coach the speech team.

Lenners, an elementary Title I teacher, will complete 20 years at Chase County Schools, after starting here in August, 1989. For the 10 years before that, 1979-89, she was an elementary teacher at District 42 in Lamar.

About a dozen patrons attended the meeting, with an interest in what direction the board was going to take on the K-6 vocal music position.

Apparently, rumors and an email had been circulating that Christensen's position may not be filled, and that the K-6 music classes would be assumed by Randy Hayes and Richard Munson.

Supt. Matt Fisher said there is no intent by the board to drop the elementary music program.

However, he did say it was important for the board to discuss what is an appropriate level of staffing in the K-12 building.

With previous teacher retirements, Fisher said they have discussed what is most feasible in replacing those people.

"We don't want any RIFs (Reduction in Force) in the future if possible," he said.

Board President Sheila Stromberger said she had thought about the possibility of adding the grade 5-6 vocal music students to Randy Hayes' schedule.

Currently, Hayes has three periods in which he is scheduled for music classes. His high school and junior high choir classes meet every day, and his third class period for high school show choir meets Mondays, Wednesdays and every other Friday.

Hayes also has two study halls, and a planning period, with two periods where nothing is scheduled.

"My thoughts are that Mr. Hayes is an outstanding educator and I personally don't feel we are utilizing him to his full potential," Stromberger said.

"He's too good of an instructor to be supervising study halls," she added.

Hayes said he had not considered adding additional responsibilities to his schedule, and noted he spends a lot of hours with students at night after they finish their other activities.

"After school is when my day starts," he said.

Hayes said he would like to teach a general music or a music appreciation class, which have been in the CCS curriculum, but, most years, there aren't enough students to sign up to hold the class.

He also felt high school students who plan to pursue music in college could benefit from a music theory class at CCS.

"Those students aren't getting the advanced theory that they need," he said.

Board member Charley Colton said he believes a K-6 music program is essential, but also referred to an expected loss of state aid in the coming years.

Supt. Matt Fisher told board members earlier in the meeting he's expecting a loss of about $140,000 in state aid for 2009-2010.

"As we get closer to our levy limit it's going to get tight. It's tight now," Colton said.

While it may not be Hayes, Stromberger said if someone on staff could be found to take the grade 5-6 vocal music students, they could then possibly hire a less-than-fulltime person for the K-4 vocal music.

"We have overcome similar obstacles in the past," Stromberger said, referring to the elementary art and English programs, in which part-time staff was hired.

However, some of the patrons felt a part-time music teacher wasn't the way to go.

Brad Moline said, "We aren't going to be able to replace Dr. C, but if we go parttime we may lose some of the excellence" the music programs are known for.

Hayes also said, "We have a successful music program here, and if you change that, it would affect that."

It appeared after the discussion, the school would begin advertising for a fulltime elementary music teacher to replace Christensen.

As the issue was discussed, it was also noted that study halls do not have to be monitored by a certificated staff member. Someone from the community could be hired at a per-hour wage for study hall coverage.

The board also accepted resignations from both Jodie Schuller and Kim Wilson from their junior high track coaching positions.

Supt. Fisher said with the numerous resignations this year, there hopefully will be some interest in the coaching positions from those to be hired.

If not, Fisher said they would probably have to assign them to a current staff member.

Jeremy Vlasin hired
for ag teaching position

CCS graduate and Imperial native Jeremy Vlasin was hired Tuesday for the ag instructor/FFA advisor position to replace Matt Jablonski, who resigned earlier this year.

Vlasin will also teach junior high science.

Vlasin, whose education degree is in social studies, plans to take additional ag education classes in the coming years to be fully accredited in that area, Supt. Fisher said. He will be teaching the ag education classes with a provisional certificate until that time.

He can teach on that provisional certificate for three years.

Vlasin graduated from CCS in 2000. His father, Randy, was an ag education teacher/FFA advisor here for a number of years.