

Following is information presented by drafting instructor Kim Higgins to the board and superintendent at the Sept. 18 meeting:

306: That is the number of students that had drafting as one of their choices for electives for the 2023-24 school year

112: Students had Drafting as their primary #1 choice

With only 90 seats available per year that meant there was a waiting list for students wanting to take drafting. Please don't try to discredit these numbers. I have a time stamped copy from May. I know the demand for those classes.

26: Students are currently enrolled in Drafting 154 through Mayland

24: Students are enrolled in Drafting 254. That means 24 of the 306 students will complete a Drafting Pathway this school year. Only these 24 may have the opportunity to graduate with Technical Honors. "God bless the Mountain Heritage CTE Director who has had to scramble in order to make Mayland Community College courses available for this school year. She has had to come up with a solution caused when the majority of this board voted to transfer the highly qualified teacher," Higgins said.

"What about the students that wanted an architectural career pathway? Both of the Mayland courses are mechanical engineering related, not architecture. Mayland does not offer architecture courses," she explained. "How will my son, along with many others, complete an architectural related pathway?"

Higgins said that the founding fathers of Mountain Heritage as the singular county high school had a vision. "That vision contained a drafting design program that has sustained this community and its local construction and manufacturing industry for 47 years. Ethan Allen, Henredon, OMC, Bombardier, Altec, just to name a few, and I could never name all of the construction companies that rely on the high school's drafting department for their workforce."

Higgins said that in a recent Asheville Citizens-Times article, Yancey school board chairman Edwin Fortner spoke in regard to the county's plan to take over the local library system, "And I quote, "Every governing agency has to have accountability to be operational, from what I see."

"What mode of accountability is in place at Yancey County Schools? Who is accountable for my child and countless others never having the opportunity to finish his career path with exploration in mapping,

surveying, land development, residential home design, all of which are covered in the architecture courses no longer offered at Mountain Heritage.”

Addressing Fortner, she stated, “I am sure you are not even aware these topics are covered in the Architectural III course curriculum. The heavy equipment course that this board single-handedly brought to MHHS could certainly have been enhanced by these classes. But not anymore.”

“If these architecture students, like my son, cannot complete their educational pathway, their only option will be to take college transfer courses. Without a completer course, they will not graduate with National Technical Honors. It will be a shame for gifted students to not be rewarded for their hard work in their respective CTE Courses that are no longer available. “

“Where is the accountability? I ask, who is truly in charge of the governing of Yancey County Schools? Who is making the decisions that are affecting generations to come as well as local industry and businesses? Is there an authority of accountability and responsibility that delegates leadership to one particular person or party? I ask you to ponder these questions.”

Elizabeth Boulter, who taught in Yancey’s schools for 27 years and two months, directed her remarks about the loss of quality, respected teachers to neighboring counties to the school board and superintendent.

“For the last several years Yancey County Schools has been losing excellent teachers and principals due to the increasingly bad working environment that has been created here by our system-level leadership – the superintendent and the majority of our school board members,” she stated.

“One outstanding educator who left Yancey County Schools because of the persecution and personal vendettas of some members of this board is now principal at Madison High School. Since Kevin Huskins went to work there, the school has seen its scores go up 35 percent and has an outstanding graduation rate. Another principal who left our system, Tamara Presnell, has just been named Principal of the Year – for Avery County.”

She continued, “Quality educators are continuing to flee Yancey County and its unwholesome working environment, and the blame for it lies with our system leadership. We have a majority of board members who neither know nor care what makes a school a great place to teach and learn.”

“One board member has been heard to say that he thinks teachers are OVERPAID!”

“We have leadership that is dragging down our schools, both in measurable ways, such as course offerings and in equally important ways that are harder to measure, such as teacher morale.”

“I am here to point out that if it were not for this poor county leadership, Kevin Huskins, Tamara Presnell, and many other quality educators would still be putting their considerable talents to use here in our county helping our teachers and kids,” Boulter concluded.