

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, MAY 15 2014

The School Board of Escambia County, Florida, convened in Special Workshop at 3:00 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center, 30 East Texar Drive, Pensacola, Florida, with the following present:

Chair: Mrs. Linda Moultrie Vice Chair: Mrs. Patricia Hightower

Board Members: Mr. Jeff Bergosh
Mr. Gerald W. Boone
Mr. Bill Slayton (*arrived at 3:18 p.m.*)

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

Meeting was advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on April 26, 2014 - Legal No. 1622969

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Moultrie called the Special Workshop to order at 3:00 p.m.

II. OPEN DISCUSSION

- ITTS Digital Showcase – *Superintendent*

Mr. Tom Ingram, Director of Information Technology reminded the School Board about the ITTS Digital Showcase that would be held May 16th, beginning at 5:30 p.m., in Room 160 at the J.E Hall Educational Services Center. He said there would be about twelve groups of students who would be showing how they had used technology to expand their learning this school year. In case School Board Members would not be able to attend the May 16th Showcase, Mr. Ingram said one of those groups had agreed to give a presentation during this session. Ms. Myra Palmer, Media Specialist at Ensley Elementary School, introduced students from Ensley Elementary, who demonstrated how her students had used their “virtual world” to enhance their learning. Part of ITEC immersive technology in Escambia County

- May, June & July 2014 Calendar – *Moultrie*

(*Mr. Slayton arrived at 3:18 p.m. during the discussion of this topic.*) There were no changes to the School Board’s regular schedule of workshops/meetings for May, June, or July 2014. The following Special Workshops were scheduled for the purpose of discussing the 2014-2015 budget:

May 29, 2014, beginning at 3:30 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center
June 24, 2014, beginning at 3:30 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center
July 2, 2014, beginning at 3:30 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center

- Addressing Prior Problem Behavior when Compiling and Analyzing District Discipline Statistics - Bergosh
[Handout provided]

Mr. Bergosh noted that over the past several months, a number of individuals had addressed the School Board during public forum segments “throwing out statistics” and “drawing conclusions” about the School District’s actions with regard to student discipline were different based on the student’s race. In his recent readings on the topic of student discipline, Mr. Bergosh said he came across an [article](#) entitled “Prior problem behavior accounts for the racial gap in school suspensions,” which appeared just one month ago in the *Journal of Criminal Justice*. Mr. Bergosh briefly reviewed several sections of the article that he had highlighted. He noted that reading this article had reaffirmed his desire “to ensure that we look at all the aspects of these expulsions and changes of placement before we paint with a broad brush or allow other people to paint with a broad brush and say that we’re treating some students differently than others based upon their race.” Mr. Bergosh said he would appreciate it if his fellow School Board Members would take the time to read the article for themselves.

Mrs. Hightower believed that the misconceptions in the community were primarily due to a lack of communication. She felt it was imperative for the School Board to have a conversation with members of the community about the reality of what happens in the School District and to try to clear up any misconception that the School District was treating students differently based on race.

The Superintendent noted that he would be putting together (assembling) a committee that would be readdressing the School District’s adjudication guidelines. He said the committee would consist of a wide-range of stakeholders including parents, students, community members, school-based personnel; the committee would review the discipline matrixes from a number of school districts including Broward County. Mrs. Hightower suggested that local law enforcement be included on the Superintendent’s committee. She also asked that the Superintendent invite Mrs. Waters to the committee’s meetings and that he contact either or both Judge Ross M. Goodman and Judge Edward P. Nickinson, III. She also suggested that the committee review the discipline matrixes from both Clayton County School District (Georgia) and Buffalo Public Schools (New York). Mr. Slayton suggested that Judge Scott Duncan be invited to serve on the committee. In an effort to be transparent with students, parents, and the community at-large, the Superintendent advised that the adjudication guidelines, once finalized, would be posted to the District’s website. Mrs. Hightower noted that the School Board had never been asked to approve the School District’s adjudication guidelines. In response, the Superintendent pointed out that the guidelines were a procedural document used by school deans when processing student discipline referrals. He noted that the guidelines had existed for as long as he could remember, but because they were considered procedures and not policy, they had never been presented to the School Board for approval. Mrs. Waters said she would need to review the guidelines and do some research to determine whether those guidelines would be consider procedure or policy; if deemed to be policy, then the guidelines would need to be approved by the School Board.

- Northwestern University Research Paper on Marijuana’s Damage to Brain Structure – Bergosh
[Handout provided]

Mr. Bergosh said there was no discussion on this topic; he simply wanted his fellow School Board Members to be aware of a [study](#) that showed that even casual marijuana use was linked to brain abnormalities.

- Addressing Bullying and Other Deviant Behaviors in Elementary Schools – Can Expanded School Choice Help this Problem? – *Bergosh*

Mr. Bergosh said it seemed to be a standard response from most parents who contacted him regarding a situation where they believed their child was being bullied, that the response from the school staff was inadequate. Mr. Bergosh specifically wanted to know: (1) how the Superintendent could ensure that school-level staff were following the School Board's policies on bullying and harassment; and (2) could and should the policies on bullying and harassment be expanded to provide parents more school choice in terms of the ability to move their child from the school where the bullying or harassment was occurring to another school in the District. In answer to Mr. Bergosh's questions, the Superintendent said he did believe that school-level staff was following the School Board's policies on bullying and harassment; and noted that any time a parent had requested to move their child to another school because of a situation involving a true instance of bullying or harassment, that had always been allowed to happen. He pointed out however, that the School District's school choice program already allowed for a student to attend any school as long as the parent/guardian provided transportation. Mr. Bergosh suggested that the bullying and harassment policy should specify that a student would be permitted to move to another school if a true instance of bullying was occurring; especially since the Superintendent had confirmed that the School District was already doing that anyway. Mr. Slayton said he could never support a change to the policies that would specify bullying as a reason for a school transfer primarily because the term bullying had become so widely misused and nowadays what should really be considered teasing was being labeled as bullying. Mrs. Hightower asked the Superintendent to be very clear on the policies and procedures regarding bullying during the principal training for the upcoming year as she was aware of some instances where the procedures outlined in policy (i.e., committee formed, written report generated in ten days) had not been properly followed. And in the future, if a parent did not agree with the written report, Mrs. Hightower suggested that there should be an opportunity for rebuttal.

- Escambia High School's Engineering Academy – *Superintendent*

Mr. Timothy Deloge, instructor at Escambia High School (EHS), addressed the School Board regarding the school's honors Engineering Academy. EHS students, Savannah Cox, Kirsten Binegar, Jennifer St. John, Caitlyn Miller, gave a brief PowerPoint® presentation highlighting various aspects of the academy. The students also

- Escambia County School District Clothes Closet – *Superintendent*

Staff from the School Social Worker Department announced the newly established Escambia County School District (ECSD) Clothing Closet located at Lincoln Park Elementary School. The ECSD Clothing Closet would provide needed items for students in grades PK-12 only beginning with the 2014-2015 school year. Donations of new and gently used items were currently being accepted from School District employees at any school. Beginning June 5, donations would be accepted from local business, agencies and community members. Monetary donations would also be accepted. It was noted that the ECSD Clothing Closet would be staffed by volunteers and would be open on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The School Social Worker Department extended an invitation to School Board Members to attend the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony that was scheduled for June 4th, beginning at 10:00 a.m., at Lincoln Park Elementary School.

- Insurance Update – *Superintendent*
[Handout provided]

Mr. Kevin Windham, Director of Risk Management, introduced representatives from AON Hewitt, who narrated a PowerPoint® [presentation](#) that outlined the School District’s 2014-2015 health care claim projections. The AON representatives highlighted the following information:

- o Projected deficit of \$1,252,085 for 2014
- o 2015 Projection: Increase over 2014, 12.4%
- o 2015 Renewal Strategy –
 - Change to a 4 tier contribution – reallocate
 - Employee
 - Employee + Spouse
 - Employee + Child(ren)
 - Employee + Family
- o Impact of Re-Tiering 2014 Rates to Reflect Actual Costs
- o Proposed 2015 Rates with Re-Tiering

- 2014-2015 Meal Prices – *Superintendent*

Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to the May 16, 2014 Regular Workshop.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

Mrs. Moultrie called for public forum; however, there were no speakers.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no objection, the Special Workshop was adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Superintendent

Chair