



Duval County Public Schools

April 8, 2014, Board Workshop

Ms. Becki Couch, Chairman
Ms. Cheryl Grymes, Vice-Chairman
Mr. Jason Fischer
Dr. Constance S. Hall
Ms. Ashley Smith Juarez
Mr. Fred "Fel" Lee
Mr. Ms. Paula D. Wright
Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent

ATTENDANCE AT THIS WORKSHOP OF THE DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD: All Board Members were present, with the exception of Board Members Jason Fischer and Paula Wright. Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent, was also present.

Call Meeting To Order

[CALL MEETING TO ORDER](#)

Minutes:

The Chairman called the Board Workshop to order at 9:08 a.m.

Items To Be Discussed

[1. GOVERNANCE](#)

Minutes:

The following items were discussed:

- Community Meeting at Fletcher High School - Board Member Lee shared that he had asked the Superintendent to be prepared to talk about advanced program funding; transparency of the Fletcher budget, etc., at the April 10th Community meeting. The Board discussed asking those who attend the remainder of the community meetings to provide feedback, in addition to the questions they submit. Board Member Juarez suggested we use the same format as was used at a recent meeting with students - i.e., what are your top 5 priorities for the budget and what are the 5 things you think are expendable.
- Board Member Hall requested an update on accreditation. The Superintendent shared that he had sent out the schedule to the Board this morning. Vice-Chairman Grymes asked how the schools were identified. Dr. Vitti shared that it was a mixture of Title I, non-Title I, high performing, and low performing schools. The team is composed of 30 people from throughout the state, and is composed of retired and current administrators. They will be staying at the Homewood Suites near the administration building. Dr. Hall asked that he send the Board a list of the community partners with whom they will be meeting. She also asked if there are any areas that he thinks we should have concerns about. Dr. Vitti said that he is not anticipating any significant problems.
- Chairman Couch said that she had shared information with the Board from Ms. Sonita Young, Chief of Human Resource Services, regarding the process for finding replacements for Bonnie and Linda, who are retiring. Linda will be retiring at the end of June this year, and Bonnie will be retiring at the end of March 2015. She will share the list of duties they each provided her with earlier this year. Ms. Young also has a copy, which she will use in the interview process. Both of them have a lot of historical knowledge and have contacts throughout the City, so this will be an interesting transition with both leaving so soon. Ms. Young explained the process, indicating that she will screen candidates, then she, Chairman Couch, and Ms. LeHockey will interview the top three candidates. The rest of the Board will then be offered the opportunity to have individual meetings with the top candidate and provide Ms. Young with feedback, prior to an official offer being made. The goal is to have a person identified no later than April 25th. Vice-Chairman Grymes asked how many candidates are in the pool. Ms. Young indicated that there are 25 Secretary IV's, as well as several Secretary III's who are on a promotion list. Chairman Couch emphasized that Linda's position requires use of SAP, and that this is an important skill for the person who is selected to have. Board Member Hall asked about the position having to be a Civil Service position, and that this might be a good time to look at other options. Ms. Young shared that there was a position of Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent that could be used. They could not find a job description for this position, however, one could be created if that was the desire of the Board. She also talked about compensation, and that those interviewed so far had asked if there would be a salary increase involved. It would have to be on the approved salary schedule and that it would be possible to move the person up if that is the desire. They also have the option of filling the position on a temporary basis, with the knowledge that the person would have a job in the system if the desire was to go in a different direction. After discussion, the Board agreed that due to the timeline, that they will move forward with the current plan to fill Linda's position, and that they would have further discussions at the April 15th Board Workshop on the desires of the Board

- regarding staffing of the office.
- Chairman Couch asked about the budget timeline. The Superintendent indicated that budget staff and Board Auditor, Michelle Begley, needed time to look at the budget. After discussion, it was decided that the April 15th meeting would be for the May 6th draft agenda and the Board office positions. The budget will be added to the May 15th and May 20th meetings. Board Member Juarez asked about the PTA luncheon at UNF on May 20th. It was decided that Bonnie would contact UNF about having our May 20th meeting at the UNF campus so that the Board could attend the luncheon.
 - Board Member Lee suggested that we calendar a date each month for expulsion hearings and have a rotation schedule for Board members. This will help with scheduling and will ensure that we have at least four members present. Bonnie will work on establishing a date and if there are no expulsions for that month, we can cancel the meeting.
 - Chairman Couch emphasized that if a Board member is assigned to a committee or elected to serve on a committee, that they make it a priority on their calendars. The Value Adjustment Board was used as an example. We have rotated Board members on this committee and it is important they show up because without the Board representative, they cannot hold the meeting. DAC attendance was also discussed. Vice-Chairman Grymes suggested this be a governance conversation. Dr. Hall suggested that we discuss during our upcoming Board Development meeting.

Speakers:

Ms. Becki Couch, Board Chairman
Mr. Fred "Fel" Lee, Board Member
Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent
Dr. Constance S. Hall, Board Member
Ms. Cheryl Grymes, Board Member
Ms. Ashley Smith Juarez, Board Member
Ms. Sonita Young, Chief of Human Resource Services

2. BUDGET

Minutes:

The Superintendent made a presentation to the Board regarding the budget for 2014-2015. A copy of the materials is attached to the Minutes. Discussion included the following:

- Board Member Lee asked about employee benefits. The Superintendent indicated he did not anticipate an increase for employees this year.
- Chairman Couch requested a breakdown of the \$6 million in reserves. The Superintendent shared that it will likely be higher at the end of the fiscal year.

- Board Member Hall asked about class size. Board Member Lee asked about having class size at the school level and if classes would actually change in size. He used Kindergarten as an example. The Superintendent said that they could be anywhere from 18 up to 23, but the average would not exceed 18 students. Board Member Lee asked about class size at Stanton and Paxon vs schools like Fletcher. The Superintendent indicated that with Stanton and Paxon it was easier to schedule as opposed to other schools that offer more courses. Chairman Couch asked if virtual could be added as an option if a class is overcrowded and a student does not want to take other subjects. Board Member Juarez would like to know the actual savings for class size. She would also like to know what the trade offs are, and requested an analysis of electives. Chairman Couch asked what the money saved would be used for, and Dr. Vitti indicated it would be used to continue funding other things. Board Member Hall requested scenarios of the impact this would have with actual numbers. The Superintendent said that another option would be to use the 8th period day only at traditional low performing middle and high schools, and the 7th period day at high performing middle and high schools.
- Chairman Couch asked what the Superintendent intended to spend the one time funds for, and he shared that he had no plan at this time.
- The Superintendent is recommending a 5% reserve for the coming year, as opposed to the current 7% reserve. Each percentage is approximately \$10 million. The Superintendent does not feel it is good to have a high reserve. Board Member Lee shared that he supports having a lower reserve for the coming year.
- The Superintendent is recommending cuts in administrative staff at schools and at the administration buildings.
- Board Member Hall asked if the Superintendent had asked for feedback from schools on the allocation plan and how it was working. Dr. Vitti responded that the only feedback was at general meetings and not in a survey format.
- The Superintendent shared that he was not sure how we can continue to give step increases to those units who have them guaranteed in their collective bargaining agreements, indicating that it was putting a stress on general revenue.
- Dr. Vitti shared that he was recommending spending \$4.6 million for new math books, but that we cannot afford all of the books we need for the coming year. Chairman Couch asked if the books would be ordered in time for the start of the next school year. Dr. Vitti indicated they were ahead of schedule and should have in time for the start of school. Chairman Couch requested a breakdown with dollar amounts.
- Board Member Hall left the meeting at 12:5 p.m.
- Board Member Juarez requested an update on evening classes and how many were taking advantage of the opportunity. She also asked that he include students using virtual classes as a recovery option.
- Dr. Vitti indicated that he was not provided with correct information on schools and their available technology - i.e., hotspots, etc. He is proposing a QZAB II to address those needs. Board Member Juarez asked for a geographic outlay of where we are and what schools currently have, including an inventory of hardware. She also asked how the 36 schools were selected. The Superintendent indicated they were the lowest performing schools. Board

Member Lee asked that the report also reflect where the schools are in the refresh cycle.

- Vice-Chairman Grymes also asked about textbooks and if we were on schedule so as to avoid the same issues as last year. The Superintendent said some of the issues were caused by the vendors not having available inventory last year. Board Member Lee asked if we could include penalty language in our contracts with the vendors. The Superintendent will ask Ms. Chastain to look at this option.
- Vice-Chairman Grymes left the meeting at 1:23 pm.
- Chairman Couch had the following questions on the presentation:
 - Requested the Board be provided with summaries of the effectiveness of groups we contract with, such as Junior Achievement and Communities In Schools.
 - She asked about positions that are funded by grants and what happens to those positions when the grant ends. Dr. Vitti said some are absorbed with general revenue and some are eliminated.
 - What is the timeline for making changes that impact school budgets and having feedback from the faculty? This relates to the Shared Decision Making process. Dr. Vitti said they were further along this year and should have clarity by the beginning of May.
 - Provide the Board with information on historical costs of employee steps and the total for all steps in 2013-2014.
 - Provide the Board with a list of how many items have been approved for the coming year that impact the budget.
 - Provide the Board with information on lapsed salaries and a projection for 2014-2015.
 - If we go from 7% reserve to 5% reserve, what is the plan for next year?
 - Provide list of what is being added and what will be taken off the table.
 - Look at locating the school police officers at schools instead of everyone in a central office location.

Speakers:

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Mr. Fred "Fel" Lee, Board Member
Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent
Dr. Constance S. Hall, Board Member
Ms. Cheryl Grymes, Board Member
Ms. Ashley Smith Juarez, Board Member

Adjournment

[ADJOURNMENT](#)

Minutes:

The Chairman adjourned the Board Workshop at 1:59 p.m.

BSC

We Agree on this

Superintendent

Chairman