



E-AGENDA MANAGER

Duval County Public Schools

February 15, 2016, Board Development

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

ATTENDANCE AT THIS BOARD DEVELOPMENT MEETING OF THE DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD: All Board Members were present except Board Member Constance Hall. Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent, and Ms. Karen Chastain, Chief Officer of Legal Services, were also present.

Call Meeting To Order

[CALL MEETING TO ORDER](#)

Minutes: The meeting was called to order at 12:33 p.m.

Items To Be Discussed

[BOARD DEVELOPMENT](#)

Minutes:

Chairman Smith Juarez clarified to all present that attendance at this Board Development meeting is voluntary for everyone including the Superintendent. She intends to have a frank discussion among the Board that is solution oriented in nature and asks that everyone listen and stay.

In light of the high attendance at this meeting, she established ground rules. Board Member Fischer asked that the Board allow public comment at this meeting to which the Board agreed. Chairman Smith Juarez also established the importance of working as a team in the best interest of children and having a commitment to the public trust. All agreed.

Board Member Shine felt there has been plenty of talk up to that point and senses the public is ready to see action. He would like to see the Board take action on the following items:

- visit the Superintendent's plan regarding phones issued by the district to the Board Members to be used for all Board business
- establish policy that anytime there are two or more Board Members meeting, that there be an electronic recording of that meeting in order to increase transparency
- bring the social media policy by the Superintendent back to the Board as a whole and return it to the agenda
- discharge Michelle Begley, Internal Board Auditor, and pay out the remaining four months of her contract

Board Member Fischer agreed with Board Member Shine on the item of transparency but not on the cell phone issue. He was disappointed Dr. Hall was not present to address the controversy over text messages. He has family members and constituents with disabilities and was both offended and disturbed by the "Special Ed in Action" text by Dr. Hall. The comment doesn't reflect the community's values and feels she should resign.

Board Member Grymes was also disappointed that Dr. Hall was not there and is reminded of the letter that was drafted last fall on Dr. Vitti's performance; he was not part of that discussion.

Chairman Smith Juarez explained that in light of the text controversy, she felt it was important to have a discussion on relationships. Even though Dr. Hall is not present, she knows there will be a time for issues to be addressed. In spite of not having a full Board, those who are present can discuss issues brought forth by Board Member Shine and how the Board engages with the press.

Board Member Grymes doesn't see any problems being resolved until everyone is there. Vice-Chairman Wright noted that there have been times in the past when Board Development meetings were scheduled well in advance with proper notice being posted and Dr. Hall was present but others were not. She recommends that another date be set soon, but far enough in advance that everyone will be able to attend. Chairman Smith Juarez agreed that before action is taken on anything, that a full Board should be present.

Board Member Shine opined that the Board appears to have a culture of secrecy when Board Members show concern about public records being released to the media. Not all Board Members are in agreement with that observation. Board Member Shine isn't happy with the work he sees

coming from the Board. He sees improvement in teacher survey results, school grades and graduation rates and doesn't feel there is any warrant for firing the Superintendent.

Chairman Smith Juarez noted that no one at the meeting has brought up the topic of firing the Superintendent and that the Board is in agreement that a full Board should be present before discussing that topic and other issues he raised.

Before making a motion to adjourn, Board Member Fischer wanted to point out that he has received quite a bit of email from his constituents about the disability comments and there is definitely controversy brewing.

Vice-Chairman Wright is eager to have a discussion on the issues raised including the hostile environment, but she wanted to remind everyone that when discussing the state of the schools, it is important that they look at the district as a whole and not focus on just the areas doing well. She is saddened by the controversy but wants to stay focused on the work at hand. Board Member Grymes doesn't see any symptoms being resolved until the entire Board comes together as a whole to resolve underlying problems.

Motions:

That the Duval County School Board allow for public comment at the end of this Board Development meeting. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Scott Shine

Second: Jason Fischer

Rebecca Couch - Aye

Jason Fischer - Aye

Cheryl Grymes - Aye

Connie Hall - Not Present

Ashley Juarez - Aye

Scott Shine - Aye

Paula Wright - Aye

[PUBLIC COMMENT](#)

Minutes:

Warren Grymes, Chief Executive Officer, Big Brothers Big Sisters

Mr. Grymes disclosed he is married to one of the Board Members. He has said to his wife on multiple occasions that if things don't change, the Board would end up in the paper. He felt compelled to inform the Board that a fellow Rotarian noticed while attending the last Board meeting that there was not much in the way of any security check when allowing the public in to the meetings. He encouraged the Board to address that concern before something serious happens.

Lisa Williams

The Superintendent has said he is in a hostile environment; the students feel the same way about his schools.

Bettye J. Miller

As a vet with a disability, Ms. Miller fought to defend this country from all enemies foreign and domestic. She also fought to defend Freedom of Speech which extends to Dr. Hall. The constituents in Dr. Hall's district determine who represents them; not other Board Members. She expressed the staunch support the constituents of Dr. Hall's district have for her.

At this point Board Member Grymes assured everyone that no one other than the Governor of the State can remove a Board Member.

Denise Hunt

In order for the Board to arrive at solutions to problems, she suggests they hire an anthropologist's assessment. Mika Pollock from Harvard University wrote a paper on race wrestling in public education which would serve the Board well to read. Her 23-year-old son just graduated from Palm Avenue Exceptional Student Center. He is not able to get a job. His IEP did not match up with what he received, so he is not able to read and write. She feels the system did not work for him.

Vivian Jenkins

Ms. Jenkins feels the Board has not told the entire story as it pertains to the text messages. Only a few snippets of Dr. Hall's emails were publicized which makes her wonder what was NOT publicized that would tell a different story.

Bradford Hall

Mr. Hall is ashamed at the way the whole issue has been handled at the executive level. Threatening legal action is wrong. He has talked to people with disabilities and they are not offended by Dr. Hall's comments. Rather than focus on divisiveness, why isn't the media focusing on the fact that our district has 59 schools that are D's or F's.

Virginia Gray

She sees a lack of respect on the Board over the last year that she has never seen before. She would like to see schools in her community open up instead of close down. She doesn't want to see children bused out of their area.

Eunice Barnum

As the Board's boss, she sees the problem of the Board as being a lack of training. She would like to know the protocol for the blue cards once they are turned in. Everyone on the Board lacks in the area of constituency rights. She recounted her experience of being attacked by a principal years back and still not being contacted by any Board Member. She feels if one Board Member is to go, they should all go.

Shelia Andrews

Ms. Andrews had her first encounter with DCPS when she arrived in her wheelchair for an IEP meeting for her son and there was no room for her. The culture has changed but the district has not. She feels the blue card she turns in is moved to the bottom of the stack.

Chairman Smith Juarez asked Ms. Chastain to clarify if there is any procedure in place that determines the order of blue cards. Currently there is not.

Adjournment

ADJOURNMENT

Minutes:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

LBL

Motions:

That the Duval County School Board
move to adjourn the meeting. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Cheryl Grymes

Second: Rebecca Couch

Rebecca Couch - Aye

Jason Fischer - Aye

Cheryl Grymes - Aye

Connie Hall - Not Present

Ashley Juarez - Aye

Scott Shine - Aye

Paula Wright - Aye

Superintendent

Chairman