



## Duval County Public Schools

---

June 20, 2013, Special Board Meeting

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

ATTENDANCE AT THIS SPECIAL MEETING OF THE DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD: All Board Members were present. Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent was also present.

Call Meeting to Order

### [CALL MEETING TO ORDER](#)

Minutes:

The Chairman called the Special Board Meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Board

### [1. SUPERINTENDENT'S EVALUATION](#)

Minutes:

The Chairman started the meeting by reviewing the purpose and goals for the day, which are to:

- Review the Superintendent's Evaluation Matrix
- Dialogue the Matrix
- Develop an overall Evaluation Statement

Board Members dropped off their Evaluation Matrix to Michelle Begley, Board Auditor, this morning prior to this meeting. Ms. Begley is compiled the information and shared with the entire Board and Superintendent during the first few minutes of the meeting. A copy is attached to the Minutes.

Discussion included the following:

- Chairman Lee indicated that we need to start talking about targets for the coming school year, and that will start the conversation on the Matrix and the rest of the Evaluation for the coming year.
- Board Member Hall shared that she had done a number of evaluations, and this one was difficult to do. In the future, she would like to see it be more relevant to the work and the subjectivity removed. We need to separate the person from the performance.
- Vice-Chairman Couch recommended that the Board perform a self-evaluation. She has formats that other districts use and will share these with the Board.
- Board Member Wright indicated that it had been a difficult process. There are many areas on the evaluation that we really don't know, and need to have more opportunities to understand and work with staff. At the present time, everything comes from the Superintendent. The Board's communications should be more broad and there should be more interaction with staff. She also suggested a survey of staff by the Board.
- Board Member Grymes agreed with the input, but thinks we should wait on the staff survey until things settle down from all of the recent changes.
- Board Member Wright suggested this be done prior to the next evaluation.

The Board then worked on an Evaluation Statement. The Board first made a list of accomplishments and development examples, which are listed below:

- Accomplishments
  - Development of a child centric Strategic Plan
  - Availability and community presence - energizing the community and establishment of the Superintendent as the education leader in the City
  - Zero based budget process aligned with the Strategic Plan, and allocation of more resources to the schools
  - Streamlining resources with focus on student achievement
- Development Examples:
  - Employee satisfaction
  - Effective communication with District employees, parents, community, and the Board
  - Strong control of fiscal responsibilities and oversight

The Board then came up with the following statement, which will be sent to Communications for refinement. After the statement is refined, it, along with the Evaluation Matrix, will be placed in the Superintendent's personnel file and released to

the media.

### Superintendent Evaluation Statement

The Board views the evaluation process as an effective coaching and communication tool with a goal of student success via the success of the Superintendent.

In collaboration with the Board, some of the hallmarks of the Superintendent's first seven months at the helm of Duval County Public Schools include the following:

- Development of a child-centric Strategic Plan.
- Creation of a new budget process aligned with the Strategic Plan and allocation of more resources to the schools.
- High availability and active involvement across the community has established the Superintendent as the education leader in the City and energized the community.
- Streamlining resources with a focus on student achievement.

Over the next 12 months, the Superintendent will need to have a strong emphasis on the following areas:

- Emphasize safety and discipline at schools and continue to monitor implementation of the Code of Student Conduct.
- Budget - Place a very strong focus on fiscal tracking throughout the year. Refine preparation of the budget format and develop a forecast for future years.
- Delegating authority - delegate responsibility and authority to appropriate staff and hold each one accountable.
- Fostering team spirit with focus of sharing common vision.
- Effective communication with the Board and with internal and external stakeholders.

Additional discussion included the following:

- Superintendent Vitti stated that when we talk about morale, everything is about context and we are in a deep organizational reform, at the extent that this district has not seen in a very long time, if ever, and it is very important we don't fix or confuse moral with change. The Chairman shared that they were talking about the next 12 months and what is the emphasis going forward that we expect. He wants to make sure people are treated respectfully, feel valued in their input, etc. The Superintendent is not questioning that we don't have to work on morale, and creating a team spirit, he is concerned about sending mixed messages.
- Board members discussed the need to build staff capacity and leverage current employees. The Superintendent asked how you measure and demonstrate improvement to the Board. He hears that Cabinet members do not speak as much as they used to at events and meetings. He believes that is more a function of organizational structure in his domain and has been trained that at Board meetings the Superintendent spoke and when he could not go as deep, Cabinet members would then speak. The Chairman asked how we ensure we break down silos and are a team vs those folks and these folks - from Miami and Jacksonville. The Superintendent believes that we should measure capacity based

on quality and amount of work produced and meeting deadlines and targets. Vice-Chairman Couch feels that it could be measured through true delegation of authority and allowing staff to respond to questions directly. Also following the quarterly updates on the policy manual. Board Member Hall agreed that delegating authority was a good way to measure this area. Board Member Fischer agreed and gave a recent example of a constituent issue where the staff member had to check with the Superintendent before he could copy him on a response. The Chairman suggested that we use the wording in the Evaluation Matrix of "Delegates responsibility, authority to appropriate staff, holds each accountable.

The Chairman gave the Superintendent an opportunity to make comments on his evaluation. Those comments included the following:

- Keeps Board informed n issues, needs, operations, in a timely manner - believes that is about defining from each Board members perspective and then having clarity from the entire Board on process and procedures to be in place on what needs to be communicated with the Board and when. This is an on-going process.
- Stakeholder Focus and Satisfaction - Systems are in place to monitor internal/external perceptions of the district - thinks this has to do with need for better surveys throughout the organization - beginning and end of year. Response rates are usually low, so we need to build more confidence that the results will be more actionable when we receive the data.
- Parents, staff, students report feeling safe and respected in school - that was one of the areas he rated lower as compared to the others. He agrees and thinks it is important that we put it in perspective that he has been here for seven months and this is an area that takes time.
- Delegates responsibility, authority to appropriate staff, holds each accountable - we have talked about that.
- Provides a leadership role to achieve high morale - believes that morale is important and agrees with all of that. Issue of morale goes to reform and that everyone wants change until change comes to them.
- Fiscal Leadership - issue here has been one of a complete revamping of a massive budget. Some Board members thought that was necessary and some felt that it was not. Think some Board members felt that there were some errors along the way, and there was, but it is important to look at the bigger picture and you cannot go through the restructuring of a \$1.6 billion dollar budget and that everything will be clear. Believes that you strive for that and we had six Board workshops and one on one meetings. He feels that our budget is now more aligned to the Strategic Plan, and it is difficult in a short amount of time to communicate all of the moving parts, and believes that it will be better next year, and part of the problem was a budget from a former administration and 4 new Board members and 3 carrying over from the former and a lot of pieces had to be explained and justified. The budget process is always difficult. The Superintendent feels that the budget is tighter and stronger than it has ever been before.
- Overall Marks - appreciates feedback. One concern is there are some significant discrepancies among Board members, and that should be a conversation among

the Board on expectations and how you define that. As a Superintendent I have to work with the Board as a whole, and with 7 individuals. If, as a group, we don't start calibrating what the expectations are, it is very difficult as a leader to try and manage, run, and transform an organization while keeping 7 Board members comfortable with the speed and direction of the reform. This evaluation clearly indicates we have discrepancies regarding expectations and how you measure those expectations. He would have wished there would have been calibration done by the Board before the evaluation. In the individual meetings certain things came out and were communicated consistently across the board on needs improvement as opposed to a 5 or 6 because he feels it sends a wrong message to the community on where the Board stands with their Superintendent.

Additional comments:

- The Chairman shared that he thinks there was some recognition of the above comments during the discussion today and that it was a good start to the process as we get into a more formal evaluation. While he would like to see some things not as diverse as they were, you will always see some diversity, and that is what makes a Board strong. Calibration is difficult. The purpose was to have dialogue with you about the first 7 months; what things can we look forward to going forward; and, how do we line everything up going forward.
- The Superintendent felt the individual feedback from Board members was very helpful and defined the areas that needed improvement moving forward, but continues to urge the Board to work together on defining what that means so he is not being pulled in different directions, and as we move forward we have to come together as a team.
- The Chairman feels that we are moving in the right direction.
- Board Member Grymes feels this goes back to governance and common understanding of our rules. She looks forward to professional development opportunities for the Board. We need to agree on certain things on how we operate.
- Board Member Fischer used the budget as an example for his decisions on the evaluation, and shared that he separated the process from the results. He would have liked to have seen a different process.
- Chairman Lee suggested we take the Evaluation and start to workshop the different areas and agree as a team.
- Board Member Wright sees the process as a way to review ourselves and the Superintendent. We should continue to discuss as a Board on ways to develop, but also sees the evaluation as a reflection of the Superintendent's 100 day plan. We will not always walk the same step in everything, and that is healthy. She agrees that workshoping the different areas of the Evaluation would be helpful. The Evaluation reflects what we see individually and not collectively, and has been a healthy process. She agrees that the Board and Superintendent should continue to grow as a team.
- Board Member Hall shared that as we talk about Board development and how difficult it was to even find a time to meet. She believes that the Board is ready to make the time and will have a packet of recommendations in the next couple of weeks.
- Vice-Chairman Couch said that moving forward they needed to come up with a

time they could do a Board evaluation. She thinks once they do that, it will put things in perspective. She also agrees on the calibration. If you look at 5 out of 10, some people would see that as 50%, but on this form it is effective. If are concerned with the way it looks in appearance, we need to revise the form. She is looking at the category more than the numbers. Ms. Couch will share information she has gathered on self evaluations from other counties.

- Board Member Juarez agreed on the self evaluation and that we should continue moving forward as a team. She does not want to lose the opportunity for feedback though. There are always areas for improvement. She appreciates his willingness to step into this role because it is a difficult job. She also appreciates his willingness to come forward with what he thinks is best for the district.
- Board Member Fischer is not against the self evaluation, but hopes the Board approaches it with caution. He is interested in seeing what it looks like before he decides.
- Board Member Grymes shared that the dangers of evaluations is the subjectiveness. She cited the budget process as an example. She has been on the Board for several Superintendents and part of her perspective is from working with past Superintendents. She believes that we needed significant change. She is excited about what the Superintendent and the other Board members bring to the table. It is important to her that they be an effective Board.
- Chairman Lee thanked the Superintendent for participating in the process. He agrees that the self evaluation would be a good idea.
- The Superintendent appreciates all of the feedback and reviewed some of the accomplishments in the past seven months.

The following statement is the final version after review by the Chief of Communications:

The Duval County School Board views its annual evaluation process of the Superintendent as effective coaching and communications tools that contribute to student and district success.

The Superintendent, in collaboration with the School Board, earned a number of notable hallmarks during his first seven months as head of Duval County Public Schools. The include the following:

- Development of a child-centric Strategic Plan;
- Creation of a new budget process aligned with the Strategic Plan and greater allocation of resources to schools;
- Increased visibility, community energy and recognition of Superintendent as the City's education leader;
- Streamlining/shifting of resources focused on student achievement.

Over the next 2 months, the Superintendent will increase his efforts in the following areas:

- Emphasis on school safety and discipline while monitoring implementation of the Code of Student Conduct;
- Increased focus on fiscal tracking throughout the year and refined budget

- preparation format that includes development of a forecast for future years;
- Greater delegation of responsibility, authority, and accountability to staff;
- Demonstrated efforts for fostering team spirit and buy-in of shared vision;
- Improved effectiveness in communications with Board and internal and external stakeholders.

Speakers:

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

Adjournment

[ADJOURNMENT](#)

Minutes:

The Chairman adjourned the Special Board Meeting at 12:05 p.m.

BSC

---

Superintendent

---

Chairman