



E-AGENDA MANAGER

Duval County Public Schools

November 15, 2016, Board Development

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

ATTENDANCE AT THIS MEETING OF THE DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD: All Board Members were present except Board Member Constance S. Hall. Board Members-elect Lori Hershey and Warren A. Jones were also present as well as Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent.

Call Meeting To Order

[CALL MEETING TO ORDER](#)

Minutes: The meeting was called to order at 10:37 a.m.

Items To Be Discussed

[NEW BOARD ORIENTATION](#)

Minutes:

After Chairman Ashley Smith Juarez explained that the purpose of the Board Development session was to do an orientation for both new and seasoned Board Members, Cathy Minberg, President and CEO of Center for Reform of School Systems (CRSS) gave a brief introduction of herself and her background.

Dr. Mincberg explained that effective school boards operate successfully within the Reform Governance Framework (see attached). The framework lays out the roles and boundaries within which boards and their superintendents operate harmoniously. She stressed the importance of boards deciding on what their vision is, etching it in their brains and not getting sidetracked with distractions during their time on the board. There was discussion as to when and when not to include the community in decision making processes. It was noted that the line drawn between the roles of the board and superintendent can be ambiguous, at times.

Dr. Mincberg pointed out that if a board doesn't have a clear vision, it will get pulled in many different directions by various groups within the community and very little will be accomplished by the board. She reminded the Board that corporations, along with their stockholders, know what the corporation's vision is (making money) and they don't allow outside forces to come along and distract them. Dr. Mincberg explained how, prior to the evolution of school districts, school boards used to do the work of administrators. Now, the management of the district is assigned to the superintendent, but totally handing over the responsibilities for that is still difficult for many boards to this day.

The relationship among superintendents, boards and communities was discussed along with the timing of issues and when issues/positions are announced in communities. Communities can be involved in discussion of topics but boards should not allow the communities to make decisions. If a community decision does not go well, the community is not responsible. Superintendents and boards, on the other hand, can be fired/lose their seat. The group discussed pros and cons of stating a position on an issue prior to discussion in a meeting.

While discussing issues of dissent among the Board, Dr. Mincberg noted the importance of getting as much of the views of dissent out into the public as much as possible. However, once the vote is taken, it is important that the board move on. Revisiting a topic of dissent should only be done when doing so could be beneficial. The Board also discussed the purpose of their meeting time: information gathering vs. debating an issue.

Important points in working with the media: Be truthful, timely and mindful of their deadlines. Separating opinion from fact during interviews are important. Board Member Couch pointed out that oftentimes when a board member states how he/she thinks another board member will vote, it gets confused as fact and not noted as opinion, which is problematic.

The time of day a meeting is held can have an effect on how people interact with each other. Boards usually don't take breaks often enough. Is time during the meeting used to gather information for the benefit of the public or to debate an issue? It should be used to debate although a few minutes used to inform the public is acceptable as long as it is kept short. If board members need more information, they can always schedule a one-on-one with the superintendent. Discussion during meetings help the public feel that Sunshine Laws are not being violated.

Putting time limits on the amount of discussion is helpful although some topics, such as the budget, should have the time rule suspended.

The role of the Board (policy making) was discussed vs. role of the Superintendent (implementing policy). When discussing the hiring of a superintendent, the community can give input but not drive the decision.

The process of firing employees and the limitations put on the Board with that process was discussed. The Board is in a position of being expected to fire with little to no information about the case because of possibly playing the judicial role later if it comes back in a grievance hearing.

Superintendents are responsible for bringing plans, budgets, etc. to the boards. Boards can vote them up or down but cannot replace them. When superintendents repeatedly bring plans before boards they are not happy with, they may have to agree they have reached an impasse they cannot get beyond. That would qualify as grounds for termination. Most superintendents have an idea whether their board will support an item. Very rarely will superintendents bring items before a board without knowing if the board would support it.

Dr. Mincberg noted to the Board that Sunshine Laws dictate that relationships, for the most part, have to be developed in the public eye which makes things very difficult. The role that retreats play for boards are very important for when controversial items later come up at the board table.

How Board Members are to acquire information they want was discussed such as using the Board Member Request (BMR) system vs. asking the Superintendent vs. going directly to staff.

After Board orientation, the Board discussed the upcoming vote on Board Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Discussion included the role and responsibility of chairmanship.

Adjournment

[ADJOURNMENT](#)

Minutes:

The meeting was adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

LBL

Superintendent

Chairman