



## Duval County Public Schools

November 19, 2013, Organizational Meeting

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

ATTENDANCE AT THIS ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD with Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent of Schools, Ms. Karen Chastain, Chief Officer of Legal Services and all Board members, present.

Call Meeting to Order

[CALL MEETING TO ORDER](#)

Minutes: The Organizational meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

[APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 19, 2013, AGENDA](#)

Motions:

That the Duval County School Board approve the November 19, 2013, Agenda. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Cheryl Grymes

Second: Rebecca Couch

Rebecca Couch	- Aye
Jason Fischer	- Aye
Cheryl Grymes	- Aye
Connie Hall	- Aye
Ashley Juarez	- Aye
Fred Lee	- Aye
Paula Wright	- Aye

Invocation

[INVOCATION](#)

Minutes: Pastor Jay Stuckey gave the Invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

[PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE](#)

Board Members'

[1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN](#)

Minutes:

Board Member Fred "Fel" Lee nominated Board Member Becki Couch for Chairman;  
Board Member Jason Fischer nominated Dr. Connie Hall for Chairman.

Dr. Connie Hall declined the nomination.

Ms. Becki Couch was unanimously elected Chairman of the Board for the 2013-2014 year to be effective November 19, 2013.

Motions:

Board Member Fred "Fel" Lee nominated Ms. Becki Couch for Chairman of the Board. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Fred Lee

Second:

Rebecca Couch - Aye

Jason Fischer - Aye

Cheryl Grymes - Aye

Connie Hall - Aye

Ashley Juarez - Aye

Fred Lee - Aye

Paula Wright - Aye

Motions:

Board Member Jason Fisher nominated Dr. Constance S. Hall for Chairman of the Board. -  
Dr. Hall declined nomination.

Vote Results

Motion: Jason Fischer

Second:

[2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN](#)

Minutes:

Board Member Paula D. Wright asked to make a statement before nominations began, as follows::

In the general primary on August 26, 2010, as one of three candidates, I was elected to serve as the School Board Member for District 4 by receiving 72% of the votes. It was a mandate. It was loud. It was clear. During the process of engaging the community via candidates' forums, walking the neighborhoods, and listening to and sharing ideas with citizens about student success in our public schools, two directives rang out. As a voice within my community all of my life, (1) I knew intricately of the

community's desire to have a Board Member whose focus would be on student academic success by addressing disparities between resources – financial, material and human – and then to ensure that equity prevailed in the distribution of those resources for the betterment of our community – the city of Jacksonville that is; and (2) then to connect those resources to the community as a means to bridge the gaps that exist educationally, economically, and digitally. I have worked hard to accomplish those two directives as they serve as the underpinnings of an array of issues that can increase student achievement. In the last three years, I proudly sit before you to report that I have worked diligently to accomplish the will of the people and will continue to do so. I understand to whom I serve and the purpose of my being elected in District 4, to ensure improved academic success for all students. I will share specific efforts of the path I've created to achieve those two directives, but before doing so, I want to share this.

I desire to serve as Vice Chair of the Duval County School Board. But my desire to serve as Vice Chair, does not, cannot, and will not override nor undermine my commitment to serve the students, teachers, staff, and parents within my community and across our community at large. Let me be clear, I want to serve as Vice Chair, but I will not be party to politics that could lead to another fractious or contentious Board, that's not who I am nor is it indicative of the constituents that I represent in District 4. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right." The School Board election is a non-partisan election. We, individually and collectively, should be the model to/for our community as an inclusive, objective body whose decisions are based on the good of the whole. It's about the children and their academic success today so that they will have a bright future tomorrow. Upon my swearing-in in November 2010, I inherited three of the four, then failing schools. Jean Ribault, Andrew Jackson High Schools, and North Shore Elementary, are in District 4 and William M. Raines is in District 5. The FLDOE Commissioners' voted to close these four schools because of their continual low performance on the FCAT. Then our board voted 5-2 to also close these four schools, with then Board Member Betty Burney and I casting votes to keep all of our schools open. It was more than a split vote, it created a split board. Mrs. Couch and Mr. Lee, I do not want to participate in taking the Board down that road again. For me, I prefer that this be the road less travelled. To support the district's vision and the Superintendent's initiatives and to encourage him to continue to be futuristic, we need the strength that unity brings to an organization; the strength that affords each of us individually, and as a collective board and Superintendent team to carry one message loud and clear: At Every school, in every classroom, on every day, every child will receive a quality education in Duval County Public Schools. Until last Thursday, I was the only declared Board Member for Vice Chair. It is not my intent to suggest in any way those others should not participate; competition is in the blood stream of Americans. But to have two other board members declare their intent three (3) days before the vote is a direct line to divisiveness and dysfunction, and those are two pieces of the pie that we should have on the table.

Peter Drucker, known as the man who invented management, famously stated that "management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things; he further stated that "great leaders has a zest for change, and above all, vision that allows them to set their sights on the "things" that truly merit attention." In my neck of the woods,

we call Drucker's analysis of a leader – Keeping your eyes on the prize. Since my tenure on this Board, I have been collaborative, cooperative, and inclusive, while still honoring the duties of my office, which is to ensure that we are good stewards of our community and doing all within our power to provide a free and equitable education for the children in Duval County. I have championed issues that were brought to me by constituents I serve, rather via an email, a community meeting, a telephone call, round table discussions, or most importantly the comments/suggestions in the grocery store- where you learn the real deal!

I serve as the voice of constituents!

Stood up and fought for Raines, Ribault, Jackson, and North Shore, despite the will of the Board I have proven not only can I make the hard call, but I can make the right call. It was the persistence of saying all students deserves a neighborhood school and we can't punish students because adults could not get it right that lead to Gov. Scott's intervening. Because after a last ditch opportunity on a Friday in Miami, the DOE said yes to closing, but with God's Grace, on Saturday, Governor Scott said Yes to keep them opened.

Collaborated with City Councilman, Dr. Johnny Gaffney, District 7 (one of the districts I serve) to bring more than 35 minority and women business owners to discuss how to help minorities and women to become certified with the District. As a result, a number of workshops were conducted by our staff -MBE staff to enable minorities and women to become certified as MBE vendors to do business with our district, a year before that scathing report about our low percentage of MBE participation released last month. In addition, I scheduled MBE staff an opportunity to discuss what the MBE office was doing to recruit minorities and women. I understand the value of supporting the local economy.

Put out the call for community members along with then Board Member Betty Burney to organize to serve as advocates for all students. This group is now the Northwest Friends of Jacksonville. The call to action was done at my church. The first meeting was at my church. In addition, I provided a facility for them to meet during their formative months because I know how important it is to have knowledgeable and informed stakeholders.

One of the creators of the plan for the JWJ Academic and Career Training Center more than 3 years ago to ensure that once James Weldon Johnson ... moved to Paxon Middle School that there would not be another dilapidated building in our community. It is now the home of the Bridge for Success middle schoolers. In addition, included Edward Waters College President to provide the college not only with space for college students, but the opportunity for the college students to mentor our students at JWJ ACT. It also serves as a hub for students throughout this district to take their Microsoft certification exams. Ministers, former principals, educators, and business owners and community stakeholders are composed of the Concerned Citizens in Support of Education (CCSE) an education think tank group for our students in Duval County.

Worked with the DCF's, NE Regional Director David Abramowitz, Cong. Corrine Brown, Sen. Audrey Gibson, Mayoral Aide Tony Hill, local ministers, the NAACP, Dr. Vitti and

Head Start local and national staff to secure facilities and staff to ensure that our most vulnerable young students' foundational learning process would not be interrupted this past summer when somebody somewhere decided that students in the Head Start could just sit home. Let me further say that when I called Dr. Vitti for his help, he did not stumble. I thanked him during the conversation, I thanked at the Board table, I thanked him at the press conference, and I thank him again today, for we accomplished our goal for children.

I was the only board member to personally engage Interim DCF Secretary Esther Jacobo during her visit here to express the need for more collaboration with DCF and DCPS to help our city.

I walked with Sheriff Rutherford, PAL personnel, JSO personnel, Frank D. Murphy of Athletes with Purpose, City Council members Don Redmon and Dr. Johnny Gaffney, and SHADCO members for a crime prevention walk to hear the concerns from citizens in the community.

Participated in the National Summit on Education Reform, Chaired by our former Governor Jeb Bush to understand the national flavor regarding public education and to glean ideas/actions that could be useful for our students.

As a member of FSBA and NSBA, I have served as a member of the team who lobbied our congressional leaders on behalf of public education.

I've helped to created local partnerships, I've engaged with state and national leaders to bring discussion to the table as how we can better serve our students.

As a board member, it is my contention that no one has been as collaborative or inclusive, or as accepting of others as I. I have sought to and will continue to seek to bring new partners and new ideas to the table while I continue to support and appreciate the many that already have a seat.

Duval County is one of the largest urban districts in the country, with 44.8% African American, 8% Hispanic, 4.4% Asian, 3.2% Multiracial, 0.2% American Indian, and 39.4% white that's a sizable minority population. We are currently engaging our community at Nathan Bedford Forrest High School about the possibility of changing the school's name. It is not the name Nathan Bedford Forrest's that some people find disturbing, it was (for those) it actions. Perhaps we should observe our actions as a Board as we reach the end of 2013 because although I tire of having to constantly deal with the assumption that as a person of color acceptance from others is oftentimes based on the assumption that the person of color must conform and transform to others; however, it is also clear that the person of color must accept others just as they are. Yes, I am tired of that presumption, but I am no ways tired of being the servant who sits at the table to say diversity includes people of color, too. In the words of the late and great Frederick Douglas, "Inclusiveness involves accepting that I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and to incur my own abhorrence." I am going to keep my eyes on academic progress of our students while accepting all others for who they are and offering a willing spirit to work together for the good of the community, for if we struggle with diversity at this level, how are children of color faring in Duval County Public Schools.

If we fail at this level, we must question our core beliefs of Excellence, Integrity, Innovation, Equity, and Collaboration.

A divided Board will not effectively provide a strong foundation to ensure success of the Superintendent's initiatives that are helping to move our district in a forward movement such as:

- His increase in supporting early literacy across our district;
- His increase in providing additional pathways for all of our students to graduate college or career ready, with the new overage academies and continuance of Saturday school programs, as well as
- His work in increasing parent engagement and involvement through the Parent Academy initiative.

I want a Board unified on students' progress, teacher development, and cultivating a welcoming and receptive working and learning environment for all of the 14,000+ employees in Duval County. We have five fingers on ONE hand; let's understand the value of each finger to make the one hand great for mutual progress for our students, teachers, parents, staff, and our city. I shared a fraction of my involvement since becoming a Board Member, and the fair self-evaluative question should be - what have you done as a Board Member to foster our core beliefs? I don't know the outcome of our votes today, but I do know this: I am on a mission by way of my community's mandate, and my eyes remain on the prize of ensuring academic progress for every student. Mr. Superintendent, I close with these eighteen (18) words as stated by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. - "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Board Member Jason Fischer nominated Ms. Cheryl Grymes for Vice Chair.

Board Chair Becki Couch nominated Ms. Ashley Smith Juarez for Vice Chair.

Board Member Fred "Fel" Lee nominated Ms. Paula D. Wright for Vice Chair; Board Member Wright declined the nomination.

Ms. Grymes was elected Vice Chair of the Board for the 2013-2014 year to be effective November 19, 2013.

#### Motions:

Board Member Jason Fischer nominated Ms. Cheryl Grymes for Vice-Chairman of the Board. - PASS

#### Vote Results

Motion: Jason Fischer

Second:

Rebecca Couch	- Nay
Jason Fischer	- Aye
Cheryl Grymes	- Aye
Connie Hall	- Aye
Ashley Juarez	- Nay
Fred Lee	- Aye
Paula Wright	- Aye

Motions:

Board Member Becki Couch nominated Ms. Ashley Smith Juarez for Vice-Chairman of the Board. -

Vote Results

Motion: Rebecca Couch

Second:

Motions:

Board Member Fred "Fell" Lee nominated Ms. Paula D. Wright for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Board. Ms. Wright declined the nomination. -

Vote Results

Motion: Fred Lee

Second:

### 3. OATH OF OFFICE

Minutes:

The *Oath of Office* was administered, as follows:

Pastor Jay Stucky swore in Chairman Becki Couch.

Matt Carlucci swore in Vice Chairman Cheryl Grymes.

These positions are effective November 19, 2013.

#### 4. ESTABLISH TIME, PLACE, AND DATE OF REGULAR MEETINGS

Minutes:

Board Member Lee offered a motion that the Duval County School Board conduct their regular meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m., in the Cline Auditorium, first floor of the Administration Building, 1701 Prudential Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32207 to be effective November 19, 2013.

Board Member Fischer seconded the motion.

Motions:

That the Duval County School Board discuss and establish the time, place, and date of Regular Meetings, in accordance with File: 2.26, Duval County School Board Policy Handbook.

Note: A recommendation from a Board Member regarding the time, place, and date of Regular Meetings is in order at this time.

- PASS

Proposed Recommendation:

That the Duval County School Board conduct their regular meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m., in the first Floor Board Room of the Administration Building, 1701 Prudential Drive.

Vote Results

Motion: Fred Lee

Second: Jason Fischer

Rebecca Couch	- Aye
Jason Fischer	- Aye
Cheryl Grymes	- Aye
Connie Hall	- Aye
Ashley Juarez	- Aye
Fred Lee	- Aye
Paula Wright	- Aye

#### 5. SELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVE FOR FSBA LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes:

Board Member Lee nominated Board Member Paula D. Wright to serve on the Florida School Boards Association's Legislative Committee for the 2013-2014 year.

Board Member Fischer seconded the nomination.

Board Member Wright nominated Board Member Fischer as the Alternate to serve on the Florida School Boards Legislative Committee for the 2013-2014 year.

Board Vice Chairman Grymes seconded the nomination.

Motions:

That the Duval County School Board Members select a Board member, and an alternate, to serve on the FSBA (Florida - PASS School Board Association) Legislative Committee for 2013-2014.

Vote Results

Motion: Fred Lee

Second: Jason Fischer

Rebecca Couch	- Aye
Jason Fischer	- Aye
Cheryl Grymes	- Aye
Connie Hall	- Aye

Ashley Juarez	- Aye
Fred Lee	- Aye
Paula Wright	- Aye

Motions:	
Alternate	- PASS
Vote Results	
Motion: Paula Wright	
Second: Cheryl Grymes	
Rebecca Couch	- Aye
Jason Fischer	- Aye
Cheryl Grymes	- Aye
Connie Hall	- Aye
Ashley Juarez	- Aye
Fred Lee	- Aye
Paula Wright	- Aye

For The Record

[FOR THE RECORD](#)

Minutes:

Mr. Jason Fischer said I have enjoyed the last twelve months together and I've learned alot from all of you. It's important to continue working together and the next months will be even greater. I'm thankful for this evening as we come together as a team.

Dr. Connie Hall congratulated the new Chair and Vice Chair and certainly look to doing exciting things with students in Duval County Public Schools. Also, I want to commend Board Member Wright...very thought provoking comments this evening and often times, those kinds of comments can help keep us grounded as we move forward as a Board, as well. Here's wishing to all of our faculties, staffs and students a very happy and safe Thanksgiving and don't eat too much turkey!

Mr. Fel Lee said congratulations the new Chair and Vice Chair. I appreciated the honor to serve as your Chairman these past twelve months. It's been an eventful and productive year and I'm looking to being a Board member for awhile. I'd like to wish all of our faculties, staffs and the entire organization a wonderful and safe happy Thanksgiving.

Ms. Paula D. Wright said let me take this opportunity to congratulate our new Chair person,, Madam Becki Couch, and Vice Chair person, Madam Cheryl Grymes as we forge ahead this year. I also want to pause and give thanks to our 2012-2013 Chairman, Fred "Fel" Lee because I appreciate the time that you put in, the commitment that you shared and the due diligence that you put in in terms of leading this Board. I know that as the Chair, it included even more of your personal time. I just want to say "thank you" for your willingness to serve. I'd also like to wish everyone and say "eat all the turkey you want" and have a great, successful and restful Thanksgiving holiday! We're all looking forward to a prosperous new year as we venture into 2014. I'm look forward to ensuring that all students receive a quality education as we gear up next month for some of our high school grades and looking forward to the continual success of our students in 2014.

Ms. Ashley Smith Juarez said congratulations to Chair Becki Couch and Vice Chair Cheryl Grymes. As my fellow Board members have said, I have truly enjoyed the last year of work. We say "work" and when we look at it as a whole, it is work and good work and in the best interest of children on a daily basis. I want to thank our immediate past Chair, Mr. Lee, for his commitment for the meetings, the scripts, the in between times in keeping us all on point in terms of where we needed to be to keep pace with our Superintendent who has led this district in a way that is productive and advantageous to our children and community. I very much look forward to another strong year and continuing to work with the Board, Superintendent and staff - our teachers, students, parents and communities at large to make this district all that it is and all that it can be for the city of Jacksonville. Thank you.

Ms. Cheryl Grymes said I, too, would like to extend my warm thanks to our past Chairman. There's no better title than "past". It's been a very eventful year and we've had some difficult times and alot of getting to know each other and working as a new team. I applaud you for all the time you put into it. I'd like to recognize Ms. Wright for what she said. It was very thought provoking. I have served with a split Board and I know that, unfortunately, you get distracted from the work and I do appreciate the sentiments and you bringing us back to the fact that we do need to keep our "*eye on the prize*" and the focus on the kids because that is what this is all about. It's not about the politics. I do appreciate your comments. I appreciate every one of you and I think we're becoming a really good team and we'll continue to get better and appreciate the support and will do my part in keeping us as a team, unified...not that we won't disagree, but that we keep moving in the right direction.

Ms. Becki Couch said I want to say "thank you" to Board Member Fel Lee, past Chairman. We've talked before and you mentioned that having the right person at the right time and I believe that you were definitely the right person at the right time. I appreciate all the time commitment that you put into this and I know you're looking forward to having more time to spend with your family. I truly do appreciate your words of wisdom, your encouragement and your support. So, thank you so much for

your leadership on this Board. I want to say "thank you" to my fellow Board members for your support, as well, as being selected as your Chairman for this year. I will be diligent and serve you and speak on behalf of the Board and will work well with the Superintendent this year. We may not always agree on every issue but we will work together as a leadership team. I want to say "thank you" to Board Member Wright for her words. I agree that it is important to recognize that diversity and differences among our Board and to work together for the benefit of 125,000 students and put aside adults and think about children every single day.

Adjournment

ADJOURNMENT

Minutes:

The Organizational meeting adjourned at 5:53 p.m.

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Superintendent

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Chairman