



Meeting Minutes Duval County Public Schools

February 14, 2023, Board Workshop

Dr. Kelly Coker, Chairman
Ms. Cindy Pearson, Vice-Chairman
Ms. April A. Carney
Ms. Lori Hershey
Mr. Warren A. Jones
Ms. Charlotte D. Joyce
Mr. Darryl Willie
Dr. Diana Greene, Superintendent

ATTENDANCE AT THIS MEETING OF THE DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD: All Board Members were present except Chairman Dr. Kelly Coker. Dr. Diana Greene, Superintendent, and Mr. Ray Poole, Office of General Counsel, were also present.

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m.

The Board paused for a moment of silence/prayer in observation of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Anniversary.

Vice-Chairman Pearson informed everyone that at approximately 11:30 a.m., Sniffen & Spellman, P.A. would be presenting the Grand Jury Update, so at that time, they would need to stop and switch to that topic, then afterwards they could resume discussion on the topic they were previously discussing.

Items to be Discussed

1. SCHOOL MEDIA COLLECTION

Dr. Greene, Superintendent of the Duval County School Board requested Paula Renfro, Chief Officer, Academic Services, to come forward to present a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Library Materials and Reading Lists" (see attached). The presentation included a timeline of the journey from July 2022 and the new legislation that came in and where the district is now. Mrs. Renfro continued sharing how the review process for libraries changed and how media specialists check libraries for materials that are questionable to ensure they are in alignment with the statute.

Discussion included the following:

- The reviewing of classroom libraries.
- Meetings with Media Specialist.

- Media Specialist vacancies within elementary schools.
- The explanation of statute language to media specialists.
- Review of materials are being done because Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) care about their teachers and students.
- Teachers get a lot of donated books, but the books must be grade level appropriate for their classroom libraries.
- Books that are being held are not books that are not wanted in the classroom, but there are some books that may be too complex for certain grade levels.

Dr. Greene joined the discussion, sharing with everyone that the Board approved approximately 1 million dollars to be spent on a robust collection of books for all students. She shared with everyone that the books being placed on hold for review are not just about pornography, but the district is taking into consideration what the legislation states about indoctrination, or having material that can make a student feel bad about themselves. She continued by giving examples of excerpts from various books and shared how some books have pictures that are not good for the grade level the books are designated for. For books that have questionable materials, according to legislation, a decision must be made as to whether the book should be in the classroom library or the media center.

Dr. Greene continued sharing with everyone that she did not want to put the teachers of DCPS in a bad situation that could lead to having their teaching certificate sanctioned. The goal of the district is to ensure all students have access to high quality literature and books that reflect them, no matter their ethnicity.

Mrs. Renfro continued with the presentation. The discussion included:

- Development of the review process.
- Required Training.
- Various review sites are being used when purchasing books.
- Robust Media Specialist platforms that the district communicates with.
- Funds were identified to recruit retired media specialists to assist.
- Inventory and reviewing of books.
- Parents becoming a part of the review process.
- Media Advisory Committees.
- The review process is based upon guidelines associated with the state statutes.
- Different people can come to different conclusions when reviewing books, but it goes into a program and someone at the district level makes the final decision.
- Consulting with other districts about what they are doing.
- Media Specialist Supervisors collaborate with one another.
- Independent monthly meetings.
- Being in line with the intent of the law.
- Duval County School Board is not banning books.
- Ensuring that the Roberto Clemente book is placed in the appropriate grade level.
- The Roberto Clemente book came with the Essentials Voices Collection.
- Some books ordered from the Essentials Voices Collection were substituted by the company for other books which the district did not order. Therefore, all books from the collection were pulled for review.
- Books based off of pornography, indoctrination, or gender identity were put aside.
- Roberto Clemente's book was not banned, it was just put aside until the media specialists were fully trained.
- Board Member Joyce requested to have the training materials sent to her.
- The law came into effect in 2017.

- Continuity throughout the district.
- Every school must have a searchable library and it must be searchable district wide.
- Everyone contributes to 1 district list.
- Other districts have not encountered the same issue as DCPS because most districts have specialists in every school but DCPS does not. Media specialists are not in middle or high schools and there are 28 vacancies for media specialist.
- Low number of man power to complete the book reviews.
- Media training was taken to heart because of accountability.
- Board Member Jones shared appreciation for Dr. Greene and Mrs. Renfro for the work done to protect teachers and principals.
- Book Fairs are not subject to the same criteria as the media center and classroom libraries are.
- Charter School requirements.
- Laws in place with no clarity but expecting Principals to implement them.
- Questions asked by the Department of Education.
- In grades K-3, it is against state statute to have conversation or instruction related to gender identity.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) characters are in books, but those books cannot be in kindergarten-3rd grade classroom libraries, however those books are available in the media center.
- Vetting is for books that currently reside in the classroom library.
- The advisory committees are supposed to have input about the purchases a school makes.
- The committee can suggest books for the review process.
- The review process was in place before the statute was put in place.
- In other counties, volunteers are assisting with scanning books and Duval County is working to get there in approximately another week.
- Emails including a video were sent to the board members and principals concerning classroom libraries and the vetting process.
- Volunteers to assist with the scanning of books and what needs to be done for those that are not approved volunteers.
- A request was made to Dr. Tracy Pierce, Chief Officer, Communications, to make the link for volunteers available on the district's webpage.
- The meetings that must take place to meet the common selection criteria for instructional materials, library materials and reading lists are fulfilled through the advisory committee meetings.
- Once the books have been scanned and uploaded, anyone will be able to see them on the schools' and districts' websites. The law requires websites to be searchable.
- The list of approved books includes the grade level.
- A parent can request that a book be included in another grade level.
- The 52 minute video for media specialists gives them an explanation of the law but the law is vague.
- The statutes referenced that the school board would approve the procedures but the policy is not really clear and has caused a lot of disruption. Therefore, a request was made to have a more definitive procedure.
- Some principals have taken extreme actions so the district should put something in place.
- The media center is under a searchable system called Destiny.
- Communication needed about Policy 4.12.
- The schools' media centers are open. However, the district has requested that the media specialists be given 3 days a week to vet classroom libraries.
- Having uniformity when directing principals.
- In 2 weeks there will be a book list available and if there are any errors the public is asked to bring it

to the district's attention.

- The district's goal is to celebrate the history of all students, no matter their ethnicity or LGBTQ, so that they can see literature in books that represent them.
- Parents have the ability to challenge books.
- The district does not want teachers working in fear and principals worried about their certificates, so Board Member Jones thanked Dr. Greene for the things that have been put into place.
- Gifted students and their access to certain books.
- A teacher was challenged because of 2 words in a play.

2. SCHOOL CHOICE UPDATE

Sharwonda Peek, Assistant Superintendent, School Choice, presented a PowerPoint presentation to the board on school choice updates (see attached).

Discussion took place on the following:

- Principal surveys were implemented.
- School showcase Saturday costs consisted of security and t-shirts for leadership, district staff and board members.
- Ensured parents were well informed.
- Parent surveys to gather feedback from families that attended the showcases.
- Ways to connect with families that have attended the school showcase to generate percentages based upon the attendance.
- The cost does not reflect the human resources.

The Board transitioned to the next topic at 11:24 a.m. due to the School Safety & Security/Grand Jury Update presenters connecting via phone.

The discussion continued on the School Choice Update at 12:53 p.m. on the following:

- Board Member Jones inquired about a list of students that live in certain attendance zones. Per Mrs. Peek, principals can request any list. However, many principals do not take advantage of this opportunity.
- All schools have the same access.
- Credit given to parents for neighborhood school exposure. The showcase with all schools gives exposure to all schools.
- Plans to assist parents with being in the neighborhood schools.
- Effectiveness of transition nights.
- Board Member Jones thanked Mrs. Peek for all of the work done.
- The District cannot dictate what charter schools do.
- Ensuring all schools have the same access.
- Board Member Joyce shared appreciation for Mrs. Peek and the efforts to be conservative.
- Past observations of participation at the school versus the Prime Osborn Center.
- Advantages of having the showcase at the Prime Osborn Center.
- The School Choice Office will continue to look at ways and platforms to offer families shopping opportunities and choose the best option.
- Other venue options were shared by Dr. Greene.

3. SCHOOL SAFETY & SECURITY/GRAND JURY UPDATE

Mark Logan and Mitchell from Sniffen & Spellman, P.A. joined the meeting via phone, providing the Board Members with a brief summary of the grand jury report. The summary focused on the initial step dealing with the compliance efforts of the administration and staff as well as Dr. Greene and her staff. Mr. Logan continued sharing how to move forward and what issues the board may want to review. The review findings that were shared were the following:

- The administration engaged in concerted compliance efforts starting back in 2019.
- Correction measures were put into place.
- Efforts to engage were thorough through the Office of Safe Schools.
- There has been a lot back and forth led by the Superintendent on a consistent basis to assist in reviewing and training to ensure compliance with the law.
- Consistent efforts and training materials were implemented with front line workers responsible for that specific reporting to ensure data submitted is accurate moving forward according to the School Environment Safety Incident Report (SESIR) requirements.
- Ensuring that clear systems and training are in place for administrators and law enforcement.
- The Office of Safe Schools is the ultimate arbitrary requirement.
- Engagement in compliance testing.
- Importance of working in concert with The Office of Safe Schools.
- The consistent implementation of random data reviews.
- The use of a random set of schools and administrators to see how the training is being understood and implemented.
- Pulling of particular incident data to see how it was handled.
- Additional compliance training.
- Suggestions for other consultations to assist the Board.

Board Member Questions/Comments:

- Board Member Willie thanked Mr. Logan and inquired about the confirmation testing, achieve room and the timeline for how it all gets coordinated. Per Mr. Logan, the establishment of the timeline is based upon working with staff to gather data, ensuring there is no bias and then sitting down to come up with an interview protocol to come up with all topics with respect to compliance and the law.
- Review of initial observation shows that everything is in place for compliance.
- Board Member Joyce inquired about what documents and processes were reviewed to come to the conclusion that everything is in place for compliance. Per Mr. Logan, the training documents provided, the evidence of training that has taken place, the communication between the District and the Office of Safe Schools with respect to compliance and all the changes made to the Focus system suggest compliance.
- Mr. Logan did not contact The Office of Safe Schools and would not without prior authorization from administration or the Board.
- Vice-Chairman Pearson thanked Mr. Logan for his time and assistance.
- The training documents that Mr. Logan received were provided to the Board during a workshop however, Ray Poole, Office of General Counsel Attorney (OGC), shared with the Board that he would send everything that was shared with Mr. Logan to the Board.
- Board Member Joyce shared that what transpired was not what she thought she was voting on when the funds were approved to hire outside help to assist with the grand jury findings.
- Mr. Poole explained his role and shared that the firm did not reach out to him for any additional information.
- The amount of funds that have been spent so far on the review process.

- The firm being able to complete the review process within the approved budgeted amount.
- Reference to the resolution as to what should be done by the firm in the review process.
- The Board needs clarity on expectations and what is being provided by the firm.
- The Office of Safe Schools' final letter stated that the only underreporting is in gang-related activities.
- Every year, training is done with every officer on how to identify gangs. However, those considered gang members do not attend DCPS.
- Ensuring the code of conduct is applied correctly.
- A new memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been created specifically for gangs.
- No gang activity evidence in elementary schools.
- Ensuring a deep dive is done to identify what happened.
- Monthly School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR).
- Anyone that assesses data should be an expert in SESIR data.
- Chief Gregory Burton, Executive Director of School Police, commended Scott Schneider, Chief of Schools, and Dr. Anna Dewese, Executive Director, Student Discipline and Support Services, on the great work they are doing.
- Communication with the Office of Safe Schools to ensure things are done correctly.
- The reason the Office of Safe Schools said the district was underreporting was because the numbers decreased from 2018-2019. Therefore, they thought it was underreporting. Documented gang members are not attending schools.
- Chief Burton can get a list of students that are in our schools that may be gang related, but the list is kept confidential.
- Board Member Willie shared it is dangerous to label students as gang members and board members need to be educated about gang members so that precautions can be used, because the goal of the district is to educate students.
- Mr. Poole communicated his next steps with the Board.

The Board resumed the discussion on the school choice update at 12:53 p.m.

4. GRADUATION RATE

5. GOVERNANCE

- Board Member Jones reached out to OGC to confirm when the new boundaries would take effect for School Board Members.
- Mr. Poole shared insight on the boundaries as well and will follow up for confirmation.
- Vice Chairman Pearson shared that the Companion Senate Bill to House Bill 1 (HB1) had been filed and the language in that bill came from the Duval platform.
- Board Member Hershey inquired about when the recommendation to relocate would be received.
- Mr. Poole shared the Board is now at a point where they can have individual conversations about the recommendations.
- Sonita Thompson, Chief of Staff shared that there will be one additional meeting concerning the relocation recommendations to set up guidelines. She also shared with the Board that invitations will be extended to the Board Members.
- Board Member Carney gave a recap of the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) 2023 School Finance Certified Board Member (CBM) Forum that she attended.
- Board Member Joyce shared information about the controversy around the renaming of the Riverside High Football Field and the School Advisory Council (SAC) needing guidance. She continued sharing how she reached out to Mr. Poole inquiring about the creation of a policy to create

parameters.

- Vice Chairman Pearson inquired about the policy that prohibits the naming of a school after a person and if that has an effect on a portion of the school being able to be named after a person.
- Board Member Willie shared that he wants to ensure that policy is clear as well for future situations that may arise.

Adjournment

1. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:26 p.m.

MA

Superintendent

Chairman