



Meeting Minutes Duval County Public Schools

April 9, 2026, Duval County School Board (DCSB) and City Council Joint Meeting - REVISED

Ms. Charlotte D. Joyce, Chairman
Ms. April A. Carney, Vice-Chairman
Mr. Reginald Blount
Ms. Melody A. Bolduc
Ms. Cindy Pearson
Mr. Anthony Ricardo
Mr. Darryl D. Willie
Dr. Christopher Bernier, Superintendent

ATTENDANCE AT THIS JOINT MEETING OF THE DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD AND CITY COUNCIL: All Board Members were present. Dr. Christopher Bernier, Superintendent, and Mr. William Spillias, Office of General Counsel (OGC), were also present. *Board Member Bolduc arrived at 10:06 a.m.* CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Council President (CP) Carrico, Council Vice President (CVP) Howland, Council Member Boylan, Council Member Lahnen, Council Member Gaffney, Jr., Council Member Arias, Council Member White, Council Member Amaro, Council Member Clark-Murray, Council Member Freeman, and Council Member Johnson.

Also in attendance: Micheal Ramirez, Chief of Staff, Duval County Public Schools (DCPS), Corey Wright, Chief Officer, Accountability and Assessment, Paula Renfro, Chief Officer, Academic Services, Scott Schneider, Chief Officer, Chief of Schools, Jim Culbert, Chief Officer, Operations and Technology Services, Ronald Fagan, Chief Officer, Financial, Tracy Pierce, Chief Officer, Enrollment Marketing, Jackson Short, Chief Officer, School Police, Dr. Heather Albritton, Director, Health and Physical Education, Jose Acevedo, Director, Foundation Development, Jill Fierle, Director, Career and Technical Education, Traci Bryant, Supervisor, Career and Technical Education, Kortney Wesley, Director, Governmental Relations, Jacqueline Watkins, Chief Officer, Human Resources, Randy Gallup, Director, Facilities Planning and Program Management, Shane McGrath, Attorney, OGC, Mary Staffopoulos, OGC, Carla Schell, OGC, Kim Taylor, Council Auditor, Colleen Hampsey, Council Research, Gail Collins, Executive Administrative Assistant, School Board and Monica Adams, Executive Administrative Assistant, School Board.

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m.

CP Carrico welcomed the group, called for introductions, and reviewed the agenda. Duval School Board Chair Joyce extended appreciation to CVP Howland for Ordinance 2025-867-E, approved by council January 13, 2026, that requires that input from the Duval County School Board (DCSB) be requested and considered when developing the proposed Capital Improvement Plan.

All council members and board members introduced themselves.

Items to be Discussed

1. ISSUES THAT WILL IMPACT GROWTH, FUNDING, QUALITY OF LIFE, AND WORK WITHIN THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE

CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PRESENTATION

A PowerPoint Presentation (see attached) was shared by Jill Fierle, DCPS, Director, Career and Technical Education (CTE). The presentation shared an overview of CTE programs. The following was shared during the presentation:

- The overall CTE program has grown from the 2020-21 to the 2024-25 school year, from 41 programs offered to 72, and from 3733 certifications earned to 12,114.
- Awarded grant funds (state and federal) that help to support CTE programs.
- The expansion of program enrollment includes elementary students, using a mobile "Career Lab" bus.
- Duval Ready Diploma which demonstrates a student's career readiness by completing modules on workplace topics.
- 1212 students earned such a diploma designation in the 2024-25 school year.
- Future plans for the CTE program, including emergency response planning and maritime technology.

Council and Board Member questions and comments included the following:

- An inquiry was made regarding financial literacy training and entrepreneurship.
- The work of the Special Committee on Youth Empowerment, with a focus on youth aged 16–24, was shared by City Council.
- VyStar partnership that provides real-life training on banking where students operate a functional bank on school campuses.

BE SAFE, BE SEEN PRESENTATION

A PowerPoint Presentation (see attached) was shared by Dr. Heather Albritton, Director of Health and Public Education. The presentation included the following:

- Student traffic safety.
- The DCSB Resolution, 2025-05, that resolved that the Superintendent create a community action plan for pedestrian safety.
- Bike and pedestrian safety awareness campaign activities and bicycle maintenance and helmets.
- Additional traffic gardens.
- The objectives and goals made by the Youth Traffic Safety Steering Committee, and the timeline for their upcoming meetings.

The following comments or inquiries were made:

- An inquiry was made about scooters and E-bikes, and possible legislation to regulate the use of those.
- An inquiry was made about the role of parents in affecting safe riding behavior.
- An inquiry was made about bike repairs and helmet distribution, and how parents would know what services are available.
- It was noted that in the Beaches communities, police are ticketing kids who are not riding safely, and there is a safety training event planned at Fletcher High School this summer.
- An inquiry was made regarding whether the safety campaigns are being conducted at charter schools.
- An inquiry was made about ridership numbers for students who ride to school.
- Bike giveaways for students who need bikes were mentioned.
- Cameras on school bus arms are currently in the testing stage.
- An inquiry was made about school crossings, which have not been implemented at this time.
- Classification of e-bikes needs to be reviewed as some can be dangerous.

PRESENTATION - CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (CIP)

A PowerPoint Presentation was shared by Nina Sickler, Public Works. The presentation included the following:

- The CIP process and collaboration with the School Board.
- A study conducted about reduced-speed school zones near middle schools.
 - The results reflected a pattern of accidents in these areas, but fewer in the reduced speed zones.
 - The results led to a CIP request to include reduced speed zones by all middle schools, rolled out incrementally.
- Fourteen (14) funded CIP school related projects, including raised crossings and signage.
- Projects under consideration at First Coast High School and A. Phillip Randolph Academy, and other future safety requests.
- The coordinated process between Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) and Public Works.
- The school safety committee, and projects stemming from their discussions.

The following questions and comments were shared:

- Ms. Sickler was commended for the teamwork.
- Safety efforts on Merrill Road were highlighted.
- Support was shared for how well the coordinated work has gone thus far.
- An inquiry was made about the status of a list of projects drafted by the School Board, which will proceed next year when they are "shovel ready".
- An inquiry was made about how the projects are selected and what criteria are used for determination, and equity was encouraged in project choices.
- Praise was offered for the level of collaboration among parties to make safety improvements near schools.
- An inquiry was made about when reduced speed school zones would be placed near all middle schools.

- An inquiry about population growth and traffic planning, and new apartments near Ed White High School.
- The Mobility Plan update that looks at long range traffic and development planning, currently in progress, was mentioned.

SUPERINTENDENT UPDATE

Dr. Christopher Bernier, Superintendent of DCPS, shared the following:

- The state of DCPS, and the importance of momentum.
- The District's "A" grade and graduation rates.
- DCPS has no schools with a "F" grade.
- Proficiency level increases across the district.
- School quality is a recruitment tool for attracting businesses to Jacksonville.
- The essential role and impact of teachers.
- Graduation rates, and how teachers make a difference in those numbers.
- The achievement gap, between races, has been eradicated.
- Graduation requirements, and how they are more stringent.
- Emphasis was placed on all the things teachers do outside the classroom to support students.
- Realities outside the classroom that impact student performance, and how teachers navigate that.
- Teachers are the most important factor in student performance.
- Teacher shortages, and how retention requires compensation.
- The referendum to approve renewing the 1-mill property tax that provides district funding for school programs and teachers.
- How the 1-mill affects teacher salaries, recruitment, and retention.
- The funds from the 1-mill cover costs for campus improvements, for athletic fields and art programs.
 - This serves as a visible investment in students.
- Accountability derived through required referendum renewals to reflect public support.
- Council's role is not to approve the 1-mill, but to direct the Supervisor of Elections to place the item on the ballot to be approved or denied by the public.

Questions and comments included the following:

- A comment was shared about Dr. Bernier's passion for education and the district.
- An inquiry was made to get clarification about the school board resolution requesting the referendum for the 1-mill to be continued, pending voter approval, and the role of council in the process.
- Council acts as a pass-through to put the item before the voters, so funds may be collected to support schools and teachers.
- It was explained by OGC that after a letter of request is sent to the council president, legislation will be prepared to call for an election for the extension of the 1-mill, set the ballot date and language, and require notice of the election from the Supervisor of Elections.
- An inquiry was made about whether other funds are available to use instead of the 1-mill revenue, and Dr. Bernier shared that there is no other sustainable pot of money available for this purpose.
- State class size requirements, and how that takes investment for compliance.
- An inquiry was made about the average cost for a teacher plus benefits.

- The average salary is about \$75,000 per year, with an additional 40% for benefits.
- A comment was made about the correlation between funding and educational quality.
- Support was shared for supporting teachers, and an inquiry was made regarding what portion of the district's budget goes towards teacher and staff salaries. About 85% of the district's budget goes toward teachers and staff salaries.
- A comment was shared regarding the successful collaboration between the school board and council.

Public Comment

Time did not permit public comment. However, three (3) speaker cards were submitted.

Adjournment

1. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

MA

Superintendent

Chairman