

02 13 2018 Work Session 9 00 AM

NEW BUSINESS

1. [9:00 - 9:20 AM School Board Comments](#)

Minutes:

Mrs. Byrd reminded the Board Members that if they have any concerns regarding her staff they are to come to her. There have been unprofessional comments and perceived threats made toward her staff and she is asking, again, that comments and concerns come to her and she'll address staff. Her staff will uphold the policies and procedures set by the Board and it is non-negotiable that they bend those policies.

Mr. Townsend announced he rarely uses his parking spot so he invited staff and the public to use it as needed. Mr. Wilson stated he is in agreement but not on Board meeting days. The Board Members concurred.

Mr. Townsend commented on the loss of Tiffany Combee (Risk Management) to an outside agency with better pay. The loss is due to the fact that she does not have an degree and the job description for a higher pay class did not allow job experience. The district has lost a valuable employee.

Mr. Townsend commented on the recent newspaper article regarding the External Operators taking over several of our middle schools. He stated we should not let the Ledger take the lead on the story. Eric (reporter) called him for a quote two days before the story was released. Mr. Wilson stated Mrs. Byrd has gone way beyond what is expected of her. The turnaround options have been discussed in past work sessions and her goal has been to avoid the need to contract with an EO. Mr. Townsend responded that the public doesn't know what goes on in our meetings. They only learn after he posts the videos on his website.

Mrs. Sellers stated she doesn't understand how the reporter got the story when there had not been a meeting to discuss it; the EO contracts were scheduled to be on today's work session. It would not have been proper for the Superintendent to do a story on something she hasn't presented to the Board.

Mrs. Fields stated that Eric should have been asked to wait to do the story after today's meeting. She does have a concern with the email threat of a new Board.

Mr. Wilson suggested the Board address the problems through policy.

Mrs. Sellers reported she and Mr. Harris were in Tallahassee last week to meet with legislators. The district is projected to receive 47 cent more per student funding than last year. She has asked the Legislators to address the teacher shortage.

Mr. Harris felt the most encouraging meeting was with Senator Ben Albritton. He was impressed with the quality of our career academies and the achievements being made within the district. Mrs. Cunningham commented that we are 2nd in the nation. Mrs. Fields stated that the district won the MAGNA Award in 2007 because of the

number and high quality of our academies.

Mr. Harris reported that several proposed bills working through the Legislature were discussed at the Central Florida Public School Boards Coalition meeting: Senate Bill 188 will decrease the 2 mile transportation to 1.5 mile and decrease the definition of unsafe distance. As one of the biggest geographic districts in the State, this will hurt us tremendously.

Mrs. Fields was not able to attend the last meeting and would like to know when the Board will hear more about concurrency.

Mrs. Sellers asked for an update on the insurance plan.

Mr. Wilson reported Representative Darren Soto has asked how he can help our district. Mr. Wilson explained the need for funds to address the influx of Puerto Rico/Hispanic students and the return of local control to school boards. Representative Soto will try to get \$1.4 million of federal dollars for local capital funds.

Mr. Bridges announced the need to have an Attorney-Client session during the next work session to discuss current litigation.

OLD BUSINESS

2. [9:20 - 9:30 AM School Board Services' Direct Employees Contract Discussion](#)

Attachment: [Contract Renewal Memo - Wes Carol.pdf](#)

Minutes: Wes Bridges, School Board attorney, reported he received many sample contracts for the Board and will have them available at the next work session. Carol Matthews reported that of the 15 she received, only two of those report to the Board as her position does.

BOARD AGENDA REVIEW

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Item 3

3. [9:30 - 9:50 Charter Contract Renewals](#)

Attachment: [PSC Lakeland Gateway Renewal Site Visit Report 12.11.17-Final.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Discovery Academy Renewal Document with appendices 11-1-17.pdf](#)

Attachment: [GHCharterRenewalFinalCopy2017.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred Renewal Site Visit Report 12.4.17-Final.pdf](#)

Attachment: [WS Summary Discovery Academy & PSC Lakeland Gateway Contract Renewal.pdf](#)

Minutes:

Melissa Brady, Director of Charter School Division, provided information on the renewal applications of Discovery Charter and Polk State College Lakeland Gateway High School

Discovery:

- opened in 2001
- Title 1 school
- enrollment is 58% minority and 77% economically disadvantaged

The Charter Review Committee recommends renewing their contract for 15 years: July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2033.

Gateway:

- opened in 2013; grades 11 and 12.
- site visit on December 11, 2017
- is an alternative program and receives a SIR (school improvement rating) rather than a school grade.
- 63% minority
- fund balance is greater than 40%. Mr. Harris and Mr. Townsend asked if there are services they are not providing to have such a high fund balance. Mrs. Brady will ask for a financial breakdown.

The Charter Review Committee recommends renewing their charter for 5 years: July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2023. They requested 10 years.

Several board members requested a breakdown of ESE (gifted and other programs) of both schools.

Mrs. Brady provided the breakdown after the meeting:

Discovery – 952 total students

- 161 ESE (16.91%)
 - 80 Gifted (8.4%)
 - 81 SWD (8.51%)

Gateway – 206 total students

- 12 total ESE (5.83%)
 - 7 Gifted (3.4%)
 - 5 SWD (2.43%)

Mrs. Fields inquired about students leaving both schools.

Mrs. Brady provided a breakdown:

- Discovery
 - 12 to our School Of Arts
 - 3 to private schools
 - 11 to Virtual/home school
 - 36 students were withdrawn for behavior problems
 - 25 left due to family choice to their home schools: Westwood, Denison, Citrus Ridge,
- Polk State College Lakeland Gateway High School
 - 9 were dropouts due to non-attendance/whereabouts unknown.

Item 4

4. [9:50 - 10:20 AM Learning Support Update](#)

Minutes:

Dr. Kimberly Steinke, Jim Maxwell, and Diane Taylor with Learning Support provided an update.

- 13,000 students with disabilities out of 104,141 total Polk County students
- funding from local and IDEA (Federal)
 - personnel, contracts, operations, private and charter school allocations

Mrs. Sellers asked how many openings do we have for ESE teachers. Dr. Steinke, Associate Superintendent of Learning Support, responded that there are 17 current open ESE positions which

isn't unusual for the number of students we have and the number has been decreasing throughout the year.

Mr. Harris asked what is the percentage of ESE students enrolled in charter schools. Dr. Steinke didn't have the information but will provide it to the group later.

Mrs. Fields asked for a break down by sub groups by gender, race, and other specifics. Do we have enough staff in place to meet the needs of our students? If not, what are we doing to do to correct that? Have we reduced our contracts with non-profits?

Mrs. Sellers asked what percentage of ESE students are at our struggling schools?

Mr. Wilson asked what are some strategies to communicate with the public. Dr. Steinke responded there were Meet and Greet events held where we explained our roles and how parents could contact us. March 10th will be our second Symposium; parents can learn about IEPs, parent support, resources, and communities agencies that help parents of students with disabilities.

Mr. Townsend clarified the information is not only for parents...it's for the public in general.

Item 5

5. [10:20 - 10:35 AM External Operator Update](#)

Minutes:

Superintendent Byrd clarified that the District had three options to address the turnaround schools:

- reassign all students to a higher performing school and close the school
- turn the school over to a high performing charter school
- hire an external operator to manage the day-to-day operations

On January 31, 2018, we notified DOE that we were having conversations with several external operator companies. Our number one question for each of the EOs was when the schools earn a 'C' or better, the EO will no longer manage the schools and will release them back to the district.

Before the discussion began, Mr. Wilson made it known that there had not been any discussion to close or turn these schools over to a charter system.

Dr. Michael Akes, Associate Superintendent of Learning, reported that last year 90% of our schools improved their grade or made gains. When Senate Bill 7069 came into effect the drive of school improvement accelerated for turnaround schools. We have six (6) schools that have been in turnaround status for 2 or more years:

- Bartow Middle
- Kathleen Middle
- Lake Alfred Polytechnic
- Lake Marion Creek
- Griffin Elementary
- Garner Elementary

If the schools earn a "C" or better, they will be removed from the Turnaround threat and monitored. Three companies under consideration: (DOE has not created a list of approved high performing charter schools or External Operators)

- Learning Sciences International (LSI)
 - 5 year plan; primary oversight, \$150K this year per school and \$1m per school for years 1 and 2; Year 3 \$495K; Year 4, \$395K; Year 5, \$198K
 - a track record in some schools in Florida

- o wants to control the schools beginning year 3 (\$495K)
- o will not return the schools to the district if they make a "C" or better

Mrs. Byrd noted that the company has been used in several schools for Professional Development; they were not listed as an academic or external management company.

- Educational Directions
 - o needs assessment (Spring) \$60,500
 - o costs based on school needs Year 1 cost per school, \$325K - \$350K
 - o subsequent years \$225K - \$250K
 - o will relinquish management oversight of the schools to the district and offer support at the request of the district or school administration when they make a "C" or better.

- MGT
 - o Consulting company based in Tallahassee
 - o 2-3 year transition plan
 - o full time staff
 - o \$700+K per school depending on the student enrollment

Decision points to determine a recommendation: cost, years of experience, track record, levels of support, flexibility, commitment to release schools, collaborative oversight.

Recommend ----- Educational Directions

Mr. Harris commented one school is unique because of their location: Lake Alfred Polytech, which is located next door to a high performing charter school, Discovery Academy. Why didn't the charter stepped up if they care for the students in that area? Dr. Akes responded that we want to ensure the students remain in our district and employees will continue to be employed. Mr. Harris agreed and emphasized he was making a point that it would mean the charter school would have to deal with the same demographics we do.

Mr. Harris asked what is the cost per school? Dr. Akes stated the level of support varies; we are responsible for staffing, education of students, collaborating with EO leadership, maintenance of building. ED will bring in support of leadership, and additional coaching. The staff will remain at the school. DOE looks at the leadership first - superintendent will make that decision. Caveat is the VAM scores with current teachers at each site. That requirement will be heavily scrutinized by the state.

Mr. Townsend would like a formal invitation sent to the DOE representatives when the Board votes on the EO contract. He would like to know the names of the people driving this action. He asked what happens if we choose not to enter into any of the 3 options? What actions can the State take? Will they close the schools or pay for the EO themselves?

Mr. Bridges responded the State BOE operates under their own guidelines and not under any ruling making process. They've issued directives to some districts with threats to remove funding. If the Board takes direction that is contrary to Florida law, Board Members, individually, can be held in violation.

Mrs. Fields believes this a temporary situation - our schools will improve and are improving. What staff person will be working directly with Educational Directions? Mrs. Byrd responded it will be Dr. Akes and herself. Mrs. Fields stated it is critical that someone attend the CAT meeting to get the message out to the communities.

Mrs. Cunningham stated we are currently in litigation with HB 7069. Are other districts considering not entering into any of the 3 options? Where's the money coming from?

Wes stated most HB 7069 litigation conversations evolves around capital outlay to charter schools. He will see if there are any districts considering not taking action on the 3 options. Wes also warned that if the contract states that the schools will remain staffed as current, the EO may place language that protects them should no learning gains be made.

Mrs. Sellers believes there will be true collaboration with ED. If we decide to say no, we need the community, parents, and business partners behind us.

Mr. Wilson has confidence that Superintendent Byrd will turn these schools around; she has the background and has been effective in the past. We have demonstrated success. This is a win win for us. It allows us to meet the state's requirement and keep employees. This is the result of a faulty grading system established by the State. If the State does not work with us on this, then I would join Mr. Townsend and my tendency would be to push back on the State.

Mrs. Sellers stated that Representative Colleen Burton has offered to stand with us if we get push back from the State.

Mrs. Fields commented on a statement from Senator Kellie Stargel in a past article. We need to reach out to her and let her know that we have students excelling at these schools. She should visit one or more of these schools to see what staff and students are doing.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Item 6

6. [Naming of the Baseball Locker Room at George Jenkins High School](#)

Attachment: [GJHS SAC October Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Regional Dawson approval Mike Curry Field House.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Sch BM ltr.pdf](#)

Minutes:

Item 7

7. [Investment Report as of 12/31/17](#)

Attachment: [Dec 31, 2017 Summary of Earnings-Board Meeting.pdf](#)

Meeting adjourned at 12:20 PM. Minutes were approved and attested this 13th day of March, 2018.

Lynn Wilson, Board Chair

Jacqueline M. Byrd, Superintendent