

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA  
APPROVED MINUTES  
**Racial Equity Workshop**  
December 7, 2015

The Board met in a workshop session duly called at 3:03 p.m. in the Boardroom, 620 East University Ave., Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Eileen Roy, Chairman; Rob Hyatt, Vice-Chairman; April Griffin, Leanetta McNealy, and Gunnar Paulson, Board members; Owen Roberts, Superintendent; staff members; and David Delaney, Board Attorney. Dr. Paulson arrived at 3:02 and Mr. Hyatt at 3:12 p.m.

The workshop was called to order by Chairman Roy, who welcomed UF Lastinger Center staff and announced that today's workshop is on the subject of Racial Equity.

Chairman Roy turned the meeting over to Superintendent Roberts.

Dr. Roberts thanked Scott Costello and his team for honoring him earlier in the day with the 2015 Impact Award. Dr. Roberts said the award really includes the School Board and the entire school system.

Superintendent Roberts opened the workshop by explaining that the purpose is to address the basic and fundamental issue of racial equity. He introduced Dr. Donald Pemberton, Director of the Lastinger Center, who in turn introduced his colleagues. Dr. Pemberton said that they have been working pro bono with the Superintendent and several schools to frame the conversation and develop a prototype. The goal is to further accelerate the good work already taking place and to help the Superintendent achieve his vision. Their presentation was then conducted: *Leading for Equity: Transforming the Educational Experience and Opportunities of Students of Color in Alachua County Public School*. Discussion followed.

Dr. McNealy said that race is a sensitive issue which needs to be embraced. She feels this is an excellent initiative and stated that she would like for this district to lead the nation.

Mr. Hyatt referred to the Mission Statement displayed in the Boardroom: *We are committed to the success of every student!* In order to achieve that commitment, Mr. Hyatt believes we can afford to do no less than try and is excited about this opportunity.

Mrs. Griffin expressed appreciation that this is not a top-down approach and the acknowledgment that everyone in the district (staff and teachers) is already working on this issue. She raised the following questions:

1. Is it possible to combine the first two years of analyzing/strategizing into one year? (The process involves two separate groups.)
  - Answer – Yes.
2. What is the cost?
  - Answer – It depends on 'how much and how far' the process is taken, as the plan will be co-constructed with the Superintendent and other district leaders. The estimated cost is \$70,000 per year for three years.
3. Does this plan include differentiated instruction?
  - Answer – It is all encompassing. Including cultural attitudes, how to speak to students, differentiated practices, policies, discipline, classroom management, actions of individual teachers, etc. Depending on district audit findings, a plan will be co-constructed. Decisions will be made on what to tackle first.

Dr. Paulson asked:

1. Can we look at other programs/models?
  - Answer – There are very few models (nationally) of whole school districts. They have worked with groups of teachers/leaders (in North Carolina and Miami).
2. Are there any other programs or are we the first?
  - Answer – Montgomery County, Maryland (not conducted by the Lastinger Center) was a 10-year effort led by the Superintendent of that district. A book, *Leading for Equity*, was written about the study.
3. Are there any proven results?
  - Answer – It is too early to see test results, but the leaders/teachers are energized.

Dr. Roberts explained that he is bringing the issue to the Board at this time because he was charged with the improvement of the school system and continuing to pour more money into the system or implementing different programs is not the answer. In order to realize a major impact on success, disparities must be dealt with. We must examine our personal beliefs, values, and our expectations of all students (PreK – 12).

Kali Blount, *Alachua County Black History Task Force*, shared his disappointment that January's Black History intentions have fallen to the background. He is pleased that this proposal is a move in the right direction, but the three year window is disappointing.

Chairman Roy thanked the Lastinger Center and stated that the Board will further discuss this proposal with the Superintendent. She noted that a 'buy-in' is needed from the teachers, who are already stressed to the max with state requirements. Cost is another consideration.

Mrs. Roy asked a nod from the Board Members is needed, with Board Attorney Delaney responding that a Workshop today is the beginning of the conversation and a specific recommendation would be required for this Board response.

Dr. Roberts stated that significant sustainable change does not happen overnight. He believes if the conversation begins with cost, the process will never take place. The conversation must first be framed, the problem addressed and understood, solutions must be searched for, cost determined and resources found.

A Strategic Planning Workshop is scheduled for December 9. Dr. Roberts proposed postponing it, due to the information learned at the conference last week in Tampa. He asked if it should be arranged for the group from the conference to meet with the Board. Dr. Paulson did not favor that option, stating that items were missing in the session he attended. It was then decided to hold the Strategic Planning Workshop as scheduled and, at that meeting, discuss whether the group from Tampa should be included.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:32 p.m.