

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA  
APPROVED WORKSHOP MINUTES

**Alternatives to Suspension**

July 11, 2013

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in workshop session duly called at 4 p.m. in the Kirby-Smith Boardroom, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Eileen Roy, chairman; April Griffin and Leanetta McNealy, and Gunnar Paulson members; W. Daniel Boyd, Superintendent; Hershel Lyons, Deputy Superintendent, and staff members. Absent: Board Member Carol Oyenarte.

The purpose of today's workshop is to discuss Alternatives to Suspension. Representatives of other community agencies were in attendance.

Superintendent Boyd welcomed community members and introduced Deputy Superintendent Hershel Lyons. Mr. Lyons reviewed the history and impact of the in-school suspension program at Newberry High School, which was implemented some years ago. He spoke about the District's commitment to providing such alternative programs. Mr. Lyons then introduced Ms. Kathy Black, Executive Director, Student Support Services, and Mr. Bill Goodman, Guidance Supervisor, who presented and commented on data that included:

- Middle and High School Out-of-School Suspension information by numbers, length of suspension, Free and Reduced Lunch populations, Gender, Race, arrests.
- Strategies to reduce suspensions
- Counseling Services
- Consultation, Planning and Referrals Services
- Behavior Contracting and Improvement Plans
- Peer/Family Mediation
- Mentorship Programs
- In-School, Before and After School, and Saturday School Detention
- Alternatives to Suspension Program at the Manning Center
- Alternative Educational Placement (PACE Center; Horizon Center, A.Q. Jones Center, Job Corps, SIA Tech, MYcroSchool)
- Mitigating the Impact
- Florida Department of Juvenile Justice: An Eight-Year Study of Delinquency in Florida's Schools
  - Tobacco Use
  - Births and Repeat Births to Teenage Mothers
  - Alcohol
  - Marijuana/Hashish
  - STD Rates

In summary, Mr. Lyons stated that it is clear that there are three groups involved in most of the suspension time: Free and Reduced Lunch, Male Students, and African-American Students. He introduced Dr. Karen Cole-Smith, Santa Fe Community College, Outreach for East Gainesville Instruction, who has arranged for Ms. Thomasina Adams to conduct a training of for all school and district administrative staff.

Jeffrey Weisberg, Director of Programs and Outreach, River Phoenix Center for Peacebuilding, conducted a presentation to introduce and explain their Program for Restorative Justice, an educational process.

Several community organizations such as the PACE Center for Girls, Evelyn Fox with the NAACP, City Commissioner Rawls, and Warren Crews, Pipeline to Prisons, addressed the Board and expressed their support of a task force to help students.

Rahda Sylvester, of the Family and Behavioral Health Services (former Corner Drug Store), reminded the Board and audience that CDS sponsors Interface, a short-term teen residential program that will enroll suspended students for the duration of the suspension. While at Interface, students will receive academic help and counseling, and it is free to the parents and school district.

Dr. McNealy voiced her support for the formulation of a task force to address suspensions for next year and expressed hope that by next year there will be a significant decrease. She suggested a small group that would be able to exchange ideas.

Dr. Paulson requested an update on the pilot middle school program being held at the Manning Center. Ms. Black reported that the program has been a success and they hope to continue to grow and assist these students again in the fall.

Julian Kinsey, Education Chair, 4As, offered the following suggestions:

1. Cultural sensitivity
2. Due Process
3. Working group research-based alternative
4. Revisions to the Code of Student Conduct
5. Process for parents to request a school counselor to serve as their liaison
6. Allow suspended students to receive homework assignments and make-up work.

Superintendent Boyd thanked everyone for their input and support and informed them that the school district will continue to find ways of working with a small population of students that are continually struggling and having behavioral problems, and will deal with each case on an individual basis. Currently, the district has the Horizon Center as the alternative school, which is set up specifically to deal with this population. The school district also welcomes the opportunity to continue to work with community agencies to help find solutions that will help families.

Chairman Roy thanked everyone for their input and suggestions.

The workshop adjourned at 4:10 p.m.