



City of Jacksonville – The Jacksonville Journey

Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy Subcommittee

MINUTES

OF

EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION

AND

TRUANCY WORKGROUP

April 8, 2008

The Jacksonville Journey – Education

Education Sub-Committee

Out-of-School Suspension & Truancy Workgroup

April 8, 2008

10:00 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS before the Jacksonville Journey - Education Sub-Committee, Out-of-School Suspension and Truancy Workgroup taken on Tuesday, April 8, 2008, Edward Ball Building, 8th Floor, Room 851 - 214 N. Hogan Street, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida commencing at approximately 10:00 a.m.

Out-of-School Suspension & Truancy Workgroup

Bill Scheu, Workgroup Chair
W.C. Gentry, Workgroup Sub-Chair
Skip Cramer, Member
Bill Hodges, Member
Dr. Robert Lee, Member
Tom Majdanics, Member

APPEARANCES

COMMITTEE CHAIRS & MEMBERS:

Bill Scheu, Workgroup Chair
W.C. Gentry, Workgroup Sub-Chair
Skip Cramer, Member
Bill Hodges, Member
Tom Majdanics, Member

STAFF:

Renee Brust
Alice Checorski

ABSENT:

Robert Lee, Member

OTHERS PRESENT:

Councilman Don Redman, District 4
Pat Willis, DCPS
Paul Soares, DCPS
Gloria Lockley, DCPS
Donna Massie-Cobb, DCPS
Reverend Bruce Havens, ICARE
Robert Sievart-Wagner, ICARE

PROCEEDINGS

April 8, 2008 - 10:00 a.m.

Education Sub-Committee, Out-of-School Suspension and Truancy
Workgroup

Call to Order and Comments. Chairman Bill Scheu called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and acknowledged there was a quorum present in attendance today.

1. Purpose of Meeting.

The purpose of this meeting is to address out-of-school suspensions and truancy in Duval County Public Schools.

2. Discussion.

Skip Cramer reported that he looked at the discipline policies in four of the other urban counties in the state since the question

was raised if there was a significant difference in the policies and as to why we have higher out-of-school suspension rates. Hillsborough County has the least specific policy as to what the students can do and what the implications are. Broward County has a matrix for offenses and resulting actions. Duval County is very clear on what levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 offenses are. We don't know what the factors are to cause Duval County to have higher rates. It appears we don't have tougher written policies than others. We also don't know how other district's policies are applied and what level of experience their teachers have.

What can Duval County do is really a two-part study. It begins with an evaluation piece to see how Duval fits against other school districts. The second piece involves Duval County Public Schools, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, State Attorney's Office and parents in the need to develop an analysis to examine the school discipline policy and identify which practices in other school systems will reduce out-of-school suspensions. This study would come from a public safety and educational impact and look at best practices to reduce suspensions and at the same time protecting a productive classroom learning environment.

Mr. Cramer suggested Dr. Bill Bainbridge, School Match as a possible resource to assist in finding someone to conduct the study. He estimated a cost for Part 1 at about \$50,000.

W.C. Gentry recommended that Part 1 be implemented and the motion was seconded by Bill Hodges.

Bill Scheu asked if it wouldn't be better to recommend both parts of the study. A typical JCCI Study is about \$100,000. Skip

Cramer estimated a total cost for the full study of about \$150,000. Once he receives information from Dr. Bainbridge and UNF, he will give a more precise number.

The workgroup **voted on Part 1 - Analyze other districts' best practices and compare to Duval County Public Schools.**

VOTE: All In favor - unanimous

At this time, Gloria Lockley, Executive Director for Alternative Schools and Donna Massie-Cobb, Truancy Intervention Program, made a presentation of the DCPS' draft proposal. They supplied a handout titled *Alternative to Out-of-School Suspension/Truancy Intervention Program Duval County Public Schools*. Ms. Lockley stated this is a rough draft of a program to address out-of-school suspension and truancy and to give students an opportunity to continue the learning process (both academic and behavioral) in a safe, structured and supervised environment. The objectives of the program are:

- To reduce the incidents of out-of-school suspensions resulting from Code of Student Conduct violations
- To reduce the incidents of truancy and improve the attendance rate of students
- To reduce the number of School Environmental Safety Incident Report (SESIR) incidents

The program eligibility is for grades 6-12 (middle and high school). The student must be suspended for a minimum of three days. In-school suspension would be for one to two days, which would allow the school to work with the students. It would be a

great change to the system.

Pat Willis stated we would look at the level of offense so we can have relevant academic support. We should be able to serve our students so they get their work packet and complete it.

Bill Scheu asked what a 1-2 day in-school suspension program would look like. For a 3-day suspension, would the student be in school for days 1 and 2? Ms. Lockley replied that for a 3-day suspension the student would go to the center. In-school suspensions are with a para-professional including behavioral interventions. We are already doing this.

Pat Willis said there is an opportunity for some counseling on the school site, but the student is separated from the other children. Ms. Willis stated we could contract with outside agencies on a competitive process. The contracts would be tight, especially making sure faith-based organizations do not use religious-based programs. We would like an option program where the parent would buy into it (i.e. St. Paul Missionary Church).

W.C. Gentry expressed thanks to the Duval County Public School staff for a great job in a short time in putting this draft together.

He said it is important to have parent buy-in to the other program and he can see a contract with the parent to make sure they bring the student. It seems that out-of-school suspensions aren't working because the parents aren't buying in. The big job is getting the principals and the school staff to change their mindset to in-school suspensions for 1-2 days instead of out of school for 3 days.

Ms. Willis stated the impact on the district would be facility-wise and funding in-school suspension programs for every school. We are intervening and holding these students in school and not on the street. Training and education is critical.

Donna Massie-Cobb reported that Palm Beach stressed we include principals and other staff on the development of the program. They have 3 sites since implementation last January. Hillsborough County has 12 sites.

Ms. Lockley directed the group to Page 3 of the draft proposal which recommended staffing needs on a site basis:

- 1 Certificated Staff (teacher)
- 1 Social Worker
- 1 School Resource Officer
- 2 Truant Officers

Recommended to serve all schools:

- 1 Lead Social Worker
- 1 ESE Itinerant Certificated Teacher to serve all sites
- 1 ESOL Itinerant Certificated Teacher to serve all sites

Persons currently assigned to Truancy Centers would be re-assigned. Four out of 7 are part-time.

Donna Massie-Cobb reviewed the proposed locations, capacity and current sites. Mayport Middle School is recommended for the beaches area. They would provide the services once provided by the Boys and Girls Club. They are recommending geographic areas for public-private partnerships and contracting with religious or other non-profit groups to provide services. St. Paul is across the street from Ribault High School. We are looking at the feeder

patterns in the school system.

Ms. Lockley presented the proposed budget, with an estimated cost for 10 centers. She stated if we use centers and do not have oversight for Compass Odyssey, there would be an additional maintenance cost involved.

The salaries for 20 Truant Officers include the current officers and 13 additional officers.

The initial set-up cost is estimated at \$1,155,500 and the ongoing operating cost estimate is \$2,205,146.

At this time, Chairman Scheu emphasized the massive amount of work done by the Duval County Public School Staff. He expressed gratitude on behalf of the workgroup for their efforts.

Mr. Scheu made a motion that the group move to adopt the program "in concept". It was so moved by W.C. Gentry and seconded by Skip Cramer. The question was raised if DCPS buys into the in-school suspensions, do we need 10 centers? Tom Majdanics referred to the number of approximately 25 students per center if the out-of-school suspension rate was cut from 400 to 200-250. Ms. Willis mentioned this briefly to the superintendent. Funding is the concern.

Mr. Scheu stated there is no money for the additional funds needed for the in-school suspension program.

Councilman Don Redman asked how many in-school suspensions we have now. Donna Massie-Cobb replied we based the out-of-school suspensions on 30 per site, including truants. Mr. Scheu recommended we start with 10 centers and reduce the number over a

period of time.

Pat Willis said that the training component is key for our principals and assistant principals.

Mr. Gentry said there could be funds for the public-private partnerships, but he doesn't see the City funding the DCPS.

Ms. Lockley added that IT costs need to be looked at for other sites.

Councilman Redman said we need to do this as part of *the Journey*.

We already have business partners that help with our schools.

Paul Soares stated there will be gaps in the cost. We will provide a more detailed budget to Renee Brust prior to the Subcommittee meeting on Wednesday.

W.C. Gentry will also work with Ms. Brust to get something fleshed out to the workgroup this afternoon.

The workgroup **voted to approve the DCPS proposal "in concept" -**

VOTE: Unanimous - In Favor

VOTE: Close Truancy Centers - Unanimous - In Favor

At this time, Reverend Bruce Havens, Arlington Congregation Church representing ICARE provided public comment. Reverend Havens stated ICARE, a faith coalition, is comprised of 25 organizations working around education and justice issues. They introduced the CHAMPS Behavioral Program. He stated members of the congregation are concerned with truancy and out-of-school suspension issues. On April 21, 2008 there will be a community meeting with the 25 organizations, at which approximately 1,500 people are expected to attend. The Deputy Superintendent, JSO representative and

hopefully a representative from the Mayor's Office will attend. He invited the workgroup to also attend. The event will be held at St. Paul's AME Church. Reverend Havens expressed a great deal of concern about the alternative programs and transportation. ICARE is proposing a five-school pilot program focusing on reading on grade level, which he feels is a key initiative to students' improvement in school.

Chairman Scheu thanked Reverend Havens for speaking with the workgroup and for the invitation to participate in the community meeting on April 21, 2008.

At this time, the minutes from the April 4, 2008 workgroup were approved.

3. Action Items

- Skip Cramer will provide a more precise estimate for both parts of the study based on information from Dr. Bainbridge and UNF.
- Paul Soares, DCPS, will provide a more in-depth budget proposal.
- Renee Brust and W.C. Gentry will flesh out the workgroup's recommendations and circulate this afternoon, prior to the Subcommittee meeting on Wednesday, April 9, 2008.

Adjournment. The meeting ended at 11:20 a.m.