



**City of Jacksonville – The Jacksonville Journey**

**Education**

**MINUTES**

**OF**

**EDUCATION, TRUANCY, DROPOUT &**

**LITERACY**

**SUB-COMMITTEE**

**April 9, 2008**

**The Jacksonville Journey – Education**  
**Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy**

**Sub-Committee**

**April 9, 2008**

**1:30 p.m.**

PROCEEDINGS before the Jacksonville Journey - Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy Sub-Committee, taken on Thursday, April 9, 2008, Edward Ball Building, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 851 - 214 N. Hogan Street, Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida commencing at approximately 1:30 p.m.

**Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy Sub-Committee**

W. C. Gentry, Chair  
Tony Bellamy, Member  
Terrie Brady, Member  
Nancy Broner, Member  
Vicki Burke, Member  
Charles "Skip" Cramer, Member  
Pastor Moses Criswell, Member  
Michael Edwards, Member  
John Fletcher, Member  
Deborah Gianoulis, Member  
Cheryl Grymes, Member  
Bill Hodges, Member  
Connie Hodges, Member  
Kevin Hyde, Member  
Mia Jones, Member  
Robert Lee, Member  
Tom Majdanics, Member  
Nongongama Majova-Seane, Member  
Gerlieve Oliver, Member  
Perry Robinson, Member  
Bill Scheu, Member  
Connie Stophel, Member  
Lucretia Williams, Member

## APPEARANCES

### **COMMITTEE CHAIRS & MEMBERS:**

W.C. GENTRY, Chair  
VICKI BURKE, Member  
CHARLES "SKIP" CRAMER, Member  
MICHAEL EDWARDS, Member  
DEBORAH GIANOULIS, Member  
BILL HODGES, Member  
CONNIE HODGES, Member  
MIA JONES, Member  
TOM MAJDANICS, Member  
BILL SCHEU, Member  
CONNIE STOPHEL, Member

### **ABSENTEE MEMBERS:**

TONY BELLAMY, Member  
TERRIE BRADY, Member  
NANCY BRONER, Member  
PASTOR MOSES CRISWELL, Member  
JOHN FLETCHER, Member  
CHERYL GRYMES, Member  
COUNCILMAN KEVIN HYDE, Member  
ROBERT LEE, Member  
NONGONOMA MAJOVA-SEANE, Member  
GERLIEVE OLIVER, Member  
REVEREND PERRY ROBINSON, Member  
LUCRETIA WILLIAMS, Member  
BARBARA GUBBIN, Ex-Officio

### **STAFF:**

LINDA LANIER  
RENEE BRUST  
ALICE CHECORSKI

### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Donna Massie-Cobb, DCPS  
Shelley Grant, SAO  
Kathy Graw, JPL  
Jill Johnson, COJ  
Gloria Lockley, DCPS  
Tia Mitchell, T-U  
Debra Jahns-Nelsen, District 3 School Board Candidate

## **PROCEEDINGS**

April 9, 2008

Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy Sub-Committee, 1:30 p.m.

**Call to Order and Comments.** Chairman W.C. Gentry called the meeting to order at approximately 1:40 p.m.

### **1. Purpose of Meeting.**

Discuss the Mayor's crime initiative - *The Jacksonville Journey*, Education, Literacy, Truancy and Dropouts Subcommittee.

### **2. Discussion Items**

Chairman Gentry opened the meeting by thanking all the committee members and especially the Workgroup Chairs, Terrie Brady, Skip Cramer, Bill Scheu and Connie Stophel for their great work. Mr. Gentry stated we have already made a difference through the committee's efforts. He asked the members to keep Lucretia Williams in their thoughts. She has been a wonderful addition to the committee and attended most of our meetings as well as some of the workgroup meetings. She called to say she would not be here today due to a death in the family.

Mr. Gentry also thanked the Duval County Public School staff for their extraordinary involvement in working with the subcommittee. At this time, Bill Scheu presented the following recommendation outlined in a memorandum dated March 31, 2008 concerning the **Jacksonville Public Library** as it relates to the reduction in truancy and dropouts and improving literacy:

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Recognizing that the effectiveness of the recommendations of this Committee depend in part on the ability of the Jacksonville Public Library to continue to serve all of the Jacksonville community, and particularly to enable it to continue to provide critical programs that reduce truancy and dropouts and improve literacy, this Committee recommends that the funding of the Jacksonville Public Library not be reduced, but continued at least at current levels.

Motion made by: Bill Scheu            Seconded by:        Deborah Gianoulis

VOTE: Unanimous - In Favor

**OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND TRUANCY CENTERS**

W.C. Gentry stated that when he presented to the Education Subcommittee's recommendations to the Steering Committee, they kept asking what are we going to do about out-of-school suspensions. Mr. Gentry said we will continue studying this issue, and noted that he asked Bill Scheu to chair a combined workgroup with Bill Hodges, Skip Cramer and Tom Majdanics with great assistance from the Duval County Public School staff.

Statistics indicate that in addition to over 17,000 students missing more than 20 days of school, last year, there were approximately over 40,000 children suspended. It appears a number of those children are suspended more than once.

This is clearly an unacceptable situation. Duval County leads the state in in-school suspensions. The consensus was that we need to recommend an alternative out-of-school suspension program where

the children can be sent to, continue to be educated, and get counseling instead of wandering the streets. Again, we received tremendous help from DCPS in providing data of what these centers would look like, how they would be staffed, etc.

Bill Scheu, Chair, OSS & Truancy Workgroup, stated they met for the first time on Friday, April 4, 2008 and again on Monday, April 7, 2008 to finalize the recommendations.

The initial recommendations were discussed in great detail by all members of the subcommittee before making amendments and voting on a modified recommendation. Initially, it was thought that closing the Truancy Centers would be best. However, with input from the Duval County School Board as well as the committee members, the recommendation was changed to keep the existing Truancy Centers and expand the program to include out-of-school suspensions for more than 3 days. Both groups of students would be assigned to one of the four existing Truancy Center locations, with the addition of one public-private partnership organization site. They would receive e-learning education under the supervision of a certificated staff member, assessment and counseling services, parental engagement and some form of community service.

Mr. Gentry and Skip Cramer both said for this to work, we would need to engage principals, teachers and staff. Mr. Scheu stated the Duval County Public School staff also expressed that training is very important to the success of this recommendation.

With regard to the public-private organization (faith-based or other), certificated teachers would also be required as well as a clear contract.

The committee discussed the e-learning component and the need for funding. Councilman Don Redman stated he believes the churches would provide the computers and support.

Deborah Gianoulis asked about alternative schools. Gloria Lockley, Director of Alternative Education and Behavioral Support for the school district, stated we have two alternative schools, Maddie B. Rutherford and Grand Park Center. When a student receives a code of conduct violation, they are sent to one of these schools for 45 days. These schools have a full school psychologist, counselor and a partnership with Communities In Schools (CIS) to provide transition services by case managers.

Vickie Burke asked about the effectiveness of the alternative schools since in-school suspension is handled differently at each school. Ms. Lockley replied that Maddie B. Rutherford is a smaller learning environment. Students sent here have academic problems and we give them support. At Grand Park, students who offend for the second time are sent here for 45-180 days. The recidivism rate is low. The CIS transition specialist accompanies the child back into the school system. There are many interventions in place before suspending a student and sending them to an alternative school.

Debra Jahns-Nelsen requested an opportunity for public comment. Ms. Jahns-Nelsen said she sat in on the School Safety Workgroup a few times. She expressed concern about the loss of FTE funding when students are suspended out of school. Mr. Scheu said we were advised by DCPS that those students would be included in the count. Skip Cramer said that because the census has a 10-day

window, virtually everybody is covered and there is no revenue loss.

The issue of school security at the truancy and out-of-school suspension centers was raised. Director Michael Edwards, JSO, said there are two ways to handle it. Since DCPS pays two-thirds of the officer's salaries, we have the opportunity to increase our cap. He recommended bringing back retired officers for half the amount of funding. The School Resource Officer normally deals with anywhere from 400 to 3,000 students, depending on the location. In the centers, retired officers would only deal with about 30 students. Director Edwards recommended this as a cost-saving option.

After much discussion and revision, the subcommittee made a motion to accept the following recommendations, in addition to the recommendation mentioned earlier in the meeting regarding continued funding for the Jacksonville Public Library:

**RECOMMENDATION #1: Undertake an expedited but thorough review of other comparable school district practices and polices in comparison with DCPS practices and policies regarding in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions and behavior management and discipline. Estimated cost: \$60,000**

**RECOMMENDATION #2: Turn existing four Truancy Centers into out-of-school suspension centers where truant and suspended students will receive academic and counseling services and add an additional center as a pilot program through a public-private partnership.**

Failure to implement this recommendation, the Truancy Centers should be closed.

RECOMMENDATION #3: The Duval County Public School system should immediately implement a systemic policy review and take steps to reduce in-school-suspensions and out-of-school suspensions.

VOTE ON ALL 3 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Unanimous - In Favor

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION:

Recognizing that the effectiveness of the recommendations of this Committee depend in part on the ability of the Jacksonville Public Library to continue to serve all of the Jacksonville community, and particularly to enable it to continue to provide critical programs that reduce truancy and dropouts and improve literacy, this Committee recommends that the funding of the Jacksonville Public Library not be reduced, but continued at least at current levels.

Motion made by: Bill Scheu      Seconded by:      Deborah Gianoulis

VOTE: Unanimous - In Favor

Minutes from the March 12, 2008 meeting were approved.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.



**EDUCATION, TRUANCY, DROPOUT  
& LITERACY SUB-COMMITTEE**

April 9, 2008

**Out of School Suspensions & Truancy Workgroup**

**Recommendations Summary and Vote**

**RECOMMENDATION #1:** Undertake an expedited but thorough review of other comparable school district practices and polices in comparison with DCPS practices and policies regarding in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions and behavior management and discipline.

Estimated cost: \$60,000

**RECOMMENDATION #2:** Turn existing four Truancy Centers into out-of-school suspension centers where students will receive academic and counseling services and add an additional center as a pilot program through a public-private partnership. Closing the Truancy Centers is this recommendation is not implemented.

**RECOMMENDATION #3:** Implement a systemic policy review and take steps to reduce in-school-suspensions and out-of-school suspensions.

**VOTE ON ALL 3 RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Unanimous – In Favor

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE RECOMMENDATIONS, THE FOLLOWING WAS ALSO MADE DURING THE APRIL 9, 2008 MEETING:

RECOMMENDATION:

Recognizing that the effectiveness of the recommendations of this Committee depend in part on the ability of the Jacksonville Public Library to continue to serve all of the Jacksonville community, and particularly to enable it to continue to provide critical programs that reduce truancy and dropouts and improve literacy, this Committee recommends that the funding of the Jacksonville Public Library not be reduced, but continued at least at current levels.

Motion made by: Bill Scheu    Seconded by:    Deborah Gianoulis

VOTE: Unanimous – In Favor