

The District School Board of Indian River County met on October 27, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. The information session was held in the Large Instructional Conference Room located at the J.A. Thompson Administrative Center, 1990 25th Street, Vero Beach, Florida 32960. District School Board Members attending were: Chairman Carol Johnson and Board Member, Claudia Jiménez. Dr. Frances J. Adams, Superintendent of Schools; and Suzanne D'Agresta, School Board Attorney, were also present.

Information Session with State Representative Deborah Mayfield Minutes

I. Welcome by Chairman Johnson

Introductions:

State Representative Deborah Mayfield

District Secretary to Representative Mayfield, District 54, Margaret Mitchell

School Board Chairman Carol Johnson

School Board Legislative Liaison, Claudia Jiménez

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Frances J. Adams

Board Attorney, Mrs. Suzanne D'Agresta

II. Discussion

Representative Mayfield requested to meet with Dr. Adams to learn about the School District's position regarding the Florida Stop Common Core Coalition's movement to adopt a comprehensive "Opt Out" policy regarding testing and accountability in regard to statewide standardized or state required assessments.

Representative Mayfield asked what testing options were out there, what was the School District doing, and what were other States doing about the testing mandate. Dr. Adams stated that to her knowledge there was no "Opt Out" option available. She said that the testing was enacted by Florida Legislative action and mandated by Statute. Mrs. Mitchell passed out information regarding graduation, course credits, and requirements for third grade students. Dr. Adams explained the alternative assessments that were available only to students with special needs.

Representative Mayfield said that this year she wanted to file legislation to address/resolve the issues of State testing requirements for all students. She said that parents should have the option to opt out, with an alternative testing option. Representative Mayfield said that School Districts should be given the authority by the State to make the decision on selecting an alternative testing tool. There was a discussion on the pros and cons when giving parents the option.

Representative Mayfield asked if the tests were paid by the State. Dr. Adams said, "No". She said that the tests were very expensive and were tied to the teacher assessment mandate. Representative Mayfield said that the State needed to make it better for students and teachers. She said that the control needed to go back to the School Districts. She strongly urged School Board Members to challenge what has been put out there, not just do what the State tells you to do. Representative Mayfield said that our kids were different from other School Districts.

Board Member brought up the fact that performance pay was tied to student performance. She noted that the Board needed to remind legislators. Board Member asked if Representative Mayfield would include legislation to fund the required testing and the parent option to use another testing tool. Board Member stated that the proposed resolution language proposed in the Florida Stop Common Core Coalition put the responsibility on the School Districts but without funding.

There was a discussion on how complicated the entire issue would become if more than one assessment tool was being used and how much more expensive it would become. Dr. Adams reminded everyone of the importance of having consistent standards. Representative Mayfield agreed that consistent standards were important but questioned the methods of teaching standards associated with the State Assessment Test. Dr. Adams asked Representative Mayfield to go back to Legislators to change the State Assessment Test.

For now, Board Members asked that Legislators put the brakes on the next level of mandated assessments. Dr. Adams said that the best we could do right now was to put a hold on the testing. Get a panel of stakeholders, with parents, to discuss where to go from here. Dr. Adams said that there needed to be more time for transition.

There was a discussion on the total number of tests being given to students on a yearly basis versus the learning time. They also talked about the number of States that were pulling out of national testing. Representative Mayfield said she would like the Superintendent and School Board to help to put an end to the testing. Dr. Adams said that testing was needed but the transition time was not sufficient. She asked that the State put an end to holding back 3rd grade students and not to hold teachers performance pay on the line. Also, put a hold on testing this year on all subject areas. Representative Mayfield said that Florida needed to consider opting out of the national testing requirement that would result in the loss of federal funding. She said that the loss could be made up by the State budget. She also mentioned going back to standard testing.

Dr. Adams said that people have been asking for more time but nobody was listening. She said that now it was a train wreck. Dr. Adams said that millions of dollars were already spent on the mandated testing. Teachers' time and District dollars were being spent on training. Board Members said that the School District needed more time and needed to have the standards ready before becoming a mandate. There needed to be accountability (testing). Dr. Adams said that at this point we needed to move ahead but with more time to get there.

State Mandated Audits

Suggestion was made that would save School District and State money by holding audits every other year for School Districts that had a proven track record of clean audits. Representative Mayfield was in favor of that recommendation. She asked Dr. Adams to let her know what types of audits were mandated.

Other methods were discussed on how to determine if students were successful. They also discussed college readiness testing and benchmarks. Dr. Adams said that she wanted people to move to Florida because of our excellent educational opportunities.

III. Adjournment – Chairman Johnson

Representative Mayfield asked Dr. Adams to get back to her on the list of tests that did not produce results and annual, State mandated audits. Dr. Adams asked that the State totally eliminate school grades and district grades. She asked that the State grant School Districts three years before putting forth any penalties. Representative Mayfield asked for a copy of the unfunded State mandates. She also asked Luke Flynt to send her his opinion of the lists of tests being given from a teacher's perspective. Dr. Adams asked him to forward a copy of his response to her office.

With no further information, the session adjourned at approximately 4:40 p.m.