MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING
August 21, 2024
Okaloosa County School District
202A-Highway 85-N
Niceville, FL 32578

Chair Ben Gibson called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and welcomed members and guests to the State Board of Education meeting. The following members were present: Vice Chair Petty, Esther Byrd, Kelly Garcia, MaryLynn Magar, and Dr. Grazie Christie attended by phone. Chair Gibson recognized Pastor Jeremy Smith from Crosspoint Church to deliver the invocation and asked the crowd to remain standing for the presentation of the Colors by the Choctawhatchee High School JROTC. Roxy Fountain, a Senior at Baker School, and William Piker, a Senior at Fort Walton Beach High School, led the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem performed by Niceville High School Opus One.

Welcome

Chair Gibson recognized Superintendent Marcus Chambers of Okaloosa County School District to welcome the board and present the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) update. Superintendent Chambers thanked and welcomed the State Board of Education to Okaloosa County. Superintendent Chambers shared that Okaloosa County has 42 schools, 23 are Title 1 Schools, 32,000 students with 3,400 employees, and the district is a military area, with 29 percent of the population being military affiliated and 17 percent in the military. The district is the second largest employer in Okaloosa County, and has a strong presence in the community, and has been an A district since 2014. He shared Okaloosa schools' vision, The Next Generation plan, and six pillars: academic excellence, continuous learning, student-focused, safer schools, modern innovation, and community engagement.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Chair Gibson recognized Manny Diaz Jr., Commissioner of the Department of Education, to present his report. Commissioner Diaz thanked Superintendent Chambers for hosting the meeting and Chair Gibson. He also thanked everyone for their efforts during Hurricane Debby, which ensured safe and timely school openings.

Commissioner Diaz shared that teacher vacancies are down by 13.3 percent compared to last year thanks to Governor DeSantis' leadership, as he has prioritized teacher recruitment and retention, investing in initiatives and funding. School safety is a top priority, with House Bill 543 requiring the Department of Safe Schools to develop a statewide Behavioral Threat Management instrument and process. The department is implementing a two-tiered review and approval process for school-based Threat Management Teams, with nearly 30,000 members and 13,402 principals completing training. The Florida Purple Star Programs recognize schools, colleges, and districts that support military families, help students navigate challenges, and provide resources for transitioning to new school environments.

Commissioner Diaz shared that the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals granted a Florida Administrative injunction preventing the Title IX rule from taking effect statewide and preventing schools from implementing changes.

Commissioner Diaz recognized Jaivon Parks, a student at Crestview High School who has demonstrated exceptional resilience and academic achievements despite the loss of his mother. He also recognized Jamie Suarez, the 2025 Florida Teacher of the Year.

Commissioner Diaz recognized Senior Chancellor Adam Miller for his 14 years of contributions to the department as he moves on to new opportunities.

Commissioner Diaz thanked Dr. Burns for keeping the statutory timeline for processing certificate applications within 30 days instead of the 90-day timeline. Then, he highlighted the Governor's key initiative to create the Teacher Apprenticeship Program, and Superintendent Dotres in Miami-Dade and Madeline Pumariega, President of Miami-Dade College, launched the first and largest apprenticeship program, with 80 individuals sitting in classrooms with a mentor teacher. He also highlighted the success of the military pathway with 260 individuals certified through the pathway.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the Commissioner's Report. Ms. Magar made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

Updates

College System President Plinske on behalf of the Council of Presidents

Chair Gibson recognized Glen McDonald, President of Gulf Coast State College, to provide the COP update. President McDonald shared that Gulf Coast State College is proud to be Florida's first Purple Star Collegiate Campus. The 28 colleges in the state are growing by an average of about 28 percent. The college has developed the Gulf Coast Guarantee, where every high school graduate gets a guaranteed scholarship at Gulf Coast. For four years, the scholarship covers $700 a semester and requires full-time enrollment.

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Cristie Kedroshi, Interim President of Northwest Florida State College, for a brief update.

Chair Gibson recognized Shelby Sammons, Policy Coordinator for the Office of Policy and Budget, for an update. Ms. Sammons shared that nearly two-thirds of Florida's schools are A and B, ensuring students are set up for success. The state has over a million students in some form of a choice option, and for context, that's larger than 36 states' student population. The FEFP funds all students, with a record 28.4 billion dollars. The teacher vacancy rate has declined by 13 percent with a focus on ensuring students succeed. The legislature prioritized early learning, focusing on over 137,000 students in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program. They created the School Readiness Plus Program to help families transition and avoid government assistance. The Governor and legislature also committed over 8.5 billion dollars in the last few years to workforce programs, including two billion dollars for college systems and over 765 million for workforce education programs. These efforts aim to meet and exceed the 2030 goal.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of New Rule 6M-8.622, Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Provider Performance Metric and Designation

Chair Gibson recognized Cari Miller, Chancellor of Early Learning, for an overview of new rule 6M-8.622, Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Provider Performance Metric and Designation. Chancellor Miller shared that this new rule establishes a new VPK provider accountability system based on data collected during the program year. This will require the

Department to calculate provider performance based on Classroom Scoring System (CLASS) assessment scores, Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) screening, and child outcomes. Providers must meet criteria, including data for all components and serving a minimum of four children who have completed over 50 percent of the VPK program's instructional hours.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve new Rule 6M-8.622. Ms. Byrd made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia.

Chair Gibson recognized Carol Gauronskas

The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of New Rule 6M-9.200, School Readiness Plus Program

Chair Gibson recognized Chancellor Miller for an overview of new rule 6M-9.200, the School Readiness Plus Program. Chancellor Miller shared that House Bill 1267 established the School Readiness Plus Program, allowing eligible families to continue receiving subsidized childcare services to become economically self-sufficient. The program promotes economic stability and expands the workforce by encouraging participating families to accept higher wages without worrying about losing childcare subsidies. The rule establishes family eligibility and responsibilities for participating families, Early Learning Coalitions, and providers. The program has received roughly 23 million dollars, which is explicitly appropriated for implementation.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve new Rule 6M-9.200. Vice Chair Petty made the motion with a second by Ms. Magar.

Chair Gibson recognized Carol Gauronskas .

The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of New Rule 6A-1.09952, Requirements for the Florida Seal of Fine Arts

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Paul Burns, Chancellor of Public Schools, for an overview of new rule 6A-1.09952, Requirements for the Florida Seal of Fine Arts. Chancellor Burns shared that the Florida Seal of Fine Arts program, established by House Bill 523 in 2024, aims to recognize high school graduates with exemplary benchmarks in fine arts coursework. To earn the seal, students must earn an A or higher in three year-long courses in selected fine arts disciplines and meet additional criteria like advanced coursework, volunteer service, competition, performance, or portfolio.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve new Rule 6A-1.09952. Ms. Garcia made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-7.0714, Library and Instructional Materials Objection Report and Specific Material Objection Template

Chair Gibson recognized Chancellor Burns for an overview of amendment to rule 6A-7.0714, Library and Instructional Materials Objection Report, and Specific Material Objection Template. Chancellor Burns shared that the purpose of this rule is to provide school districts with the reporting instructions and materials they need in their districts. House Bill 1467, from the 2022 legislation session, continues to protect students from having access to

inappropriate materials. This amendment updates the Specific Material Objection Template to align with the statutory requirements from House Bill 1285 passed in the 2024 Legislative session. The amendment limits the number of objections a non-parent county resident can submit once a month.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to Rule 6A-7.0714. Ms. Magar made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Rules 6A-6.03315, Private School Scholarship Compliance; 6A-6.0952, Family Empowerment Scholarship Program; and 6A-6.0960, Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program

Chair Gibson recognized Adam Emerson, Director of the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, for an overview of the amendment to rules 6A-6.03315, 6A-6.0952, and 6A-6.0960. Mr. Emerson shared that the amendment to 6A-6.03315 allows for hybrid school programs to have regular and direct contact with teachers in person at least two days a week. We have a number of hybrid schools in our program that operate in a brick-and-mortar building a couple of days a week, followed by three days of a home education program.

Mr. Emerson shared that the amendment to rule 6A-6.0952 creates two payment dates, one for new students and one for renewing. Renewal scholarships will be paid by August 1st, and new students to the program will be paid by September 1st.

Mr. Emerson shared that the amendment to rule 6A-6.0960 removes the application deadline for any new or prospective scholarship funding organizations in the state.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to Rule 6A-6.03315, 6A-6.0952 and 6A-6.0952. Ms. Byrd made the motion with a second by Vice Chair Petty. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSENT ITEMS

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the consent items. Vice Chair Petty made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia.

Chair Gibson recognized Nayeli Reyes in support.

The motion passed unanimously.

Member Comments

Ms. Byrd shared her concern about the October 1st deadline and how funds will be distributed for teacher salary increase allocations. She encouraged the public to learn about the process and contact school board members. Ms. Garcia expressed her pride in the Florida College System for providing opportunities in the Panhandle and thanked the department for its hard work. Ms. Magar thanked Superintendent Chambers for embracing progress monitoring, having 86 percent of schools be an A, B, or C, and having 37 Purple Star Schools. Vice Chair Petty echoed previous comments and appreciated the community for everything they have going on in Okaloosa County. Chair Gibson echoed all the members' comments and thanked Superintendent Chambers and the Okaloosa County Schools District and board for their dedication and commitment to education. He ended by sharing the highlights of the meeting.

Chair Gibson announced that the next meeting would be in St. Augustine, on September 25, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, Chair Gibson adjourned the meeting of the State Board of Education at 11:45 a.m.

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Chris Emerson, Corporate Secretary

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Ben Gibson, Chair