



# AGENDA

## The Jacksonville Journey

Workgroup: Out of School Suspension & Truancy

April 4th, 2008  
10 a.m. – NOON

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1.	Introduction of subcommittee chairs	Bill Scheu Skip Cramer
2.	Presentation by DCPS	Tim Ballantine DCPS Pat Willis DCPS
3.	Workgroup Discussion	Bill Scheu Dr. Robert Lee Tom Majdanics Bill Hodges W.C. Gentry Skip Cramer
4.	Adjourn	Bill Scheu

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**City of Jacksonville – The Jacksonville Journey**

**Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy Subcommittee**

# **MINUTES**

**OF**

## **EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE**

## **OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION**

**AND**

## **TRUANCY WORKGROUP**

**April 4, 2008**

# **The Jacksonville Journey – Education**

## **Education Sub-Committee**

### **Out-of-School Suspension & Truancy Workgroup**

**April 4, 2008**

**10:00 a.m.**

PROCEEDINGS before the Jacksonville Journey - Education Sub-Committee, Out-of-School Suspension and Truancy Workgroup taken on Friday, April 4, 2008, Edward Ball Building, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 825 - 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  
Dr. Robert Lee, Member  
Tom Majdanics, Member

### **STAFF:**

Renee Brust  
Alice Checorski

### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Councilman Don Redman, District 4  
Tim Ballantine, DCPS  
Pat Willis, DCPS  
Paul Soares, DCPS  
Kathy Graw, JPL

### **PROCEEDINGS**

April 4, 2008 - 10:00 a.m.

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

**Call to Order and Comments.** The meeting was called to order at  
10:00 a.m.

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

The purpose of this meeting is to address the following:

"Is there an opportunity here to consolidate our efforts with  
truancy and out-of-school suspensions?"

#### **2. Discussion.**

W.C. Gentry stated that all of us on the *Journey* were shocked with  
the number of truants in the Duval County Public School system.  
When the Education Sub-committee presented to the Steering  
Committee, they asked what do we want to do with all of these

children who are not in school. We heard from the police as to how they pick up the students but in the Truancy Centers, there is staff that is not very functional. Mr. Gentry and Renee Brust looked at the information and suggested an approach: is it feasible to merge the Truancy and Prevention Programs, to find the facilities and have the programs staffed with people who are able to assist with getting on Compass Odyssey and have the students keep up with their academics while they are not in school?

It could be broken into a morning program designed for education and other appropriate training or assistance with a second program where they would perform community service and earn community service hours.

That is the concept we suggested as a format to look at. Mr. Gentry stated there are other issues such as facilities, where are we going to put these children and who is going to staff them. In the past, a faith-based program run by Reverend Gunn of St. Paul Missionary was successful. Are there enough facilities through the faith-based community and will they be able to deliver the education and training? It has to be a partnership with the Duval County Public Schools. A private partnership is more preferable because of the funding cuts DCPS is facing. The public sector would be ideal for the community service component.

Mr. Gentry stated he would like to see this committee recommend there be a policy against out-of-school suspensions. There should not be children suspended without being in school.

At this time, Bill Scheu asked the Duval County Public School representatives to address the workgroup.

Pat Willis, Deputy Superintendent, introduced Paul Soares, Operations Division, who can speak about facilities and Tim Ballantine who provided statistical information to the group.

Ms. Willis asked what is the most effective way to address suspensions and truancy with our students. We need to continually address the academic needs of our students.

Mr. Ballantine stated we have provided the number of students suspended last year from each of our middle and high schools. There is no duplication within each month. Additionally, the same data appears on page 3 of his handout by grade level. On average, students are suspended for two days. Based on the data, it appears that over a 20-day period, about 10% of students are suspended. A chart of the four Truancy Centers with staffing information was provided. The cost of operating the centers in 2006-07 was \$576,625.48, serving 1,498 students during that time. In July 2007, DCPS established a 3-year contract for the **Compass Odyssey** software, 2 consultants and 1 technical advisor. The contracted personnel serve all middle and high schools except Paxon Academy and Stanton College Prep. Paxon is considering the program to support their advance placement program.

In the middle schools, it provides a full academic curriculum. For the high schools, it is course by course but does not cover the electives. Students can do course recovery to make up missed courses. They can come back after school hours and take courses until 9 p.m.

Bill Scheu asked if there is a core group of habitual student offenders. Ms. Willis replied there is a small percentage of

students who are causing the problems in each school.

Bill Hodges noted that we have the highest rate of out of school suspensions in the State at the middle school level.

Skip Cramer reported that the data he worked with from the School Security Workgroup indicated about 15% of our school population was suspended. We were concerned with how this affects the population count that drives the funding. Are we losing dollars because these students are out of school and if so, can these dollars be recovered?

Pat Willis said that the FTE count is in October and February. There are very few students who are not counted at all since there is a 10-day window period during which they are counted.

At this time, Councilman Don Redman, District 4, addressed the workgroup. He stated for several years, we have been trying to get an OSS Program going. Reverend Gunn, St. Paul Missionary, has had a 99% success in his charge for students to do their work on computers. In his experience as school advisory chairman for Englewood High School, Councilman Redman found some students choose to be suspended. If we don't turn them around at that age, they are headed for destructions. We have the crime issue to look at as well as the students we are losing.

W.C. Gentry asked Councilman Redman what the correlation is between students who are truant and those who get suspended. Mr. Redman replied there are groups of the same students who miss classes and get in trouble on purpose just to get suspended.

Pat Willis said we need to look at how do we meet the needs of these children socially, psychologically, etc. and what are we

not addressing so we don't have this recurring theme. This component is critical.

W.C. Gentry stated we have to be school-relevant. We have recommended increasing the number of social workers. His question is transportation to these programs. Councilman Redman said that according to Reverend Gunn, the parents were responsible for getting the children there in the Raines-Ribault area.

Paul Soares stated the real number of suspended students is about 300-400 per day. Transportation is not an inexpensive option.

The workgroup discussed underused school facilities. Mr. Soares said we have to look at the school operation and how the transient group disrupts the basic operation. Some of the underused facilities need capital improvement to be considered as a site option. Using a non-profit center gives us the most "bang for the buck" and we will be paying mostly for staffing.

Pat Willis stated in grades 6-12, we could use one certificated person if we have computers. For more than 25 students, we need another person.

Renee Brust asked if Compass Odyssey is real time, or in other words is it what the other students are doing. Pat Willis replied that students using Compass Odyssey are taking actual courses. It is the responsibility of the administration and principals to make sure the students are not being punished academically.

The workgroup discussed the difference between suspended and truant students. Bill Scheu said the social workers are school-based. The Truancy Centers are being under utilized. Tom Majdanics reported that there are 2-3 students per center per day.

With an annual cost of \$576,625.48 for Truancy Centers serving 1,500 students, it amounts to about \$400 per student.

Robert Lee said we are astounded by the out-of-school Suspension numbers compared to other counties. Have we looked into what other counties are doing that we are not doing. With a public versus private sector partnership, you can leverage dollars from the feds, etc.

W.C. Gentry said the hope is that the School Board will change its policy and we will greatly reduce the number of out of school suspensions.

Ms. Willis said the Code of Conduct has specific guidelines. She doesn't know why we are higher than other counties unless there are other entities involved when they count their numbers, which may be the case.

Bill Scheu said that the good staff at JCCI called other counties.

Skip Cramer replied our in-school suspension rate places either 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> in the State as well. The recent Blueprint on Juvenile Justice indicates that the zero-tolerance policy has put a large number of students in the juvenile justice system. Dr. LaWanda Lavoira, a member of the commission, spoke to another workgroup about the report.

Tom Majdanics said it appears the district is using OSS to improve discipline. With 400 students a day being suspended, maybe reducing this number by one half would be more manageable.

Pat Willis said we need to look at what is a "suspendable offense" at other districts and what multiple offenses get a student suspended.

Bill Hodges asked what is the time frame procedurally leading up to a suspension. Ms. Willis said that a disruptive student is charged with an offense; the assistant principal of student services call the student in; there is a place for the student's statement to be written. Based on the offense, the level of discipline is determined. The parent is called. At that time, a discussion about transportation will take place.

Skip Cramer suggested an independent study of out-of-school and in-school suspensions. The study may be useful to school systems statewide.

W.C. Gentry reported that the Steering Committee has already passed the recommendation that out-of-school suspensions not exceed other counties. How do we deal with current out-of-school suspensions to ensure our students are being educated and not warehoused?

Bill Hodges said that Hillsborough County did a study several years ago and he will bring it to the workgroup.

Bill Scheu stated our recommendation is that out-of-school suspensions be assigned to a non-profit partner with an educational component. It is also our recommendation that a study be funded so that at the end of a five-year period, we take a look at it again. We could recommend closing the Truancy Centers and use those funds for social workers, contracts and staff.

Councilman Redman said it is our goal to turn these students around and put them back into the classroom as functional students. It is a proven fact that if they get a diploma, they will be a better citizen.

Chairman Bill Scheu made a motion to explore a staffing model; determine how many facilities we will need on the basis of a public-private partnership and understand what the school policy on suspension is from a legal aspect.

Robert Lee added that there should be a component that we do a study with other counties. A recommendation should be imbedded about causation from a multitude of points outside of our scope.

W.C. Gentry said we should keep in mind that the School Relevancy Workgroup is addressing some of these issues.

Renee Brust agreed we should include a funding request for the comprehensive study.

Skip Cramer said that FIE as well as a number of other private organizations can perform the study.

Additionally, W.C. Gentry said we should recommend that the under-utilized truancy centers be closed.

Councilman Redman stated using community and council members, we could find about ten facilities in the faith-based community since quite a few organizations already conduct after-school programs. They will need reassurance of the re-occurring funding.

Paul Soares added there will be an IT hardware piece to include Compass Odyssey.

### 3. Action Items

- Bill Hodges to provide a copy of the Hillsborough County Study on Truancy and Out of School Suspensions
- Pat Willis, DCPS, to develop a model of facilities, including staffing needs, recommended number of facilities based on public-private partnership, IT costs to include Compass Odyssey.

Adjournment. The meeting ended at 11:40 a.m.