

MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING

April 17, 2024

Tallahassee Community College
Student Union Ballroom
444 Appleyard Dr.
Tallahassee, FL 32304

Chair Ben Gibson called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and welcomed members and guests to the State Board of Education meeting. The following members were present. Monesia Brown, Dr. Grazie Christie, Kelly Garcia, and MaryLynn Magar. Attending by phone Vice Chair Petty, Esther Byrd, and Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz. Chair Gibson recognized Darrick McGhee, Senior Pastor of Bible Based Church in Tallahassee, Florida, to deliver the invocation.

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Jim Murdaugh, President of Tallahassee Community College. President Murdaugh provided an update on the exciting activities happening at Tallahassee Community College (TCC), including the name change to Tallahassee State College (TSC). President Murdaugh thanked Commissioner Diaz for his personal involvement in the college's success, particularly in becoming the first Florida college to sponsor a public charter high school, and expressed gratitude, support, and the opportunity to celebrate the unveiling of their new academic seal. He ended by sharing that TCC achieved a record three-year graduation rate of 42%, surpassing the national average.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Chair Gibson recognized Manny Diaz Jr., Commissioner of the Department of Education, to present his report. Commissioner Diaz shared that April is the Month of the Military Child, honoring the unique contributions of military-connected children. Florida is committed to being the most military-friendly state, with nine military installations, law supporting military families, and schools supporting military children. The Purple Star School of Distinction Program recognizes schools that support military families, help students navigate challenges, and provide resources during transitions. The Collegiate Purple Star Campus was established in 2023 to honor colleges supporting military families. Four colleges have earned the distinction, including Gulf Coast State College, Santa Fe College, State College of Florida Manatee Sarasota, and Tallahassee Community College. Florida has established the Purple Star School District Program for districts with at least 75% designated schools. The program provides professional development for veteran mentors and coaches, and the Purple Star Teacher Leadership Program provides the same high-quality professional development.

Commissioner Diaz prioritized student safety and career pathways, including the Military Veterans Temporary Certificate, Military Veterans Certification Exam waivers, Troops to Teachers, Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact, and Heroes in the Classroom Bonus Program. Florida law allows military families to choose the best schools for their children, ensuring they can participate in special academic programs, athletic sports, and extracurricular activities during relocations.

Commissioner Diaz recognized Lauren Granquist, a student at Chiles High School and Benjamin Marshall, a TCC graduate, for their academic excellence and military commitment.

Commissioner Diaz announced that all school districts' teacher salary increase plans have been finalized, with the exception of Putnam County.

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

ACTION ITEMS

Consideration of whether Broward County School Board is unwilling or unable to comply with section 1002.33(17), Florida Statutes, Charter School Funding

Chair Gibson recognized General Counsel Andrew King for an update on probable cause for Broward County. Mr. King shared that the Broward County School Board approved a payment plan to repay the district's charter schools. The repayment will be made over the next three years, starting July 10, 2024.

Chair Gibson shared Mr. King's recommendation to table the item until the July Board Meeting.

Mr. King, at the request of Chair Gibson provided an update on the personal titles and pronouns case.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-10.081, Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Paul Burns, Chancellor of Public Schools. Chancellor Burns shared that the purpose of this amendment is to establish ethical principles, which educators who are certified must follow. The Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida aims to ensure that all Florida students have access to high-quality materials and that principals understand their responsibility. The amendment prohibits bad actors in school leadership positions from intentionally depriving students of access to high-quality reading materials. The Florida Legislature and Governor DeSantis have been clear about parental choice and transparency for parents and families. In 2022, legislation required personnel involved in library media materials and reading lists to take training developed by the Department of Education. School principals are also required to oversee compliance with district procedures for selecting library media materials. In 2023, legislation reaffirmed that parents have the ability to object to pornographic and inappropriate materials in their local school districts. Chancellor Burns proposed an amendment to the amendment based on public comments. The amendment clarifies that principals must implement the decision of the school district, based on the district's objection policy, to remove inappropriate material.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to the amendment for Rule 6A-10.081. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the Amendment to Rule 6A-10.081 as amended. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Ms. Magar. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Gibson recognized Andrew Spar, President of the Florida Education Association, in opposition.

Turnaround Option Plan and Annual External Operator Contract for Alachua County School District

Chair Gibson recognized Chancellor Burns for an overview of the Turnaround Option Plan and Annual External Operator Contract. He shared that Lake Forest Elementary School received a D grade in 2017-18, received its second school grade of a D in 2019, then implemented a district managed turnaround option plan. Lake Forest Elementary received a school grade of F in 2022, and a D in 2023. Alachua County Public Schools must now implement one of three options: turn the school over to a charter operator, hire an external operator, or vote for closure with reassignment of students to higher-performing schools. The school district has chosen to enter into a contract with an external operator, Instructional Empowerment.

Chair Gibson recognized Superintendent Andrew of Alachua County. He shared additional details about why they chose an external operation and thanked the department for their continued support.

Chancellor Burns provided Commissioner Diaz's recommendation with conditions. First condition, the district will submit to the Department the results of the needs assessment completed by the external operator with an explanation of any recommendation that the district did not adopt. The second condition is that the external operator will appear before the Board to provide updates on goals and objectives after completion of progress monitoring one and two. The third condition is for the district to ensure all core classrooms are staffed at all times with highly effective teachers. The fourth condition is if this Board does not see evidence of improvement in the next year, they will have to appear before the State Board and sever ties with this external operator.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the turnaround plan recommendation, with the conditions. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Ms. Brown. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Appointments to the Education Practices Commission (EPC)

Chair Gibson recognized Deputy Chancellor of Educator Quality Sunny Chancy for an overview of the appointments to the EPC. Dr. Chancy shared that the EPC is responsible for protecting student's health, safety, and welfare. The three candidates for consideration are Jamie Harper Sheehan, a parent with experience working with the U.S. House of Representatives and Florida House of Representatives. Jennifer Thaxton, a lifelong educator with over 26 years of teaching experience, and Charlotte Wintz, a high impact teacher with 25 years of experience.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the appointments. Ms. Magar made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

New Bachelor Degree Program – Florida Gateway College Proposal for a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Larry Barrett, President of Florida Gateway College. President Barrett provided an overview of the proposed Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. Florida Gateway College serves rural communities in Dixie, Union, Hillcrest, Baker, and Columbia counties and is experiencing a strong demand for a bachelor's degree in business administration. This will expose students to critical areas of accounting, finance, marketing, management, and operations. Chair Gibson recognized Stephanie McClendon of First Federal Bank. She shared that this degree program would provide a stronger talent pool and successful planning for the bank and local businesses.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration for Florida Gateway College. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Ms. Brown. The motion passed unanimously.

New Bachelor Degree Program - St. Petersburg College Proposal for a Bachelor of Science in Cardiopulmonary Sciences

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Matthew Liao-Troth, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer of St. Petersburg College for an overview of the next three items. Dr. Liao-Troth provided local need for the new degree with support from various healthcare institutions, including Bay Care St. Luke's Hospital and St. Anthony's Hospital, and Manatee County Health Care. The proposed degree will offer students the opportunity to learn management principles in health care and improve respiratory best practices research in how to create positive change within the department and community.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the Bachelor of Science in Cardiopulmonary Sciences for St. Petersburg College. Ms. Magar made the motion with a second by Dr. Christie. The motion passed unanimously.

New Bachelor Degree Program - St. Petersburg College Proposal for a Bachelor of Applied Science in Digital Media

Dr. Liao-Troth shared that Pinellas County has over 200 job openings yearly for graphic designers, digital videographers, digital media designers, animators, content instructional designers, disposition video recorders, and gamification designers, and this degree program will help fill these jobs.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve of the Bachelor of Applied Science in Digital Media for St. Petersburg College. Ms. Garcia made the motion with a second by Ms. Brown. The motion passed unanimously.

New Bachelor Degree Program - St. Petersburg College Proposal for a Bachelor of Science in Secondary English Education

Dr. Liao-Troth shared that the proposed degree aims to prepare graduates for middle and high school English teacher positions, as well as English department chairs and other specialist positions within the school system. He shared the current demand in Pinellas County for 118 new employees every year.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the Bachelor of Science in Secondary English Education. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Gibson recognized Andrew Spar in support.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-6.03013, Exceptional Student Educational Eligibility for Students Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing and Rule 6A-6.03014, Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Student Who are Visually Impaired

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Peggy Aune, Vice Chancellor for Strategic Improvement for an overview of the proposed amendment to rule 6A-6.03013. Dr. Aune shared that this amends the method for identifying deaf or hard of hearing students for exceptional education and broadens the definition of deaf and hard of hearing. It also outlines the audiological report and assessments and provides resources for students and their parents.

Dr. Aune provided an overview of the proposed amendment to rule 6A-6.03014. This rule amendment broadens the definition of visual impairment, including blindness, and describes the medical reports and assessments required for exceptional student education.

Chair Gibson recognized Ian David, Debra Gelinski, and Alexandria Mestres in opposition.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to Rule 6A-6.03013, Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Gibson recognized Alexandria Mestres, Ashely Greguric, Ben Fox, Eileen Bischof, Doug Ingram, and Lina Nissley in opposition.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to Rule 6A-6.03014, Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Student Who Are Visually Impaired. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Ms. Magar.

Member Comments

Vice Chair Petty expressed gratitude for the hard work and effort of the board members in addressing the failing schools and the urgency to turn these schools around. Ms. Byrd shared her frustration with the turnaround process and her hope for the legislature to hold districts accountable sooner. Ms. Magar expressed her excitement about the name change for Tallahassee State College, highlighting the state's growth and importance of colleges in education and teaching necessary skills to students. Dr. Christie also expressed gratitude for the warm reception in Tallahassee and was impressed with the bachelor's degree programs. Ms. Garcia expressed her gratitude as well for TCC's welcoming environment, and acknowledged the public's comments, and expressed appreciation for superintendents, presidents, and community members. Ms. Brown expressed gratitude to the Board members for their efforts in addressing the challenges faced by turnaround schools and the department for all their hard work. Chair Gibson expressed his appreciation for the commissioner and staff.

Chair Gibson announced that the next meeting would be at Miami Dade College on May 29, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, Chair Gibson adjourned the meeting of the State Board of Education at 3:32 p.m.

Chris Emerson, Corporate Secretary

Ben Gibson, Chair