



April 21, 2020 School Board Workshop with Brevard Federation of Teachers

The School Board of Brevard County, Florida met in conjunction with Brevard Federation of Teachers for a virtual workshop on Tuesday, April 21, 2020. The meeting was streamed live via usual streaming channels. Notice of the workshop was advertised in Florida Today on Tuesday, April 14, 2020. The affidavit of publication with a copy of the ad attached is filed in the Affidavit File in the Board Office.

The meeting was held virtually in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Date: Apr 21 2020 (10:00 A.M.)

Opening Exercises

1. Opening Exercises

Chairman Misty Belford began the workshop at 10:03 a.m. She explained that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, it was necessary to hold the workshop virtually via SKYPE. The meeting was being streamed live through normal viewing channels.

Roll Call

2. Roll Call

Board Members Present Virtually: Misty Belford, Cheryl McDougall, Tina Descovich, Matt Susin and Katye Campbell
Brevard Federation of Teachers (BFT) Members Present Virtually: Anthony Colucci, President; Vanessa Skipper, 1st Vice President; Kyle Savage, Treasurer; and Jonathan Hilliard, 2nd Vice President
BPS Staff Members Present Virtually: Mike Alba, Director Professional Learning & Development; Russell Cheatham, Assistant Superintendent Chief Information Officer; Pam Escobar, Administrative Assistant School Board; Paul Gibbs, Legal Counsel; Karyle Green, Director Professional Standards & Labor Relations; Sue Hann, Assistant Superintendent Facilities Services; Jane Cline, Assistant Superintendent Elementary Leading and Learning; Cynthia Lesinski, Chief Financial Officer; Mark Langdorf, Director Risk Management & Employee Benefits; Mark Mullins, Superintendent; Chris Moore, Assistant Superintendent Student Services; Rochelle Schwindt, Director Compensation Services; Stephanie Soliven, Assistant Superintendent Secondary Leading and Learning; and Beth Thedy, Deputy Superintendent/Chief Human Resources Officer

Pledge of Allegiance

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Order of Business

Order of Business

4. Teachers with Mental Health Concerns

[☞ BFT BPS Workshop 04 21 2020.pdf](#)

[☞ Brevard Federation of Teachers & School Board of Brevard County Workshop.pdf](#)

Chairman Belford explained that there were four topics that Brevard Federation of Teachers (BFT) had requested to discuss during the workshop: Teacher Mental Health, Substitutes, Health Insurance, and Recruitment and Retention. Both the District and BFT's presentation are attached.

Mr. Colucci began by complimenting the entire BPS team for efforts during the COVID-19 crisis. He provided some background on mental health statistics. He said that depression is the most chronic mental health condition in BPS according to information from Cigna. BFT brought this issue forward as they are seeing a lot of this come into play in discipline and evaluations. He said often times it is BFT that is finding out mental health is the issue and referring the employees to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). He went on to give information about the outcomes BFT has encountered as a result. He offered some solutions specific to EAP and ways it could help. He commented that there needs to be better communication of this service to help provide employees better awareness. Mr. Colucci suggested that there are many cases where EAP should be offered in lieu of discipline. He mentioned mandatory EAP and would like to see some concrete processes shored up in this area to determine when and how mandatory EAP is assigned. BFT wants to see clear and objective criteria in place.

Mr. Langdorf spoke about the EAP process. It allows for unlimited telephonic sessions and is at no cost to the employee. He stated that employees are informed about this service through the benefits newsletter, Spotlight on Education, and through information distributed through training. He said that they plan to have a more thorough training with administrators in the summer in conjunction with Labor Relations. He further detailed methods used to get the word out about EAP. Mr. Langdorf defined the EAP contract and services offered. Next he offered information about types of referrals generally given by supervisors and the supervisor's role in the process. Mr. Langdorf outlined the EAP usage during 2019-2020 both telephonically and in person visits. He said that EAP is a great benefit to employees.

Ms. Campbell asked about mandatory EAP and whether it means mandatory to report or mandatory for the employee to get counseling. Mr. Langdorf stated that typically it is something that Labor Relations deems mandatory and they will make the arrangements. Consequently if an employee refuses, they may be subject to discipline. Typically Mr. Langdorf has seen this as "fitness for duty" exams.

Regarding the slide about EAP website usage; Ms. Skipper asked Mr. Langdorf about the number of clicks to the EAP website and whether those were overall or specific to BPS. Mr. Langdorf said that the website is specific to BPS. Ms. Skipper asked about the usage percentage. Mr. Langdorf explained that is based upon the number of employees divided by the number of cases.

Mr. Susin gave Mr. Langdorf a huge shout-out and asked what he (Mr. Susin) could communicate to schools as he met with them. Mr. Langdorf told him that education on our EAP would be most beneficial. Mr. Colucci asked how the telephonic EAP is being advertised to employees because he has a hard time finding that information on the website. Mr. Langdorf said that it is sent out through the Benefits on Spotlight and it is reiterated many times. Mr. Langdorf stated that they will work on doing a better job to get the information to the employees. Mr. Colucci said they are in favor of "all of the above" approach to communication. Regarding mandatory EAP; it is mentioned that specific policy violations might trigger a mandatory EAP and Mr. Colucci asked what those specific policy violations are. Mr. Langdorf said that is generally up to Human Resources. Ms. Green gave an example of anger management. It is a case by case basis.

Mr. Colucci asked whether or not training to administrators on identifying mental health issues would be beneficial as Cigna has said they will be willing to provide the training. Mr. Langdorf stated that the training is lengthy. He said the focus this summer will be to have administrators look at psychological problems that are happening in the workplace through EAP health advocates rather than Cigna. Mr. Colucci asked for Mr. Langdorf to continue to share what those trainings will entail with BFT. Mr. Langdorf responded affirmatively.

Ms. McDougall asked Mr. Langdorf if the cards the principals have to give out regarding EAP state that you have unlimited telephonic access to EAP? She said that it is an amazing benefit. She also wanted to know if all of the health providers understand this as well. Mr. Langdorf looked at a card he had and it did say the 800 number is available 24/7.

Mr. Savage asked how are principals addressing these types of psychological issues through EAP rather than discipline. Mr. Langdorf said they will continue to focus on training on how to identify these issues and what to do when they are recognized. Dr. Soliven, assistant superintendent of Secondary Learning and Learning, said they had the folks from Mr. Langdorf's office present to principals in February and it was outstanding. Principals asked a lot of questions and appreciated being given options and support and positive changes in the EAP process. The speaker (Lisa Schmidt) at the February training offered to go to give trainings during faculty meetings. The principals were "hungry" for this information and Dr. Soliven thinks we will see some positive changes as result.

Ms. McDougall asked if we encouraged a person to use the EAP and they refuse; does BFT do anything to move the employee toward that usage? Mr. Colucci said that he feels he has been successful in getting them to take advantage of the opportunity. He did state they he feels they need to look at mandatory EAP more closely. Dr. Thedy clarified that all information is confidential during the EAP process.

Ms. Campbell thanked both sides and agreed we need continued education.

5. Substitute Shortage

Mr. Savage began by speaking about the substitute shortage and the effects on teachers, administrators and student learning. Mr. Hilliard explained what this shortage looks like to BFT. He said that it is an anxiety producing situation at all levels. Mr. Savage went over data regarding fill rates. He said that fill rate doesn't show the whole problem for a couple of reasons. He said that there 1,000 positions during the month of February that went unfilled. He said that while the overall fill rate was at 83%, there are schools with much higher fill rates. He feels those schools should be high focus. Mr. Savage said that one of the factors with keeping subs is pay. Just to get started is over \$100. He provided some solutions which included increasing overall pay, pay incentives for hard to fill schools/positions, pay for teachers to cover classes and/or miss planning, move more PD opportunities to the summer and promote substitutes throughout the district. He suggested schools putting their special subs on posters.

Dr. Thedy stated that the information she would be providing is very similar to that presented by Mr. Savage. She said she still questioned data validity and will work toward making sure that all jobs are posted on Smart Find. She went over the hourly rate slide and she said that nearly 70% of substitutes in BPS have bachelor's degrees. Dr. Thedy also provided some potential solutions as well as information about a survey sent out to substitutes. They had about 550 responses with a variety of comments. One of the things that was mentioned is that some of the substitutes feel anonymous when they arrive and anonymous when they leave. Dr. Thedy said that it was discussed during cabinet and with the Board and they spoke about acknowledging subs. They need to have people checking in on them. It is a no-cost solution. Leading and Learning have been working with principals to think of ways to make subs to feel more welcome. There has been talk of covering some of the start up costs for substitutes and training. They have implemented giving \$20 extra a day to Madison as a pilot "hard to fill" school. She said they did not have good collection of data for the one month they were able to run it so she cannot say it was effective yet. However, she did feel it was a valuable incentive. She also provided some other incentives that may prove useful including promoting substitutes via video as well as more training. She said that right now substitutes do a 20 hour course if they do not have an education degree. It is really intensive. Dr. Thedy said another area they feel is important to continue is for cabinet and Board members to substitute as possible on hard to fill days.

Ms. Campbell asked about communication to principals about acknowledging substitutes. Dr. Thedy said that communication has gone out to principals. Ms. Campbell stated that we really need to reach out to parents as potential substitutes. She will be happy to jump in and be part of a video as she enjoyed her time as a substitute.

Ms. Descovich said that she did the 20 hours of training. She said there are areas that could receive more focus. She loved the idea of the sub poster and can be incorporated into social media.

Ms. Belford said she appreciated all of the work that was being done and wants us to continue to remember to recognize the important work substitutes are doing.

6. Health Insurance

Mr. Colucci brought forward his presentation on health insurance which included some background. He said there have been a lot of changes in the health plan during the last five years inclusive of contributions, the addition of the Well Care Centers, required biometrics, formulary changes and copay increases. He said that there is a lack of understanding about a self-funded insurance plan. He presented a slide on the projected trend of the trust fund vs. the actual trend. He said there are many inaccurate projections. He said they realize they will have to address shortfalls, but BFT is not being given a target. He presented some solutions that BFT is comfortable with right now including a tobacco surcharge. He said the dependent eligibility audit should be done. If we increase coaching, we can save dollars as well as healthier employees. We have to do more to educate employees. He said there is a lack of clarity on our Well Care Centers.

Mr. Savage stated that a timeline needs to be developed to discuss changes so that everyone has time to determine the best way to move forward.

Mr. Colucci brought forward some possible solutions that are promising, but they will need more information. He said that one of the solutions was lower copays to go to certain doctors within a designated care network. He stated that BFT had asked for a listing and had not yet received it. Mr. Savage discussed having registered nurses on some campuses for employees. He said maybe there could be incentives for employees using well care centers. Another solution could be a board infusion into the health plan. Increasing contributions by both the Board and employees could be another option.

Mr. Colucci said that there is a lack of clarity about any savings that going to an alternative network would be and additionally there are other concerns.

Dr. Mullins commented that he appreciated the way the union has defined the health plan. It is our plan and the positive way it is used benefits everyone both in healthier employees and in cost savings to the plan. He also wanted to bring to everyone's attention that a dependency audit across the organization is already being planned. The savings are yet unknown and are dependent on what is found during the audit. Additionally, an audit of the Well Care Clinics is in the process through RSM to determine what is the cost benefit analysis. RSM is also performing an audit of the pharmacy plan. They are hopeful to have results of the Well Care audit by the end of May while the audit of pharmacy plan will take more time. Dr. Mullins stated that he agrees with the Union that we are at a place where financial action will be necessary. Mr. Langdorf explained that they are in the process of getting the contract for the dependency audit and it will come before the Board for approval. Mr. Langdorf had Cigna pull some data of how we compare to other districts. He provided that information. He also asked Cigna to provide data on how employees are managing chronic conditions. He also provided data on expenses and revenue over the last six years. He stated that the revenues have basically remained flat; while the costs have increased.

There were no more questions.

[7. Recruitment and Retention](#)

Ms. Skipper and Mr. Hilliard began the presentation. Ms. Skipper said the teacher shortage has serious consequences and provided variables that impact student learning. She provided some background on reasons why teachers have left their positions and the cost of losing these teachers is to BPS. She presented that the main reasons teachers leave are: compensation, lack of support, lack of teacher preparation and working environment. She offered solutions that included predictable raises that keep up with inflation and the cost of living as well as a commitment to no pay freezes.

Ms. Skipper and Mr. Hilliard also stated that there are not enough district mentors to reach the teachers who need them and stressed the importance these mentors play for early career teachers. They suggested increasing the supplement and reducing the workload of the teacher mentors.

They also explained what teachers value in their work environment and in administration. Ms. Skipper asked for BPS and BFT to work together for improvements. Ms. Skipper concluded her presentation with a slide that stated, "You don't have a recruitment problem if you don't have a retention problem."

Mr. Alba, provided some details of what the District has been doing in the area of recruitment and retention. He felt the virtual career fairs held on March 23 and April 21, 2020 were successful and provided details. He also spoke about "On Demand Video Interviews" as another way to connect with possible candidates. They have been communicating with Instructional Assistants who may be interested in pursuing a teaching career. Mr. Alba also presented retention efforts they have implemented such as a general knowledge test workshop, teacher networking events, lead mentoring newsletter, a TLC conference, a teacher wellness event and teacher leadership training opportunities. He presented some results from the annual Insight Teacher Survey.

Mr. Colucci asked Mr. Alba about compensation for teacher leadership opportunities. Mr. Alba stated that there is a small supplement for lead mentor teachers (up to six per school). Universities typically provide some sort of compensation for teachers who have interns by way of college course credit for a discount or free.

Mr. Hilliard commented that new teachers that come into teaching through the alternative certification program will need our support to be successful. Mr. Hilliard offered to go with staff to the colleges where they are trying to recruit.

Ms. Campbell said that having professional development during the school day cause them to have to have more substitutes which causes problems on the other end. She asked how we can maneuver some of the needed professional development with limited time.

Mr. Alba stated that one positive with everyone being forced to be home during the pandemic is that everyone is becoming more comfortable with virtual platforms which may prove useful for professional development opportunities. Ms. Skipper suggested looking at grants and also reallocating funds.

Mr. Campbell said that a person to person recommendation is the biggest positive impact that you can make. We all have to be working on the recruitment and retention areas together.

Dr. Thedy thanked the Board and BFT for the cooperative and collaborative opportunity.

Mr. Colucci offered thanks as well and asked "Where do we go from here?" He asked if the BFT could be assigned to a district point of contact for each of the four topics so they can continue discussing and collaborating to come up with agreed upon solutions. Dr. Thedy said she would put that down as next steps.

Closing Remarks

8. Closing Remarks/Direction

Dr. Mullins and Ms. Belford thanked everyone and both were appreciative of the collaborative approach and solutions that were offered.

Adjournment

9. Adjournment

Chairman Belford adjourned the meeting at 1:44 p.m.

A video of the Skype meeting may be found [here](#).