

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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**School Board Workshop
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Policy 6306, Homework

The School Board recognizes the importance of assigning meaningful and quality homework to students, which should be completed during non-instructional hours. Also, they stressed the importance of quality feedback from teacher to student.

Articles for and against homework were supplied to the School Board for their information and discussion.

The discussed reasons for homework: It is a powerful instructional tool and it enhances achievement by extending learning beyond the school day. Some reasons against homework: too much homework harms students' recreation (to them) and family time, and should only be given when assignments are meaningful, not busy work.

Also supplied to the Board Members were examples from five school districts across the country and their definitions of homework. The School Board did like New York City's elementary school policy for homework, which has time limits per grade level and homework was given four days per week.

There is a difference between subjects and suggested homework. Some require more practice some require more reading and Board Members are not suggesting to reduce the rigor of teaching and learning.

The Board Members had several suggestions regarding the Homework Policy.

-Collaboration between teachers at the secondary level regarding when homework would be assigned. There should be a balance of projects so they are not assigned at the same time. The School District wants its students to be involved in extra curricular activities, but with getting homework assignments from every class each day does not allow enough time to be a part of these activities, such as clubs and sports.

-Homework should be meaningful and should reflect what was taught in class that day.

This homework should be reviewed by the teacher and graded.

-So a student knows exactly what is expected from the homework assignment, a student has the right to ask the teacher to clarify the homework assignment.

-Teachers should be sensitive to school events, weekends and holidays when assigning homework.

-Suggested time limits on homework at the elementary level. If a student needs more time it may be a sign of not understanding and reason for a parent to speak with their Guidance Counselor to determine cause. ESE and ESOL students should be allowed more time to do their homework.

-Assignments that require going to the public library will include a weekend to accommodate working families.

There must be a balance between homework, family time and extracurricular activities.

In today's world families are so busy, perhaps they having a second job. Schools should be more sensitive to how households are run today allowing more family time and not assigning too much

homework.

After making suggestions regarding the Homework Policy, Board Members asked how they can be sure that it is implemented at the schools. The leadership of the school is very important. Also, a guide for the Homework Policy will be included in the teachers' handbook for their training session stating the expectations of the School Board. Teachers are evaluated on a quarterly basis and homework assignments would be part of the evaluation.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Staff presented the School District's NCLB 2007-2008 data and lessons learned. In the 2006-07 school year, a school that did not make AYP (Adequate yearly Progress) for two years in a row, had to provide a Choice to transfer to another school for the 2007-2008 school year. Parents had to respond to the letter within 30 days if they choose to attend one of the offered schools or they could also choose to stay at their boundary school. In 2007-08 2,982 students were granted a transfer under NCLB Choice. The School Board Members were informed about the new application, timeline and assignment process for 2009. This year there will be a menu of choices. Parents will again be sent a letter advising them of their boundary school status. Parents then can prioritize their choices. The District will assign students based on parents' choices and seats available at each school. If a school has not made AYP and the student wants to stay at their boundary school, Supplemental Educational Services (SES), tutoring services are offered.

For clarification purposes: A school could be an "A" school by Florida school grade calculations. However, schools that may be designated as an "A" in the state accountability system may still not make AYP. AYP is a calculation by the Federal government that looks at small subgroups within a school. A group as small as thirty children can be the reason a school may not make AYP. This small subgroup can designate the entire school as not making AYP. NCLB Choice is a Federal consequence for schools not making AYP for two years or more. Even though Choice is offered, many students stay at their boundary school, because they are happy with the performance of their school and their achievements. The School District is very concerned with having class size reduction and having to move portables to schools to accommodate extra students because of NCLB Choice. The School District must wait until after July 14th, the predicted date for the AYP data to come from the Federal government, to determine if twenty-seven schools must continue to offer NCLB Choice for the 2008-2009 school year. It has already been determined that fifty-eight schools will be providing Choice to their families in April. It is almost an impossible task to move portables to the Choice schools on time for the beginning of school, moving extra teachers, providing student transportation and being in compliance for Class Size.

The School District want parents to be well informed. A marketing plan is being implemented to inform boundary families and community members of the great things that are happening at their home school. The marketing plan is called, *No Place Like Home*. Step two of this marketing plan is called *Destination Success*. This brochure will describe the option to stay at the home school or the option to transfer to another school. Both options equal success. This brochure will educate parents about NCLB Choice and SES. Now parents can make an informed decision as they have received both home school and Choice information. An SES toolkit brochure will be mailed to parents who selected the SES Plan. Further information will be available at the Choice/SES website, which will be launched in March.

Budget Update

The School District's financial impact, due to the Statewide funding shortfall, was discussed. It is estimated that Broward School District will lose approximately \$72.0 million in funding for 2008-09 as a result of the shortfall. The downturn in the real estate market and potential impact of the Property Tax Amendment is estimated to impact our revenue projections by \$375 million over the next 4 years, in addition to a projected first year shortfall of \$144.6 million. Approximately \$100 million of this reduction is related to property tax reform. Governor Crist has promised to hold School Districts harmless, but this will not be known until March, when the State discloses its final funding. To prepare for this uncertainty, solutions were discussed to minimize the shortfall. One solution was to restructure our debt and make up some of the capital dollars. Also suggested was to review and prioritize the adopted District Educational Facilities Plan projects revenues. The Board Members will have a future discussion on this, before the budget discussions in June, and would like to hear from the community as to what their priorities are.

The Superintendent informed the Board of the Budget Leadership Team (BLT), which met last week after the passage of Amendment One. Actions have been taken to freeze hiring and purchasing; only mandatory overtime (union contract) and stop consult agreements March 1st.

A position paper will be developed on the District's financial status in light of Amendment One passage, the shortfall from state funding and the related financial impact. A Q & A will be created on this subject on what has happened and what are the impacts on the budget. Also a communication plan for employees will be created to answer their questions and to stop rumors, which will be updated regularly.

The Chair summarized and stated that the School District will have to make some hard decisions, but will minimize the impact on the children.

Policy 7000 and 7002.B

As requested by the School Board Members, Policy 7000, New School Site Selection and Policy 7002.B, Land Purchases, came back for the Board's final word on their revisions. The Board reviewed both policies and fine tuned wording throughout the documents. The final versions of these policies will come to the Board for the first reading in March.

JFN:jd