

# **EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE**

## **Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the 2024 Interim**

**July 15, 2024**

### **Call to Order and Roll Call**

The first meeting of the Efficient and Effective School District Governance Task Force was held on July 15, 2024, at 1:00 PM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Mike Nemes, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

### **Present were:**

Members: Senator Mike Nemes, Co-Chair; Representative Kim Banta, Co-Chair; Senators Gerald Neal, and Lindsey Tichenor; Representatives Tina Bojanowski, Ken Fleming, and James Tipton; Councilman Phillip Baker; Lorrان Ferguson, proxy for Auditor Allison Ball; Angela Masden; Dr. Rebecca Nicolas; George Nichols, Jr.; and Jody Wurtenberger.

Guests: Dr. Marty Pollio, Superintendent, Jefferson County Public School District; Dr. Katy DeFerrari, Chief of Staff; Dr. Joseph Ellison, Assistant Superintendent for High Schools; Eddie Muns, Chief Financial Officer; and Dr. Corrie Shull, Chair, Jefferson County Board of Education.

LRC Staff: Joshua Collins, Emily Wiley, Peter Wright, and Maurya Allen.

### **Introductions**

Senator Mike Nemes, Co-Chair, welcomed members to the task force and briefly covered the purpose and mission of the task force. He asked everyone to look at the data that will be presented during these meetings and consider how it will help educate children. Representative Kim Banta, Co-Chair, also welcomed members and the public to the meeting.

The other members of the committee briefly introduced themselves, including Lorrان Ferguson, proxy for Auditor Allison Ball, Councilman Phillip Baker, Angela Masden, Dr. Rebecca Nicolas, George Nichols, Jr., and Jody Wurtenberger.

### **Presentation – Overview of School District Organization**

Several members of the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) system were present to give an overview of the district organization, including Dr. Marty Pollio, Superintendent;

Dr. Katy DeFerrari, Chief of Staff; Dr. Joseph Ellison, Assistant Superintendent for High Schools; Kiley Whitaker, Transition Readiness Specialist; Eddie Muns, Chief Financial Officer; and Dr. Corrie Shull, Chair, Jefferson County Board of Education.

Dr. Pollio said he was not in favor of the creation of this task force but was entering it with an open mind to share with members the state of the district and take what suggestions will come from the task force for the improvement of the system. The biggest challenges facing JCPS are very much the same as other districts across the Commonwealth and the nation – a shortage of teachers, a shortage of classified staff (especially bus drivers), and problems with student absenteeism. The pandemic amplified these issues, and recovery from the effects of the pandemic continues.

Data regarding enrollment, attendance, absenteeism, graduation rates, postsecondary readiness, and percentages of students experiencing poverty were shared with members. All the statistical information presented can be found in the meeting materials and presentation from JCPS. Dr. DeFerrari gave a brief overview of the district's organizational structure which was linked in the presentation. on the district's webpage.

Dr. Ellison spoke regarding the Academies of Louisville, JCPS's career and technical education programs and pathways offered in the district. He spoke about the middle school Explore program that introduces career pathway information to middle grade students prior to high school so they can be better prepared for postsecondary success. Dr. DeFerrari further introduced the alternative and specialty schools for students struggling with behavior issues as well as those needing special support while facing medical or other challenges. There are district-wide programs for students seeking accelerated or magnet education.

Dr. Pollio spoke briefly about the efforts of the district to close achievement gaps, especially in regards to reading and math. He addressed how many employees the district has and how they break down among various categories.

Mr. Muns briefed the members on the total budget of the district and how the general fund is budgeted. All of the data is available in the JCPS presentation posted online. Dr. Pollio noted the general fund per pupil expenditures and highlighted how that impacts the specialty programs for exceptional children. Dr. Shull spoke about the Board of Education, beginning with expenditures during the 2023-24 school year. He spoke to the various functions of the board and its committees.

In response to questions from Representative Bojanowski, Dr. Pollio said the organizational chart was a direct result of his conversations with the Council of the Great

City Schools based on other large school districts throughout the nation. They continue to consult with the Council of the Great City Schools and have had several audits during his tenure that help identify how the district can improve. He has worked with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), which he highly recommended as a resource.

Responding to questions from Representative Tipton, Dr. Pollio said there were many thousands of minutes of instruction lost due to the bus schedule problems at the start of the school year last year. This is a direct result of the shortage of bus drivers, and change is necessary to prevent learning loss, especially among high-risk students who are often the most impacted. They have worked to regain those instructional minutes over the summer, and there is a commitment to not have the same losses in the next school year.

Responding to questions from Representative Fleming, Dr. Pollio said he did not know the exact number of students with chronic absenteeism, but he agreed they are startlingly high. Mr. Muns said he had focused on general fund allotments per school, rather than total budgets for each school in order to best illustrate the amount of funding that is going directly to student supports rather than other costs such as facilities improvements. They do not often perform cost-benefits analyses on schools, but they do look very closely at the per pupil expenditures, especially for students who need additional resources. Dr. Shull said the 2014 audit predates his time on the board, but each board member does due diligence to investigate how funds are allocated, including working closely with Mr. Muns and ensuring they meet the goals of the board for student achievement.

In response to a question from Mr. Baker, Dr. Pollio said he meets frequently with other superintendents and all are struggling with the same issues, but to different degrees. Social service needs are high for many schools, which makes it difficult for teachers and principals who are expected to support students in new ways. JCPS is investing more heavily into these supports than they have before and evaluations of these supports is ongoing to determine if it is adequate and effective.

In response to a question from Senator Tichenor, Dr. Pollio said the organization chart links provided can give the exact breakdown of the number of employees and their job titles in the various departments of the system.

Responding to questions from Chair Nemes, Dr. Pollio said the district follows the law in regards to truancy; however, it is more important for the district to focus on the causes of truancy and find ways to remedy it. Regarding student assignment, Dr. Pollio said the

changes were made to have a goal for all students to attend a high-quality school, even if it meant going to a school that was not close to home. More families are choosing to attend school close to home, and the district is investing in building the infrastructure to support having high quality schools close to home for all families. The physical infrastructure was built in the 1950s and the district is working to modernize. Attendance for summer programming can be a challenge, but many thousand took advantage of the opportunities to do fun and exciting activities in addition to math and literacy instruction. He discussed the challenges of multilingual learners and how the district has worked to help prepare students for the state-wide assessments which factor into the district's accountability scores.

In response to a question from Mr. Nichols, Dr. Pollio spoke highly of the impact of the career and technical education in the district, especially in terms of increasing student engagement and attendance. The greatest impact has been in high-poverty schools better preparing students for postsecondary employment success.

### **Announcements**

The next meeting of the task force will be on July 29, 2024 in Annex 154. The meeting previously announced as being August 22, 2024 during the State Fair has been rescheduled for the early evening of August 29, 2024, in Louisville. Members were encouraged to stay alert for messages from staff regarding details of future meetings.

### **Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the task force, the meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.