

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, AUGUST 31, 2010

The School Board of Escambia County, Florida, convened a Town Hall Meeting at 5:30 p.m., in the South Lecture Hall, at Woodham Middle School, 150 East Burgess Road, Pensacola, Florida, with the following present:

Chair: Mr. Gerald W. Boone Vice Chair: Mr. Jeff Bergosh

Board Members: Mrs. Linda Moultrie
Mrs. Patricia Hightower
Mr. Bill Slayton

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

Meeting was advertised in the Pensacola News Journal on July 28, 2010 - Legal No. 1477864

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Boone called the Town Hall Meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

II. PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ON CLASS SIZE

The Superintendent and Mrs. Carolyn Spooner, Director-High School Education narrated a PowerPoint® presentation which outlined the following information with regard to Class Size:

Budget Pressures 2011-2012 –

Federal stimulus disappears; property values decline; financial impact of oil spills; and Class Size amendment.

Amendment 9 (2002) - *The Florida Constitution was amended in November 2002 to restrict class size at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The implementation of that amendment has been phased in, allowing districts to be in compliance prior to the 2010-11 school year if the following parameters were met:*

- *Calculation at the district level (2004-2006)*
- *Calculation at the school level (2007-2010)*
- *Reduction of at least two per year until full compliance is met*

Requirements of Amendment 9 (2002) - *For school year 2010-11, full compliance at the classroom level is required. The requirement for all core classes is:*

- *PreK – Grade 3 18 students*
- *Grades 4 – 8 22 students*
- *Grades 9 – 12 25 students*

These class size targets will continue to be our goal.

Class Size Calculations – *Class size is determined by calculating the number of students assigned to a classroom in which a core course is taught. Core courses included in the calculation for class size include math, English, science, reading, social studies, foreign language, and exceptional student education. Non-core courses such as art, music, physical education, and career and technical education are NOT included in the class size calculation.*

Issues Related to Class Size Reduction –

1. *Disruption of classes at all levels by requiring that classes be divided when they exceed the required size*
 - *Elementary children connect quickly with their teachers and often have difficulty adjusting when a new teacher is assigned.*
 - *Secondary students experience disruption in multiple courses when classes are divided.*
2. *Limited instructional space at some sites even when teachers can be hired*
3. *Mobility rate at all levels*
4. *Reduced opportunities for students at secondary schools to select the courses they want*
5. *Increased ancillary costs which include the following:*
 - *Teacher edition textbooks*
 - *Classroom sets of materials*
 - *Furniture, fixtures, and equipment*
 - *Additional elementary art, music, and physical education teachers*

Escambia Class Size Data –

- *The District has added 489 teachers since 2003-04.*
 - Cost of approximately 26.4 million for 2010-2011*
 - Reduction in student enrollment approximately 3200*
- *The State increased the District's allocation for class size by only \$934,244 for the 2010-2011 school year.*
- *The District met required school-level averages in all schools in 2009-10.*

Amendment 8 (2010) – *The Florida Constitution currently limits the maximum number of students assigned to each teacher in public school classrooms in the following grade groupings: for prekindergarten through grade 3, 18 students; for grade 4 through 8, 22 students; and for grades 9 through 12, 25 students. Under this amendment, the current limits on the maximum number of students assigned to each teacher in public school classrooms would become limits on the average number of students assigned per class to each teacher, by specified grade grouping, in each public school. This amendment also adopts new limits on the maximum number of students assigned to each teacher in an individual classroom as follows: for prekindergarten through grade 3, 21 students; for grades 4 through 8, 27 students; and for grades 9 through 12, 30 students. This amendment specifies that class size limits do not apply to virtual classes, requires the Legislature to provide sufficient funds to maintain the average number of students required by this amendment, and schedules these revisions to take effect upon approval by the electors of this state and to operate retroactively to the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year.*

What Amendment 8 (2010) Means –

- *The proposed amendment is NOT eliminating the class size requirements.*
- *Class size targets will be identical to the targets set in 2002, but districts will be permitted to calculate using the school average which is what we have been doing.*
- *A hard cap of 3 will be placed on Grades K-3, allowing for a maximum of 21 in a class.*
- *A hard cap of 5 will be placed on Grades 4-8, allowing for a maximum of 27 in a class.*
- *A hard cap of 5 will be placed on Grades 9-12, allowing for a maximum of 30 in a class.*

School Average –

- *To maintain the school average at each level, even given the flexibility permitted by Amendment 8 (2010), the majority of the classes must continue to be within or close to the prescribed class size or school average would not be met.*
- *The flexibility allows schools to serve students better.*

2010-11 Escambia District Measures –

- *Reduced staffing ratios*
- *Added 49 additional teachers at a cost of \$2.6 million*
- *Allocated \$1 million to be used for part-time or full teaching units*

These measures totaled \$3.6 million in additional costs to the district for 2010-2011 even though the state allocation increased by only \$943,244.

Strategies Being Implemented at All Levels to Move Schools toward Compliance –

- *Increase in the number of co-teaching classrooms*
- *Reduction of the student-teacher ratio*
- *Monitoring of the class size reports at the classroom level*
- *Monitoring of school enrollment and addition of staff when necessary*
- *Oversight from District level directors to assist with problem solving*

Additional Strategies Implemented –

- *Scheduling of small enrollment classes through Escambia Virtual Academy (EVA)*
- *Hiring of part-time teachers to fill the need for extra classes*
- *Combining into one class period multiple levels of some courses that have low enrollment, such as upper level foreign language classes, to continue programs*
- *Sharing teachers between schools*
- *Hiring of teachers to teach an additional class at the secondary level*

Casualties for Students if Amendment 8 Fails –

- *Continuity of classes*
 - Division of elementary classrooms*
 - Ongoing schedule changing at secondary schools*
- *Low enrollment accelerated courses such as Advanced Placement*
- *Schedule changes to accommodate student need*
- *Adjusting placement in Algebra I at middle school at the end of each grading period*
- *Small high school level courses such as Algebra I and Integrated Science I*
- *Small remedial classrooms*
- *Forfeiture of elective classes for core classes*
- *Approved transfers after the school year has begun as well as transfers to overcapacity schools*

Reasons Schools and Students Must Have Flexibility -

Flexibility allows schools to serve the needs of students by

- *keeping remedial classes*
- *providing accelerated classes*
- *maintaining elective classes*
- *preserving continuity of elementary classes*
- *continuing to offer opportunities for acceleration in middle school*
- *providing for AYP transfers*
- *accommodating mobility*

The number of students permitted in a class should not drive a student's opportunities.

Accurate Information Is Essential –

In 2002, the class size amendment passed by 52 percent of the voters. In 2010, it will take 60 percent of the voters to vote in favor of Amendment 8 to allow the schools the flexibility they need to serve students.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

(Supplementary Minute Book, Exhibit "A")

The following speaker requested to address the Board, the Superintendent and staff, with general questions related to Class Size: Sam Heath.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Town Hall Meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Superintendent

Chair