

SUFFOLK CITY SCHOOL BOARD RETREAT
Thursday, July 22, 2021 ~ 8:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.
The College and Career Academy at Pruden (CCAP), 4169 Pruden Blvd, Suffolk, VA
23434

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this retreat was held while practicing social distancing and the designated lobby area in CCAP was set up for the public to view the retreat.

Board Members Present:

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Chair*
Phyllis Byrum, *Vice Chair*
Karen Jenkins
Linda Johnson
Lorita Mayo
Tyron Riddick
Sherri Story

Administrative Staff Present:

Dr. John B. Gordon III, *Superintendent*
Wendell M. Waller, *School Board Attorney*
Tarshia L. Gardner, *Clerk*
Keesha L. Hicks, *Deputy Clerk*
Dr. Suzanne Rice, *Chief of Administrative Services*
Wendy Forsman, *Chief Financial Officer*
Dr. Rodney Brown, *Director of Human Resources*
Stephanie Whitley, *Director of Special Education*
Dr. Maria Lawson-Davenport, *Director of Curriculum Instruction*
Catherine Pichon, *Director of Elementary Leadership*
Dr. Ronald Leigh, *Director of Secondary Leadership*
Dr. Okema Branch, *Chief Academic Officer*
Anthonette Ward, *Community Engagement Officer*
Terry Napier, *Director of Facilities and Planning*
John Littlefield, *Director of Technology*
Shawn Dickerson, *Supervisor of Data and Research*

OPENING OF RETREAT¹ (Welcome/Purpose/Focus)

Board Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck welcomed all to the retreat and expressed her excitement for the activities for the day. The School Board Meeting/Work Session was called to order by Chair, Dr. Brooks-Buck. Dr. Buck welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Dr. Gordon to the podium to present the 2021 Climate and Culture Survey Results.

ROLE OF A BOARD MEMBER

Kerri Wilson, VSBA Trainer was introduced and presented information regarding the Role of a Board Member. Although Mrs. Wilson attended remotely, this was an interactive session as

¹ Before the opening of the retreat, citizen, Dr. Deborah Wahlstrom, arrived and was directed to the area reserved for public viewing of the retreat however, she was insistent on being in the room where Board Members and the Executive Team was located. Her behavior became so erratic that it required assistance from law enforcement. Dr. Wahlstrom was escorted out of the venue. Due to this distraction, the retreat was called to order at 8:39 a.m.

Board Members introduced themselves, participated in warm-up questions, and had an interactive activity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the following:

- School Board = Policy, Goals, Accountability, Community Leadership
 - *Duties include: Policy-making, Designating the Chief Executive Officer, Planning, Goal Setting and Evaluation, Financial Resources
 - *Role of the School Board: Engaging the community in the Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals of the school system; Taking action on personnel matters, Appointing and evaluating the superintendent, Determining educational standards and goals, Monitoring educational achievement, Monitoring the systems management for continuous improvement, Adopting policies for the school system operations, Determining school facility's needs, Establishing attendance zones for the school division, Interpreting school system needs to the community, Maintaining ongoing two-way communication with division stakeholders, Advancing a legislative agenda and grassroots advocacy efforts, Adjudication and Investigation, Establishing Bylaws - The board is responsible for procedures for the operation of the board (Electing officers, Review and evaluate board operations and performances, Establish and maintain effective board-superintendent relations), Retaining an attorney or law firm for the school district, Setting strategy and coordinating litigation decisions, Establishing and maintaining effective board/superintendent relations, Reviewing and evaluating board operations and performance, Working with city, county and other government and non-government officials and agencies.

- Superintendent = Staff, Operations, Educational Leadership
 - *Duties include: the day-to-day operations of the division
 - *Role of the Superintendent: Serves as Chief Executive Officer of the division, carries out laws and regulations relating to schools, develops regulations/procedures of the school system that are aligned with policies developed by the board, manages the schools & employees: day-to-day operations, all employees report to the superintendent, recommends all personnel to be hired, assists and advises board in creating goals, works toward meeting goals established by the board, advises board on policy development, creates and implements administrative procedures to carry out policy, establishes strategies for goal implementation, works with administrators to develop a draft budget, recommends the budget to the board, administers the budget adopted by the board, recommends courses of study and texts, provides student assessment data for board analysis, responsible either directly or indirectly for performance evaluations, communicates the needs of the school system to the board, supervises facility renovations and new construction projects, provides administrative assistance and facilitation of the board's self-assessment process.

There were several activities which required members to consider and assess various scenarios and reflect on how things will affect their service as part of a governance team.

BREAK

IMPLICIT BIAS

Mary Fertakis, Educational Equity Consultant was introduced and presented information regarding Implicit Bias. Mrs. Fertakis also attended remotely and also have various interactive activities for attendees. Mrs. Fertakis expounded on the following information:

- Norms for Equity Discussions – speak your truth, stay engaged, expect to experience discomfort, be aware of intent; own your impact, accept and expect non-closure, maintain a learner stance and remain open to new thinking

- Equality vs. Equity
- Terms: Equality- Each person receives the SAME resources, attention and supports. Equity-Each person receives what they NEED in the way of resources, attention and supports. Educational Equity-Every student has access to the resources and educational supports they NEED at the right moment in their education, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, language, ability, family background, or family income.
- Using a matching activity, she helped members in understanding terminology for equity conversations. Those words included: Race, Racism, Institutional Racism, Structural Racism, Internalized Racism, and Interpersonal Racism.
- Using a visual activity, Mrs. Fertakis helped members in understanding and recognizing biases and indicated that we all have them.
- She explained the Impact of Bias on a Board’s Decision-Making & Policy Work and highlighted the four things policies, practices and procedures do (they are not neutral, but are constantly doing one of the following: exacerbate/perpetuate/mitigate/or eliminate inequities).
- Mrs. Fertakis helped members to understand what to look for when reviewing policies, which included: (1) Reading the policy and ask the following questions: What do you see? What problem is this policy trying to solve? Who/what is centered as the problem? What is the language tone? Is the language subjective? Is the language/word choice centering a particular cultural norm, standard, or expectation? (2) Asking what language changes would make this policy more affirming to historically under-served groups of students?

Mrs. Fertakis thanked all for their participation and attendance.

LUNCH

STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

Dr. Branch led all in participating in a team building activity. She explained in detail what was involved in the strategic plan process. Dr. Branch gave an overview of the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan then covered in detail each of the following sections: SPS Visioning, Priorities Planning-What Matters Most? and the 2023-2028 Plan Process and Development. Dr. Branch thanked all for their participation in the retreat.

CLOSING/NEXT STEPS

Dr. Gordon, Dr. Branch and Dr. Brooks-Buck thanked all for their attendance, participation, feedback, excitement, and cooperation with this retreat. They agreed to use the tools presented at the retreat as they move forward in making SPS the premier division.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business or questions, Board Chair Dr. Brooks-Buck adjourned the July 22, 2021 School Board Retreat at 4:15 p.m.

Dr. Judith Brooks-Buck, *Board Chair*

Tarshia L. Gardner, *Board Clerk*