



EYES ON THE SCHOOL BOARD



APRIL, 2015

BOARD SPLIT ON SUPERINTENDENT ISAAC JOSEPH AND TEACH FOR AMERICA; RAY ST. PIERRE AND JFT INTRODUCE A DISCIPLINE TASK FORCE

Multiple school board meetings were held this month on April 9, April 15, and April 22, at the Administration Building and Bonnabel Magnet Academy High School. A first reading was introduced to alternate locations in the future.

Meet Your New Superintendent: Isaac Joseph

After much public input, Isaac Joseph was voted as the new Jefferson Parish Public School System Superintendent by 6-3. This vote took place on April 15, and his term begins on May 1. He beat out 5 other candidates for the position, and will work closely with candidate Michelle Blouin-Williams (Acting Superintendent and previous deputy superintendent) to transition into the new responsibilities.

Joseph has 29 years of experience in the system. He has taught, was Dean of Student Services, was Principal at Waggaman Alternative School, and was Director and Assistant Superintendent of Grants and Federal Programs. He used to be Chief Human Capital Officer (previously Assistant Superintendent for Personnel). And importantly, has had multiple children in the JPPSS.

"These experiences have provided me with the opportunity to work in three major areas (instruction, personnel, and finance) all of which are critical to the effectiveness and efficiency of the school system's operations." — From Joseph's Letter of Application to the School Board. His entire resumé can be read at NOLA.com.

The vision he outlined in his application includes adjusting the pupil-teacher ratio, matching challenging students with the most effective teachers (and compensating these teachers adequately), and matching high quality administrators with struggling schools. He also hopes to further engage parents (and community) to become more involved in their students' educations.

His 180 Day Transition Plan to Improve the Academic and Organizational Efficiency of the JPPSS — which was submitted to the school board as an early draft — pledges to improve academics by analyzing achievement gaps, and looking at other successful school systems that have similarities to Jefferson Parish. He also wants to ex-

pand support for English Language Learners and Special

Education programs. Reorganizing central office staffing is highlighted in his transition plan, and includes creating an Instructional Department, providing content area specialists, developing program evaluation protocol, providing more training for Common Core Standards, ensuring fair evaluations without biases, and conducting an internal audit. He hopes to also put mechanisms in place to recruit and retain teachers and administrators. Part of his plan includes fiscal transparency, equitability in salaries, and potential support for Pre-K expansion, Head Start Programs, and technology improvements. Joseph seeks to plan for long-term school improvements and enhancements that address bus routes and athletic facilities, as well.

On April 22, the board ratified an 18-month, \$200,000 contract unanimously. Larry Dale (District 6) wants performance measures in the contract to be established. And Ricky Johnson (District 2) hoped for a 2-year contract to give Joseph adequate time to make changes to the school system. So far, Joseph has wasted no time in being out in the schools and the community.

How they voted on the motion to make Isaac Joseph the new Superintendent (4/15/15):			
District	Representative	For	Against
1	Mark Morgan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2	Ricky Johnson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3	Ray St. Pierre	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4	Melinda Bourgeois		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5	Cedric Floyd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6	Larry Dale		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Melinda Doucet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
8	Marion "Coach" Bonura	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
9	Sandy Denapolis-Bosarge		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Board Splits Votes on the Future of Teach for America

At one of the most heated meetings of the year, Teach for America (TFA) found itself at the center of political debate. The board questioned if we needed to prioritize

TFA for the 2015-2016 school year. Teach for America helps to fill vacancies in critical need areas. Mark Morgan (District 1) advocated for TFA, saying it gives principals more options. But they often leave the communities that they serve after their 2 year contracts. Marion “Coach” Bonura (District 8) shared his personal story, saying “Why should we give priority to 10 or 20 teachers when we have 3000 teachers waiting in line? Let’s give jobs to people who are here.” Melinda Doucet (District 7) wanted more feedback from principals about the effectiveness of TFA teachers before she could make a decision for next year. By a vote of 4-4-1, the motion to address TFA was unable to get a majority.

Making Changes: St. Pierre and JFT Make Request to Create a Discipline Task Force Addressing Teachers’ and School Employees’ Concerns

Ray St. Pierre (District 3) in conjunction with JFT presented the following resolution as a First Reading:

“Whereas, our goal should be to provide a safe learning environment for our students and a safe working environment for our teachers and school employees; and

Whereas, the Jefferson Federation of Teachers recently completed an issues survey that was distributed to teachers and school employees in the Jefferson Parish Public School System; and

Whereas, the survey was open ended and permitted the participants to list their top issues of concern in the Jefferson Parish Public School System; and

Whereas, the results of the JFT survey overwhelming indicated that student discipline was the top concern of the teachers and school employees who participated; and

Whereas, this is a very involved and delicate issue which needs to be addressed prior to the 2015-16 school year, therefore be it resolved, that the Jefferson Federation of Teachers calls upon the Jefferson Parish School Board and the administration to form a Student Discipline Task Force to develop a comprehensive plan which addresses this extremely urgent and important issue; and be it further resolved, that the Student Discipline Task Force should include representatives appointed by the Jefferson Parish School Board, representatives appointed by the Superintendent, representatives appointed by the Jefferson Federation of Teachers, Principals, Deans of Student Services, Teachers, School Based Employees, Bus Drivers, Jefferson Parish Juvenile Judges, the Jefferson Parish Public School System’s Special Master, Jefferson Parish Legislators, Parents, Business Leaders, Community Leaders and other individuals as the Board may deem necessary to address this important issue; and be it finally resolved, that the Student Discipline Task Force should prepare a comprehensive report with suggested actions to be presented to the Jefferson Parish School Board prior to the beginning of the 2015-16 school year.”

St. Pierre’s First Reading will be voted on at the next meeting.

How they voted on the motion to discuss Teach for America at the April 22 meeting:			
District	Representative	For	Against
1	Mark Morgan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2	Ricky Johnson		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3	Ray St. Pierre		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4	Melinda Bourgeois	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5	Cedric Floyd		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Larry Dale	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7	Melinda Doucet	Abstained	
8	Marion “Coach” Bonura		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9	Sandy Denapolis-Bosarge	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Because the motion did not gain majority (4-4-1) it failed to pass, and TFA will be discussed later.			

Meladie Munch’s Public Comment:

“We’re not retaining teachers in the classroom. There is a turnover of new teachers that we experience all the time. We have got to find a way to settle this down. TFA will not be the solution. Most of these individuals only come for a 2 year commitment. When TFA started, they were trying to help fill a void, especially in hard to fill schools. It had its role, but it’s not our solution for solving our problem of retention in the teaching force.

[The solution is] going to be salary; it’s going to be respect; it’s going to be fair evaluations. We don’t even pay for training for our own people. We used to have instructional associates for new teachers. We give our new teachers the keys and tell them to go and teach. [Experienced] teachers don’t have time to help because of all the demands that are made on them. Over the last several years, JFT has offered professional development, but we want to work with you to make that happen. [TFA] is a temporary fix.”

The next school board meeting:

Wednesday, May 6, 2015

7:00 p.m.

Administration Building,

501 Manhattan Boulevard

Harvey