

# JEFFERSON TEACHER/PSRP



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## From The Lawyer's Desk

By: Larry Samuel, JFT General Counsel

### What are educators required to do when you suspect a child is being abused or neglected?

**E**ducators are “mandatory reporters” when you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected. What exactly does that mean?

It means that when a school employee has cause to suspect that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare is endangered as a result of abuse or neglect, then you are required to report your suspicion to child protection authorities.

It also means that if you fail to make a report, you may be arrested and charged with a criminal offense of failing to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Sometimes there are visible signs of child abuse, such as bruises, burn marks, repeated skin issues, and even fractures. The child’s explanation may sound suspicious. Sometimes a child who is very outgoing may suddenly become withdrawn, or constantly seek attention, or talk about inappropriate topics. Or a child may come to school without warm clothes or may often be hungry.

When you see those types of situations and have cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, you are required to make a report. If you suspect that a caretaker/parent/guardian is involved, then you make the report to the local office of the Office of Community Services/Division of Children, Youth, Family Services (Child Protection Agency). If you have cause to suspect

that someone else has committed the abuse or neglect, you must make your report to the local Sheriff’s Office or Police Department.

You are not required to have proof that the child is being abused or neglected, and you aren’t required to know who may be responsible.

Louisiana law states that if you made your report in good faith, you are immune from liability if you are sued for making a false report. You should also notify the school social worker and your supervisor.

JFT members who have questions or problems may contact JFT for assistance and advice.



## What to do if you are written up

**I**f you are written up on a conference form, there are two types of conferences. One is administrative, which remains in your school folder and the other is a special conference, which becomes a part of your personnel file. You should sign your conference form, even if you do not agree with its contents. Your signature does not acknowledge agreement, just receipt.

You are allowed up to fifteen (15) calendar days to respond in writing to an administrative or special conference. If you are a JFT member, we encourage you to contact the JFT office for assistance with this process. We **strongly** recommend that you do not respond either verbally or in writing until you speak with a JFT staff person.

Special conferences require “due process” hearings where you will be given an opportunity to explain your side of events. When a human resource representative is involved in the special conference process, JFT members will want union representation at their hearing. Please notify your administrator during your initial conference, so we will have adequate time to prepare for your hearing. If you have any questions about the process, please contact the JFT office (504) 454-5047.

## Dental & Vision Insurance Update

**T**he JFT Health and Welfare Fund (Fund) in a joint cooperative effort with the Jefferson Parish School Board (JPSB) is pleased to announce that the Fund will be offering dental and vision coverage to all eligible employees and their dependents of the Jefferson Parish Public School System (JPPSS). Effective January 1, 2016, the dental coverage will be provided through Guardian Life Insurance Company of America (Guardian) and vision coverage will be offered through Davis Vision. If you have any questions regarding your vision and dental benefits, please contact the JFT Health and Welfare office at (504) 455-7261.

## Coverage Changes & Revocations Reminders

**F**or Pre-Tax deductions, once you elect an insurance option, you can only change that option during the Annual Enrollment or Open Enrollment period unless you meet a qualifying event/family status change. You must contact the JPPSS Insurance Team and complete the benefit change within **thirty (30) calendar days of the qualifying event or family status change.**

Qualifying events/family status changes include:

- Getting married, divorced, or legally separated
- Birth, adoption, or placement of adoption of an eligible child
- Death of your covered spouse or child
- Change in your or your spouse’s work status that affects benefits eligibility (for example: starting a new job or leaving a job)
- A change in your child’s eligibility for benefits
- Becoming eligible for Medicare or Medicaid
- A significant change in your spouse’s health coverage attributable to your spouse’s employment

## PSRP Corner

**W**e want to hear from you! A survey is circulating asking for your feedback on how to make our school system better. Please complete your survey before February 5, 2016 and return to the JFT office via pony or fax (504) 454-5067. We will discuss challenges and solutions on Tuesday, February 16, 2016 at 6:30 PM at the Plumbers’ Hall, 3515 N. I-10 Service Road, Metairie, 70002. If you have questions, please email them to [robert.jft@gmail.com](mailto:robert.jft@gmail.com).

### Joint PSRP & Winter Leadership Conference\*

Please join JFT and locals from around the state for the Joint PSRP and Winter Leadership Conference at the Crown Plaza in Baton Rouge, LA on Saturday, February 27, 2016. There is **no** registration fee for this event. If you are interested in attending, please email [susan@jft.org](mailto:susan@jft.org) or call the JFT office by February 15, 2016

*\*Transportation may be provided based on the number of participants.*



# EYES ON THE SCHOOL BOARD



January 2016

The School Board Meeting was held on January 12 at 6:00 p.m. at the Administration Building. Superintendent Isaac Joseph was present, as were all School Board members except Cedric Floyd (District 5). The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

## JPSB Entertains Putting Tax Increase on April Ballot for Improved School Facilities

Jefferson Parish Public schools may be getting a 20-year facilities overhaul. The Facilities Department has been working logistically to develop a plan that would include building new schools, updating old schools, and creating career centers. The new improvements would require a millage on the April ballot to secure funding for the school system to even consider this 20 year plan.

“We need to establish career track schools outside of college,” Mark Morgan (District 2) advocated. Melinda Bourgeois (District 4) said she had seen the discussion around the Capital Improvement Plan several times, and that “everyone left the meetings saying it was a well thought-out plan. “We need to keep our school system current.”

The proposal would not extend beyond 20 years, nor beyond \$200,000,000 of incurred bonds and debt. The proposal specifies the money be allocated to “improving lands for building sites and playgrounds; including construction of necessary sidewalks and streets adjacent...purchasing, erecting and/or improving school buildings and other school related facilities...”

The School Board voted on the millage at the January meeting in order to meet ballot-related deadlines, but the specifics of the plan will be more heavily debated at the February school board meeting. Coach Bonura agreed with Bourgeois’ positive attitude about the plan and tax, and pushed for his fellow board members to vote in favor of the plan: “On [the February 2nd School Board Meeting], if we can’t come to an agreement, then we can take [the Capital Improvement Plan] off.”

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“We do not have 21st century school buildings. I want you to think deeply about what this would mean for our school system,” Superintendent Isaac Joseph contributed. The Board voted 6-1-1 in favor of moving forward with the plan for now. More information about the Capital Improvement Plan will be available soon.

district’s pacing calendar. “This is for an all-school virtual school program. My team has always endorsed this version of the program,” Joseph said.

Grade Results works around state and national standards, and provides students with live one-on-one access to a qualified teacher. There will be a physical location for students to test, and for community members to seek answers surrounding the new program. Joseph said the program “will sometimes use this [administration building] and Jimenez.”

School Board members hope that students who don’t fit into traditional schooling models can access a virtual school more easily, and work towards graduation that ultimately improves Parish funding. The contract between Grade Results and the School Board is currently up to 200 virtual students. By a vote of 7-1, Grade Results was approved. Sandy Denapolis-Bosarge (District 9) voted against the program.

## iReady Program Develops Students and Improves Schools

The iReady program is new software aimed at improving student performance. By using specific and proven-effective curriculum, educators can match students abilities to computer lessons geared towards specific students’ needs.

Advocates of the program say that 1 year of iReady improves student performance by 1 year or more. In Jefferson Parish, about two-thirds (28,000 of 45,000) of students currently spend weekly time using it. The program is available for kindergarten through 3rd grade in all schools, and lower-performing schools are required to use iReady.

However, iReady’s success is tempered by its lack of availability in all Jefferson Parish public schools. Not all schools participate, and not all schools have the necessary funding or technology in order to implement the program more widely.

## New President and VP for School Board

Ray St. Pierre (District 2) succeeded Cedric Floyd (District 5) as Board President, and Melinda Doucet (District 7) succeeded St. Pierre as Vice President for 2016. Board President and Vice President rotate between sitting Board members after a 1-year term.

## Changes in Scheduling for School Board Meetings

Previous School Board Meetings have been erratic or scheduled with short notice. This has angered several of the School Board members, as well as community members seeking to attend or speak at meetings. New President St. Pierre - with the consensus of his fellow board members - has decided that future meetings will regularly take place on the first Tuesday of the month. Special Meetings that need to be called will take place on the third Thursday of a given month. Lastly, meetings will have at least 72 hours advance notice.

### How They Voted

Dis.	School Board Member	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 (Absent)		
6	Larry Dale		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Melinda Doucet (Abstain)		
8	Marion “Coach Bonura	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
9	Sandy Denapolis-Bosarge	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

## Jefferson Parish’s New Virtual Homeschooling

A new “Virtual School” is coming to Jefferson Parish. As part of the organization ‘Grade Results,’ homeschooled students (grades 6-12) will now be able to be educated through their computers. They will still have tests and standards to meet, but will be able to work at their own pace based on a

The next School Board Meeting will be held on February 2 at 6:00 p.m. at the Administration Building (Time subject to change).