

Public Safety Transition – Jacksonville Journey Review Subcommittee Meeting  
Wednesday, July 12 1:00 PM  
Kids Hope Alliance Board Room

Members Present: WC Gentry; Frank Denton

Members not Present:

Subject Matter Experts Present: Debbie Verges (former Project Director for the Jacksonville Journey during Mayor Peyton's and Mayor Curry's Administrations); Dr. Saralyn Glass (CEO of the Kids Hope Alliance and an expert in birth to 18); Dr. Cheryl Fountain (UNF FIE).

Liaisons Present:

Chairman WC Gentry called the meeting to order at 1:05pm. He stated the subcommittee meetings are designed to put together an overview for recommendations. There will be no public comments. The purpose of the meeting is to establish groundwork and present it to other subcommittees. The community is welcome to sit in on the meetings. There will be opportunities for the community to weigh in and provide thoughts at later meeting.

He also stated reading scores were received back from the State. There was a loss due to COVID statewide. The expectation was there would be a rebound this year from the loss especially since the school district received millions of dollars to assist students. Duval county fell back and was below other school districts for state average reading. The state average is 50%. The reading scores are based upon a grading system from 1 to 5. The state considers three to be sufficient. The reading proficiency scores are critical because the system determines whether they are ready to learn, as well as high correlations to crime and finding better paying jobs. This is a critical point in the education of children and their future.

In the Chair's review of documents, there are outstanding charter and public schools. Both have success in some schools and a very low success rate in others. Some public schools are 40% and 90% proficient. Some charter schools are as low as 8%, and some are 19%. This is a system wide issue.

Frank Denton asked Debbie Verges to provide the subcommittee with an article from the New York Times that discusses reading losses suffered during COVID which have not rebounded. Debbie stated it will be put on the Google Drive.

Chairman Gentry explained that Annie R. Morgan Elementary School had 22% of children reading at level 3, but 56% were at level 1.

Dr. Cheryl Fountain explained looking at the five levels of reading, level 3 is where a third grader is expected to be. Children reading on level 1 need official remediation to get them up to level 2 and 3. The children in level 1 are more likely not to pass third grade. However, this year the Department of Education (DOE), changed standardized testing to Progress Monitoring which is also a standardized test. It measures the same standard. Statistically the two tests cannot be compared to each other, but a snapshot

using a descriptive statistic can be used to compare to determine progress. This year, the DOE passed all students on reading level 2 in third grade.

Chairman Gentry stated a few numbers for third graders as follows:

Arlington Elementary - 24% are level 3 and 38% are level 1

Hogan Springs Elementary - 29% level 3 and 24% level 1

Northshore Elementary – 23% level 3 and 56% level 1

There are more children reading at level 1, which means more help is needed in the community.

Chairman Gentry also stated for the next meeting scheduled for July 25<sup>th</sup>, he wants to send a letter to DCPS to ask several questions regarding: 1). Stimulus funding received to help remedy reading loss; 2). New reading curriculum and how it has been used for past two years; and 3); How teachers are taught that are teaching reading.

Dr. Fountain replied that chairman Gentry should request DCPS to compare the 2021 and 2022 school years to 2023. This would look at the years the new curriculum was implemented in the schools. This could be done as a snapshot or cohort. If the new curriculum was implemented in 2021 for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, those students could be followed until 2022 to determine if a difference was made.

Chairman Gentry also stated that he would like to know how the ReadUSA program's students scored during the same time frame.

Dr. Fountain replied there are two ways to look at this. First, determine if the design used focused volunteers on a small number of schools with a larger number of children, or was it widespread using many schools with fewer children.

Chairman Gentry stated this appears to be good work. We need to see the impact.

Frank Denton stated he would like to know where front line teachers, principals, and reading coordinators think reading problems are occurring. He believes a part of the equation is getting parents or guardians involved.

Chairman Gentry responded it is the schools' districts job to teach children how to read. The district is doing a good job with the Parent Academy; however, blame cannot be placed on parents when there are similar schools performing better.

Dr. Cheryl Fountain responded qualitative work with focus groups using a random survey would be helpful.

Chairman Gentry stated to solve the problem of VPK we need to address getting all children involved and improve quality of the VPK. Teachers need to be properly equipped and trained to teach students how to read. We must be sure the reading curriculum is good. Teachers must know and understand how to deliver reading curriculum. They are also challenged because there is no additional help in the class to assist with students who are reading on different levels or having emotional

challenges. Also in K, children need to be assessed to determine if there are challenges with learning to provide information in a way they can learn.

Dr. Fountain stated there are no resources to identify a child who needs help. Also, when testing is needed there are bureaucratic barriers that identify problems requiring a huge amount of documentation. There are also delays with strategy and materials. The problems seem to get compounded at each step.

Chairman Gentry responded VPK, K, and first grade reading curriculum should be able to build upon each other and follow up should be required to ensure teachers are delivering accordingly. There should be a mandatory reading summer camp for children who do not meet a certain percentage on reading assessment.

Dr. Fountain stated children can be identified as those who need assessment. It's important to note there needs to be opportunities for learning that take place outside of the normal classroom hours. We should take greater advantage of reading opportunities after school or during the summer. Part of reading is concept development and vocabulary.

Chairman Gentry responded for children who do not read at a certain level, it should be mandatory for them to attend summer reading camp for a certain number of days. Children who attended summer reading camp passed to the next grade and their reading improved.

Dr. Fountain replied it's an experience whether than a camp.

Chairman Gentry asks how many summer camps will we be running this year?

Dr. Grass replied there will be about 110 summer camps through high school. Elementary will have 70 camps. All summer camps will have a literacy component.

Chairman Gentry ask how many elementary schools have after school programs?

Dr. Grass responded there are 35 to 40 elementary schools with after school programs.

Chairman Gentry stated he would like to have a list of schools with after school programs.

Debbie Verges explained Extended Day keep children until parents pick up students for a fee. After school programs are the same hours at no cost. This is the program Kids Hope Alliance implements in partnership with community agencies and schools. The new RFP is currently out on the street.

Chairman Gentry stated we need to identify schools that need reading programs the most and provide after school literacy education and funding for all children.

Dr. Fountain responded it may be helpful to have a map to label categories of services.

Chairman Gentry stated there is a lot of opportunity to make great improvement to the system. For DCPS and Charter schools, we need to offer great training modules for pre-K and K3. There should also be a centralized location to incentivize teachers to come and learn. There should be follow-up to ensure things are being implemented. Also, we should get the community engaged and volunteers to help or act as mentors.

Dr. Fountain explained many volunteers who want to help children are not sure what to do. Security in leveraging time and volunteers knowing what to do is what makes things successful when involved.

Chairman Gentry responded hopefully we can outline all potential areas of intersections and have an impact on external to institutional literary education. Many of the charter schools may benefit from programs we have to offer because they are struggling as well. It may take three to five years to see improvement. We have a Mayor committed to the program and we will be able to have enough time on task to demonstrate in total what we have, as well as the community buy-in.

Dr. Cheryl Fontaine asked Debbie Verges to research Ameri-Corp (Experi-Corp) regarding a new initiative to recruit and pay stipends to older Americans to sustain volunteers.

Meeting adjourned 2:07pm