

Minutes of  
 Okeechobee County School Board Town Hall Meeting  
 Okeechobee Freshman Campus Auditorium  
 October 30, 2019  
 6:00 p.m.

**I. Call to Order**

Call to Order: Chairman Holcomb

- Present: District 1 – Joe Arnold  
 District 2 – Malissa Morgan  
 District 3 – Melisa Jahner  
 District 4 – Amanda Riedel, Vice Chairman  
 District 5 – Jill Holcomb, Chairman
- Ken Kenworthy, Superintendent of Schools  
 Tom Conely, School Board Attorney

Invocation: School Board Attorney, Tom Conely  
 Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Chairman Holcomb

**II. Welcome and Introductions**

Chairman Holcomb welcomed those present.

**III. Purpose**

Chairman Holcomb read the purpose: The purpose of the Town Hall meeting is to provide an opportunity for individuals to provide positive feedback and suggest areas of opportunity.

**IV. Presentation**

Superintendent Kenworthy presented the 2019-20 State of the District power point.

<b>SCHOOL BOARD OF OKEECHOBEE COUNTY</b> <b>AGENDA FOR TOWN HALL MEETING</b> <b>OFC AUDITORIUM, 610 S.W. 2<sup>ND</sup> AVENUE</b> <b>OCTOBER 30, 2019</b> <b>6:00 P.M.</b>	Chairperson Jill Holcomb Vice Chairperson Amanda Riedel Members Joe Arnold Melisa Jahner Malissa Morgan
<b>I. Call to Order</b> A. Prayer B. Pledge of Allegiance	
<b>II. Welcome and Introductions</b>	Jill Holcomb, Chairman
<b>III. Purpose</b> The purpose of the Town Hall meeting is to provide an opportunity for individuals to provide positive feedback and suggest areas of opportunity.	
<b>IV. Presentation</b>	Superintendent Ken Kenworthy
<b>V. Public Comments</b>	

**Who Do We Serve?**

- 1,481 Exceptional Education
  - 132 Autistic
- 236 Gifted
- 532 Migrant
- 264 Homeless
- 152 Pre-K
- 759 English Language Learners (P3-12)
- 191 Residential Department of Juvenile Justice
- 706 In-County Zone Waivers
- 104 Out-of-County Zone Waivers
- 492 Home Education

10/28/19

**Ethnicity**

White	44%	2,970
Hispanic	42%	2,791
Black	9%	583
Multi-Racial	3%	222
American Indian	1%	58
Asian	1%	49
Native Hawaiian	0%	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,678</b>

**Employees**

Position	Total
Admin	39
Instructional	469
Classified	373
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>881</b>

**Employees**

- Total Personnel Expense
  - Annual - \$44,554,753
  - Daily - \$178,935
  - Total Payroll – \$32,973,578
  - Total Benefits - \$11,030,272
- Teacher Salary Range - \$40,000 - \$66,000
- Classified Salary Range - \$12,027 - \$55,785

**POINTS OF PRIDE**

**WELCOME TO OKEECHOBEE HIGH SCHOOL**  
 IN THE INTEREST OF SCHOOL SECURITY, ALL ENTRANCES ARE LOCKED.  
 FOR ENTRY, PLEASE PRESS THE INTERCOM AT THE MAIN ENTRANCE.  
 FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CALL 863-462-5021.  
 THANK YOU FOR HELPING US MAKE SAFETY A REALITY.

**CONGRATULATIONS OKEECHOBEE COUNTY SCHOOLS**  
 FOR INCREASING YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT GRADE  
**2019 GRADE B SCHOOL DISTRICT**

HEALTHY SCHOOL DISTRICT 2019-2021  
 NCA CASI • NWAC • SACS CASI  
**ACCREDITED**  
 AdvancED

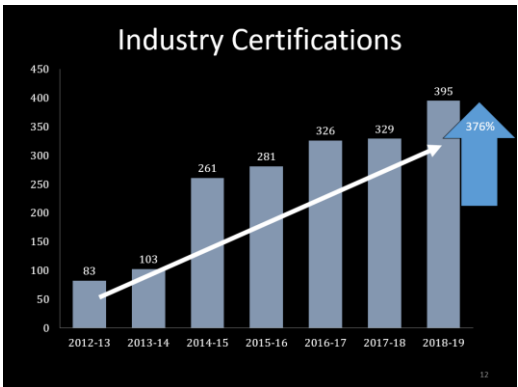
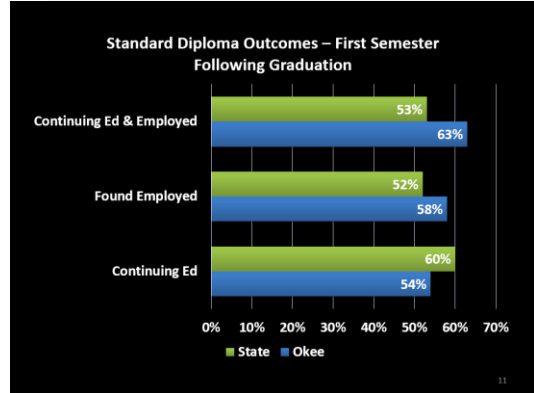
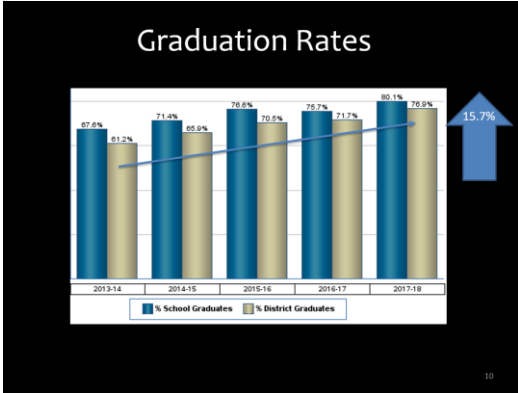
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**School & District Grades**

School Name	ELA Achievement	ELA Learning Gains Lower 25%	Math Achievement	Math Learning Gains Lower 25%	Social Studies Achievement	Science Achievement	Graduation Rate 2016-17	College and Career Readiness 2016-17	Total Points Earned	% of Total Possible Points	Percent Tested	Grade 2019			
CES	46	52	60	58	42	37	37	332	7	47	100	C			
OHS	44	44	35	38	29	28	67	59	80	66	490	10	49	97	C
SFS	49	52	61	59	53	35	37				346	7	49	97	C
YMS	40	47	41	58	60	58	35	51	64		454	9	50	97	C
NFS	65	56	57	71	68	56	49				422	7	60	99	B
EES	54	64	55	58	62	35	41				369	7	53	99	C
SEM	47	44	42	63	59	48	55				358	7	51	100	C
OMS	44	49	44	63	59	54	69	66			499	9	55	98	B

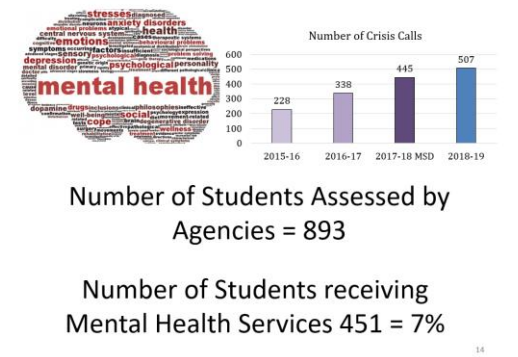
**Regional Grades**

District Name	English Language Arts Achievement	English Language Arts Learning Gains Lower 25%	Mathematics Achievement	Mathematics Learning Gains Lower 25%	Science Achievement	Social Studies Achievement	Graduation Rate 2017-18	College and Career Readiness 2017-18	Total Points Earned	% of Total Possible Points	Percent Tested	Grade 2019				
MARTIN	59	57	48	67	62	51	64	81	70	88	65	712	11	65	99	A
ST. LUCIE	53	54	46	52	52	45	58	71	78	92	68	669	11	61	99	B
INDIAN RIVER	56	55	45	58	56	47	56	68	56	92	65	654	11	59	98	B
OKEECHOBEE	46	49	44	56	53	45	47	59	64	77	66	606	11	55	98	B
HARDEE	49	50	45	60	57	50	49	56	56	80	37	589	11	54	99	B
HENDRY	45	50	41	47	53	44	49	62	60	84	48	583	11	53	99	C
GLADES	47	50	48	54	52	49	41	48	62	93	35	579	11	53	98	C
HIGHLANDS	47	49	40	52	42	47	63	54	77	46	569	11	52	99	C	
DESOTO	36	47	41	40	47	45	39	52	81	61	49	538	11	49	99	C



**ATTENDANCE**

DISTRICT NAME	DAYS PRESENT	DAYS ABSENT	TOTAL DAYS	% PRESENT
FLORIDA	465,695,487	31,930,038	497,625,525	93.6%
MARTIN	3,135,113	194,000	3,329,113	94.2%
HARDEE	850,788	56,353	907,141	93.8%
HIGHLANDS	2,017,135	141,762	2,158,897	93.4%
DESOTO	789,243	62,293	851,536	92.7%
OKEECHOBEE	1,012,253	81,198	1,093,451	92.6%
HENDRY	1,179,458	99,342	1,278,800	92.2%
INDIAN RIVER	2,892,860	245,247	3,138,107	92.2%
GLADES	292,219	27,515	319,734	91.4%
ST. LUCIE	6,498,340	616,706	7,115,046	91.3%



**OKEECHOBEE COUNTY SCHOOLS 2018-19 SESIR District-Level Data Review Sheet**

Schools Reporting SESIR Incidents	Number of Schools in District	Percent of Schools Reporting SESIR
9	10	90%

A percentage of schools reporting of less than 50% appears to be very low. The state average is 85% for 2018-19.

2018-19 Enrollment	Incidents per 1,000 Students	Total SESIR Incidents
6,484	40.1	260

The state average for incidents per 1,000 is 29, recognizing that higher numbers often indicate better reporting.

Bullying-Related Incidents	Injury-Related Incidents
24	6

**District-Specific Observations**

- Okeechobee's rate of Drug-Related incidents and Marijuana/Other Cannabisoids is high when compared to other districts.
- Otherwise, the data for 2018-19 look good and are consistent with prior years.

- Employee Training**
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
  - Active Shooter Response
  - Stop the Bleed
  - Active Shooter, Sexual Harassment and Bullying and Harassment Modules
  - Sandy Hook Promise – Signs of Suicide
  - Safety for LGBTQ Students by Equality Florida
  - Extensive Background Screening of Employees and Volunteers
  - Emergency Action Procedures Guide
  - Child Abuse Reporting
  - Threat Assessment/Safety Assessment & Intervention
  - Anti-Bias/Prejudice Awareness by Equality Florida
- School Hardening**
- Security fencing to create a single point of entry
  - Installation of school security cameras
  - Locked classroom doors
  - Marked safe spaces in each classroom
  - Electronic locking system at main entrance
  - Tinting on selected doors and windows
  - Opaque covering on windows within doors
- Supervision**
- School resource officers at every school
  - Participation in the Guardian program to include classroom teachers
  - Alternative School for students needing a more restrictive environment
  - Security walk-throughs with first responders
  - Host Special Weapons and Tactics trainings on school campuses
  - School Security Validation Checklist with Sheriff's Department and District Admin

- Threat Response**
- Revised threat assessment protocol
  - Employment of district crisis counselors and school psychologists
  - Individualized safety plans for students identifying threat to harm themselves or others
  - Intensive Tier 3 interventions to meet students' needs
- Substance Abuse**
- Substance Abuse Instruction
  - Partnership with DATA for two substance abuse counselors at the secondary level
  - Referrals for Alternative Placement
  - Random drug testing for students participating in privileged school activities
- Prevention Curriculum**
- Second Steps – Grades K-8
  - Implementation of Child Trafficking curriculum
  - Sandy Hook Promise – Say Something & Start with Hello
  - Cloud 9
  - Positive behavioral intervention and support at each school
  - Check-In Check-Out
  - Five hours of Mental Health & Wellness in grades 6-12
  - Teen Safety Matters
  - DARE offered by Okeechobee Sheriff's Department
  - Ripple Effects
  - All In - PACERs National Bullying Prevention Center curriculum
  - Stranger Danger

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**Online Safety and Reporting Tools**

- Implemented Suspicious Reporting App called FortifyFL
- Online Safety Instruction using CyberSafety, NetSmartzKids and NSTeens
- Crime Stoppers Hotline advertisements
- Security software to identify online threats to self or others
- Advanced Online Safety Instruction by Sheriff's Department
- Crime Watch Organizations at each school

**Recognizing the Need for Help**

- Early warning system to identify students needing support
- Guidance counselors at all schools
- Functional Behavioral Assessments
- Universal screenings to identify students needing assistance
- Access to Florida School Safety Portal
- Behavior intervention plans

**Services for Students and Families**

- Family engagement activities
- Licensed mental health counseling at all schools
- Shared Services Network access to services
- Employment of district social worker
- Management of a System of Care grant through Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network
- Designated Gold level healthy school district



... and conducted stakeholder focus groups to get more input into district strengths and opportunities

Focus groups conducted with the following groups (sample size in parenthesis):

- Junior/Senior Students (11)
- Families (11)
- Economic Council (6)
- Admin Services Staff (6)
- Support Services Staff (14)
- Instructional Services Staff (4)
- Principals (8)
- Teachers (12)
- Community members (12)

**Participants of the survey and focus groups highlighted several areas of strength**

- Small size creates a sense of "family" and close-knit community**
  - "Our community steps up and helps our schools when needed"; "community partnerships are very strong"
  - "The strength of the district is being small and united so we can get things done without getting stuck in bureaucracy"; "we are small but still offer a lot to students"
- Caring and dedicated staff**
  - "Every teacher I know truly loves their children"
  - "Everyone DOES care about students and is extremely supportive."
  - "Employees genuinely care about our students"
  - "Leadership is open to new ideas and support of staff"
- Strong academic offerings**
  - "Lots of class offerings - AP dual enrollment, honors"
  - "Strong CTE programs, kids are leaving with certs and job experience; strong acceleration/dual"
- Safety and security improvements**
  - "Focus on student safety"
  - "Protocols in place even early in the school year"
- Effective communication**
  - "Get immediate response from principal - communication-wise do an excellent job"
  - "Communication between teachers and parents has been excellent"
  - "APTT meetings are a great opportunity to learn about student achievement"

**In addition, the participants flagged several areas of opportunity**

1. Improve teacher hiring, support, and retention practices
2. Increase/better use available funds to address funding constraints and uncompetitive salaries
3. Focus on ensuring academic rigor
4. Prioritize ongoing updates to facilities
5. Continue to focus on safety and discipline
6. Support district and school leaders to be strategic and inclusive



**VISION**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Together, Achieving Excellence by Putting Students First	26.67% 8
Engaging the Community, Empowering our Students, and Educating ALL!	26.67% 8
Empowering Students!	6.67% 2
Empowering Excellence	13.33% 4
Stay with the current vision - Achieving Excellence: Putting Students First	26.67% 8
TOTAL	30

**MISSION**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Okeechobee County Schools readies today's learners for tomorrow's possibilities.	50.00% 15
Okeechobee County Schools and community stakeholders prepare students for global possibilities.	0.00% 0
Okeechobee County Schools lays the groundwork for the possibilities of tomorrow.	13.33% 4
Instilling excellence and determination so every student can achieve tomorrow's possibilities.	20.00% 6
Stay with the current mission - To prepare all students to be college and career ready and function as productive citizens.	16.67% 5
TOTAL	30

Superintendent Kenworthy stated that Administrators and Board members responded to a survey, results listed above. The District Advisory Council recently did a straw poll with 15 participants. The winning Vision statement, Together, Achieving Excellence by Putting Students First. The winning Mission statement, Okeechobee County Schools readies today's learners for tomorrow's possibilities.

Chairman Holcomb asked fellow Board members how they wanted to proceed with the selection of Vision and Mission statements. Member Morgan suggested opening it up to all stakeholders. Superintendent Kenworthy stated that a survey could be sent out through Skylert. Members agreed that both the Vision and Mission be sent out as a survey to all stakeholders.

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STRATEGIC PLANNING				
Goal 1: Engaging Instruction	Goal 2: Educational Equity	Goal 3: Talent Management	Goal 4: Effective Communication	Goal 5: Strategic Investment
Align standards and curriculum to support effective delivery of instruction to master grade level content and standards.	Ensure equitable support for all students, with a focus on African American students, Exceptional Education students and English Language Learners.	Improve the efficacy of our practices related to the hiring, support, and retention of staff members.	Increase our external reach and sharpen our internal communication structures to ensure we are sharing our story, promoting our culture and minimizing duplication of effort.	Effectively manage our learning environment by focusing on safety, modernizing facilities, and competitive compensation.


NEW THIS YEAR

- Strategic Planning
- School Improvement Workshops at each School Site
- Master Board Training
- Our First Town Hall Meeting
- Application for Special Facilities
- New K-8 Math Adoption



NEW THIS YEAR

- Social and Emotional Learning K-12
- Expansion of Guardian Program to include Teachers
- Revised Threat Assessment Procedures
- Required Child Trafficking Curriculum
- Required Substance Use and Abuse Curriculum




NEW THIS YEAR

- New Progress Monitoring at Secondary Level – Exact Path
- New Director of Mental Health and Behavioral Supports
- Took over Okeechobee Youth Correction Center
- TPG cultural exchange program



NEW THIS YEAR

- Implementing Test Hound
- Revising Student Services Evaluation
- Accepting Electronic Reference Checks
- Developing Home Owner initiative with CenterState Bank
- In-House GK Math Prep courses
- Financial Literacy



NEW THIS YEAR

- Soft Skills Instruction
- Career Awareness through MyCareerShines



Chairman Holcomb read the Public Comments instructions and opened the floor for comment.


V. Public Comments

School Board Policy 2.20 – Board Meetings


1. Parties wishing to address the Board shall sign up to speak on the form provided.
2. Forms are to be submitted to the Board Attorney.
3. When called, speakers must come to the podium.
4. Speakers will have 5 minutes to address the Board.
5. The purpose of this workshop is to hear your ideas. The Board will accept comments, take the information under advisement, and may ask clarifying questions, but will not take any formal action during these proceedings.
6. Depending on the number of speakers, we are encouraging the following:
  - If your name is called to speak and you do not have anything new to say, you may waive your time for or against the program.
  - The meeting will conclude after all speakers have been given an opportunity to address the Board or at 8:00pm whichever comes first.
  - If there are additional requests to address the Board after time has expired, speakers may address the Board at its regularly scheduled Board meeting on November 12, 2019 during the public comment section.

CONGRATULATIONS  
 OKEECHOBEE COUNTY SCHOOLS

FOR INCREASING YOUR  
 SCHOOL DISTRICT GRADE



2019 GRADE B SCHOOL DISTRICT



**V. Public Comment**

Attorney Conely invited speakers to the podium.

- Heather Hancock stated that she has a student at the Freshman Campus. She inquired about a communication policy, specifically for athletes. Ms. Hancock stated that she feels coaches should communicate with parents in addition to student athletes. Ms. Hancock also addressed fights/altercations at school and inquired about the school policy. She stated that the policy should be reviewed and consequences reexamined. She asked, what is a student to do when another student starts an altercation?
- Bryant Culpepper spoke about expanding vocational classes, stating that not everyone wants to attend college. Mr. Culpepper also spoke about bullying, violence and fights. He asked that the school send a letter home to every parent to search the student's phone. Mr. Culpepper asked about having drug dogs search every school as a deterrent. He also recommended student court, where peers judge their peers as another resource to keep schools safe.

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- Lisa Baird expressed concern over the number of students in exceptional student education, mainstreamed ESE students not having a paraprofessional to help them and general education teachers that are not able to help ESE students. She inquired about ways to improve education, specifically for autistic students. Ms. Baird suggested offering job training.  
Ms. Baird addressed bullying, drugs and the condition of the schools. She suggested raising the sales tax to fund repairs to schools and to build a new high school.
- Steve Bandi addressed primary curriculum. Mr. Bandi shared examples and concern with new math in second grade. He was surprised that his second grader does not have weekly spelling lists. Mr. Bandi asked Board members if there were aware of the new curriculum. Chairman Holcomb stated that the new curriculum is different, but it is State approved and supports the standards. Superintendent Kenworthy said that the Chancellor invites interested parties to make comments on the curriculum through the Department of Education website. Dr. McCoy stated that spelling falls under ELA and spelling is in context not always in lists.
- Adam Cohen stated that he moved to Okeechobee about a year ago and feels that there is a lot less bullying here than in his former District. He stated there is a parenting epidemic. Mr. Cohen appreciates the local school safety measures, specially the SROs, mental health resources, guardian program and the tech tools that are protecting our children. He recommended that all schools offer a program recently presented at the Freshman Campus, Turn Around Tuesday. Mr. Cohen said that the program puts the parents in a better position to help their child. He agreed that vocational and Dual Enrollment programs are very good for students. Mr. Cohen also expressed concern with new math.
- Bobby Keefe thanked Board members for offering the Town Hall meeting and for engaging the citizens. Mr. Keefe working as a long-term sub also expressed concern with student spelling. He suggested social emotional learning curriculum be implemented in the early grades. He expressed concern with racism. Mr. Keefe asked that soft skill instruction expand to all students. He also asked the Board to consider consolidating school and develop the vacated schools into housing. Mr. Keefe spoke about the condition of the high school, he would like to see a new high school built with bonds.

Chairman Holcomb asked the Superintendent if student enrollment was increasing and if consolidating was possible.

Superintendent Kenworthy stated that the District projected an increase of 96 students this year. Mr. Kenworthy spoke about closing schools, but then having to build wings on other schools. A few years back enrollment did decline but that is when class size reduction came into play. The Superintendent stated that consolidation could save money, in personnel, less administration, food service and other positions but the cost of building new buildings would consume that savings.

Chairman Holcomb asked what social emotional curriculum is being used. Dr. McCoy asked Dr. Jackson to speak to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Steps curriculum being used at Seminole Elementary in K-5. This program offers a weekly grade level theme that can be altered depending on need. All components and resources are computer based for the teacher. Dr. McCoy announced a New York theatre group is coming to Okeechobee.

Okeechobee was chosen as a free preview site, valued at \$5,000. In addition to student events, a night event will be offered for the community and parents. Students will have the opportunity to shadow theatre members, and will be challenged with an anti-bullying theme. The cast will eat lunch with the students. Guidance and Crisis Counselors will be provided training to work with the students.

Member Arnold stated that a new high school is a priority with a potential cost of \$60,000,000 - \$65,000,000. A cost too expensive to fund locally. He stated that the Legislature has a process and the District may have to apply several times, but eventually the project should be funded.

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**VI. Adjournment**

There being no further business to discuss, on a motion by Joe Arnold, seconded by Melisa Jahner, the Board adjourned at 7:30 p.m. The next regular meeting of the School Board is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 12, 2019, at 700 S.W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

Signature on File \_\_\_\_\_  
Jill Holcomb  
Chairman

Signature on File \_\_\_\_\_  
Ken Kenworthy  
Superintendent of Schools