



The League of Women Voters of Manatee County Education Issues Action Team observes the **School Board of Manatee County** meetings for items of interest to citizens and to the League, and notes adherence, or lack of adherence, to good governance procedures and the Sunshine Law. The League also provides feedback to school board members.

Following are the major points from the **School Board Meeting on August 4, 2026**.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Spray. Mr. Kennedy read the district vision statement and requested a moment of silence to start the meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Kevin Fennell, USAF veteran and school district employee in the Finance Department. Superintendent Breslin presented him with a US flag that was flown over the US Capitol.

Approval of Agenda (as amended) - Approved 5-0

Approval of Minutes – Approved 5-0

Recognitions / Student Celebrations

Jamie Carson, Director of Communications, introduced the celebrations:

Invested in Excellence Award Recipient

Congratulations go to Cliff Dawson on being named the 2027 Invested in the Education Award recipient. The award is presented by the Consortium of Florida Education Foundation and Florida Power and Light to an educator who expands learning opportunities for students. Mr. Dawson, Band Director at Braden River High School, expressed his thanks for the recognition. Superintendent Breslin expanded on Mr. Dawson's accomplishments.

School Board of Manatee County recognized by the National School Public Relations Association

The National School Public Relations Association recognized the School District of Manatee at its national conference in July for the District "School Choice Showcase and Campaign." Ms. Carson expanded on how significant this recognition is and named many of the staff participants.

Back to School Jam

Lisa Taylor shared that the project was a collaboration between numerous district employees and community businesses. It will be held on August 8 at LECOM Park. Last year there were 5 sponsors and this year there were 22 as well as an increase in money from \$15,000 to \$50,000 plus in-kind assistance.

Public Comments

There were no Public Commenters.

Reports and Presentations

Mr. Kevin Chapman, Associate Superintendent, Administration and Strategic Engagement made the introductions.

Model Manatee Presentation by the Manatee County Government

Amanda Ballard, Manatee County Commissioner, presented the Model Manatee program to the Board. She stated that students receive exposure to federal and state government but rarely to local government.

Brent Jones explained the program's mission is to cultivate development, engagement and leadership through experiential learning. It will increase understanding of government, encourage civic engagement and responsibility, and encourage future leadership. The program will connect students with County Commissioners, School Board members, and constitutional officers to provide hands-on experiences through real government meetings and participate in a mock commission meeting. All full-time Manatee County students, public, private, and home schooled, who have completed 10th grade are encouraged to participate. The program will run from September 26-December 27, 2026. Applications are available at mymanatee.org/modelmanatee.

Mr. Choate asked how many students would be selected for the program. They have not completely determined the number depending on the number of applications. Mr. Choate also made the suggestion to reach out to Leadership Manatee for assistance.

Mr. Crosley Jones reviewed sample agendas for the program and the application process. Applications open on August 10 and end on August 21.

Ms. Felton stated she was excited about this for high school students. She asked if students could also attend one of the School Board workshops as there is deeper discussion of items

than in board meetings. She also suggested that a student be included on the School Board, though she acknowledged she hadn't mentioned that to the Board yet. Mr. Tatem thanked them for the program as there needs to be more collaboration between the school system and the county. Mr. Kennedy echoed both Mr. Tatem's and Ms. Felton's comments. Ms. Ballard said she would like this to be expanded to all high school students in some format. Ms. Spray asked if they will get credit in the civics courses when missing classes for the program, and the response was it will be just like an absence for a school field trip. Ms. Spray also stated she would like to see mentoring included in the program when it can be expanded. Superintendent Breslin also thanked the County for initiating the program.

Consent Items

16 items were approved 5-0.

New Business: (Non-Consent Items)

Approval of Proclamations for the 2026-2027 School Year – **Approved 4-1 with Mr. Tatem voting no.**

Mr. Chapman said that at a Board workshop they agreed to the list of Proclamations and they will be put on School Board meeting agendas as they occur. Ms. Felton thanked Mr. Chapman and the Board for going forward with this, as she has been asking for it over a period of time.

New Business: (No Superintendent Recommendation)

1. Approval of Travel Expenses Associated with the School Board Member's Attendance at the Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards Legislative Meeting, September 16-18, 2026, at the Hilton Miami Downtown, FL, Not to Exceed \$1,000.00 (General Fund) Chair Spray will be attending. – **Approved 5-0**
2. Approval of Travel Expense for School Board Members to Attend the 2026 Manatee Chamber of Commerce Planning Retreat Not to Exceed \$8,600.00 (General Fund) All board members, except for Chair Spray will be attending. – **Approved 5-0**
3. Approval of the Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards (GFCSB) Annual Membership Dues of \$5,000.(General Fund) – **Approved 5-0**

INFORMATION ONLY (No Board Action Required)

Updates:

Instruction

Mr. Jensen, Executive Director of Instructional Services, said teachers are back to work this week getting ready for students next week. Last week was the New Educator conference with more than 250 attendees, followed by 989 current teachers participating in professional development for two days. He thanked all participants. Rye Road and Veteran's Elementaries will open next week which is exciting. Next week Mr. Dahlquist, principal at the new Rangeland HS, will be meeting with people to select the mascot, school colors, etc. Day of Hope at First Baptist Church in Palmetto had a program for back to school for students in their community that included medical, dental, groceries, and other services. They are doing amazing work for our students. He wished all students and staff well with the opening next week.

Operations

Mr. Willie Clark, Deputy Superintendent for Operations, thanked his entire staff in their work preparing for school to begin. Over 400 hires, 96 retirements, and 3,000 transfers have been processed by HR so far. There will be hiring workshops over the next two weeks for both teachers and staff. Ms. Amanda Brady has been hired as the Wellness Coach for school district employees. The Food Service program served over 220,000 meals this summer at 70 locations. Major projects like painting, flooring, and roofing were completed this summer at numerous schools. He visited the two new schools this week and they are ready to open.

Legal

None.

Superintendent Remarks

Dr. Breslin said principals were calling this summer thanking her for all the work being done at their schools and for the support from the district. She reminded the Board not to forget about the Back to School Bash and the Bus Waves next Monday morning. They are working on e-bike rules for parents and also information for safety tips such as walking bikes on school property and safety with school buses. It was great to hear about Mr. Dawson and the program. She also listed all of the schools she will be visiting on day one. Dr. Breslin also thanked the board for approval of the consent items – although few, they were mighty issues. Danielle and Deb were thanked for preparing for the meeting

Board Comments

Mr. Choate thanked everyone for preparing for today and thinks the program with the Manatee County government is very worthwhile. He said he saw information from the police department regarding proper driving with buses en route again as well as watching out for student walkers.

He appreciated the reminders. Mr. Choate congratulated district employees, Deb Estes and Kristy Kavanaugh, for being selected for Leadership Manatee.

Mr. Kennedy voiced appreciation for the growing number of business partners. They are so helpful in providing things we cannot for our students.

Ms. Felton thanked all those who worked throughout the summer to prepare for the start of the new school year. She was amazed with the increase in teacher summer programs and she wants to teach one of them some day. She is still having the teacher dreams (nightmares) of not having textbooks, no student rosters etc. even though she is not teaching any longer. She has been taking blood-borne pathogens training for the umpteenth time in a row. She said she was in awe of the businesses, non-profits, and individuals who support our district. Ms. Felton expressed appreciation for all of the churches that help get students ready to return to school. She is attending a workshop in Orlando on Amendment 3 and will be on a panel discussing how passing the amendment will affect schools. She wished everyone a great school year. "Teachers, take a deep breath. Get through that ten-day count and everything will settle down."

Mr. Tatem said his safety tip is that if you are a principal or community member and see a possible safety issue, please let someone in the district know. If you see something, say something. Summer high school graduation had fewer students; the half-full view is that more students are graduating on time.

Chair Spray thanked the staff at Southeast High School for hosting the summer graduation. We go in full robes and everything as these students worked so hard to graduate. She attended back-to-school at the Boys and Girls Club; again, a lot of non-profits were there handing out backpacks, etc. She then went to FELT (Feeding Empty Little Tummies) and thanked those who participated. She said to parents, it is time to get students up on time and to school on time for the entire 180 days of the school year and it starts on Monday; attendance is imperative and that is your part. To middle schoolers she said it won't be as confusing as you think and to high schoolers make the best of your school years. To school safety personnel, she thanked them.

The meeting adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

GOVERNANCE AND SUNSHINE

The meeting was well-run, concise, and informative.

We appreciate Mr. Choate catching himself prior to interrupting the Model Manatee presentation.

Observers note that many of the slides and presentations are well done and of interest to the public. However, the recognitions and celebrations did not include the links to all of the pertinent presentation slides in the Agenda Packet.

The observers remind Board Members that bringing up new ideas, such as a mentor program or a student on the School Board, should be brought up in workshops rather than at regular meetings.