

“There Are Only TWO Students”

Wednesday night school board meeting was full of inconsistencies, obvious examples of inept elected officials, and lawlessness. I will address each claim and possible remedies.

I have to start with the employees who nominated themselves for the “Every Child, Every Day Award.” I cringed as Hampton City Schools’ Spin Doctor – Ms. Stephens-Cherry – read excerpts from the stories told by these employees...narcissistic employees praising their good deed or their job’s “ah ha moments” which should be standard operating procedures falling in line with the “Every child, every day, whatever it takes” slogan by which Hampton City Schools lives. In any case, one story in particular stood out. The grand prize winner – Ms. S. McLaughlin of Syms Middle School – told a story of her regular education classroom with a 7th grade female student who is emotionally disturbed and was placed in her 8th grade class. This emotionally disturbed student would go under her desk in the fetal position, suck her thumb, curse at them and threaten to hurt them. Not sure who exactly “them” is but will assume it is her classmates. The Spin Doctor went on to tell how this teacher – in her own words – was able to get this student to participate in a city council meeting and read a poem at this meeting. All kind of red flags fly about the identity of this student and we owe it all to the pathetic, ridiculous, conceited leadership at Hampton City Schools. Remedy – stop the egotistical awards and stop violating “school board policy” and “IDEA” if what the school board chairperson and attorney claim is true.

“Mr. Dietrich:

School Board Policy BDDH precludes the Board from hearing matters of a confidential nature in public session. Discussion of a student's IEP and/or placement, governed by the IDEA, is such a confidential matter.

Nanci Reaves”

“Mrs. Taylor:

School Board Policy BDDH precludes the Board from hearing matters of a confidential nature in public session. Discussion of a student's IEP and /or placement, governed by the IDEA is a confidential matter.

Martha Mugler”

After these awards the board went into the business portion of the meeting. Well, technically the business portion. All that fluff before I would imagine was every bit as important to Hampton City Schools’ leadership if not more so since in their minds I

gather it makes them shine...for me it just darkens the clouds already threatening over the heads of our children.

The board, during this business segment, voted and approved hefty pay increases for several of their employees. The increases were approximately \$7,000 each for Dr. Leary and Dr. Woods and justified as equity adjustments. There is no school board policy that addresses equity adjustments so it is curious as to why they got such hefty raises when budgets are written with doom and gloom. What's also curious is that from last year's budget to this year's budget the position of Director, Information Services saw a salary cap that went from \$111,259 to \$131,261. Dang, that's more than a 17% increase. The position of Director, Instructional Accountability and Quality got a healthy increase to its salary cap from \$97,175 to \$124,995. Golly gee, that's more than a 28% increase. Why the increase in pay caps? Are they just a whim or do they reflect salary increases? Remedy – transparency. When a board member supposedly told a reporter that – and I am paraphrasing – we (Hampton citizens) can't handle the truth. This seems to provide the board members the necessary justification for them to limit access to information vital to our children and for our own protection. Bless their little hearts for protecting us.

Now we get to the Public Participation portion of the meeting. We begin with Mr. Dietrich. He was clarifying responses that he had received from Chairperson Mugler. One clarification in particular hit a nerve with Mugler. It seems that Mr. Dietrich was informed by Ms. Mugler that she was not paid enough for the job she does for the board. Her response I will quote –

I never never made a comment that the school board or any school board member was not paid enough. That was never something that I as an individual or a representative (sweeping hand to indicate the other members) of this board has ever said.

Chairperson Martha Mugler

I find it disturbing that she would want to venture out on a limb for EVERY school board member and lay claim to what they may or may not have ever said. I think I hear that limb creaking.

Then it was my turn. I misspoke Wednesday night. Whether nerves or just stupidity I referred to more than 50% of the school board policies being out of compliance with state law rather than the more than 50 (18%) school board policies. Granted 1 is too many but I should have spoken correctly – no excuse. I do find it interesting that Mugler was unable to correct me on the spot, but then again how do you justify more than 50 policies being out of compliance and correcting me would have only testified to those more than 50 being out of compliance. This was definitely a double edge sword kind of moment and hard to respond to when you're in your second term as an elected school board member – no excuses.

Finally, Hampton City Schools violated my daughter's right to speak. While my daughter was attempting to discuss her son's closet size windowless room, which Hampton has chosen as an appropriate classroom, school board attorney Nanci Reaves jumped into action to prevent my daughter from speaking. It seemed to provide some kind of humor for Reaves that there are only two students in that classroom. I imagine that it's like the 47% that Romney doesn't feel worthy. Shame on those two students for thinking they are entitled to Hampton's care, concern and respect.

This is how it all began. I am quoting Nanci Reaves the school board attorney –

Madam chair this speaker is out of order. We are not allowed under the policy to discuss with respect to an individual student.

The policy specifically states that you are not to bring up anything to do with an individual student or an individual employee.

Nope. That is not what the policy states. What does that policy state. The policy that was last revised August 18, 2010 states –

All regular and special meetings of the Board will be open to the public; however, the Board may adjourn into closed or executive session in accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. The Board desires to hear the viewpoints of citizens throughout the division, and also needs to conduct its business in an orderly and efficient manner. Therefore, it will schedule one or more periods during each meeting for public participation.

Speakers will be requested to limit their presentation to a maximum of 5 minutes; however, the Chairman has the right to extend this time limit if he believes it is necessary for clarification of the issue being presented.

The Board will accept comments and questions from the public during the Board meeting as designated on the agenda; however, the Board may meet at times when the public may be present but may not comment.

Comments and questions at a regular meeting may deal with any topic related to the Board's conduct of the schools. Comments at special meetings must be related to the purpose of the meeting.

The Board Chairman will be responsible for recognizing all speakers who will properly identify themselves, for maintaining proper order, and for adherence to any time limits set. Adults shall identify themselves by name and address. Minors shall provide their name and, if applicable, their grade and school of attendance. The Chairman is authorized to stop and/or have removed, any speaker who uses vulgar, obscene or profane

language or any speaker making loud, boisterous, disruptive, threatening or redundant remarks. Matters of a confidential nature shall not be heard by the Board in public session.

Questions asked by the public will be addressed by the Chairman, when possible, or referred to staff members present for reply as appropriate. Questions requiring investigation will be referred to the Superintendent for consideration and later response. The Board will delay action on any issue presented until the following meeting. However, the Board does have the flexibility to vote on an emergency issue that requires immediate action.

http://articles.dailypress.com/2012-03-14/news/dp-nws-hcs-budget-session-0315-20120314_1_hampton-school-board-tax-rate-budget-gap

http://articles.dailypress.com/2010-11-09/news/dp-nws-bullied-student-20101109-1_1_hampton-school-board-hampton-mom-superintendent-linda-shifflette

So there is nothing about students or personnel specifically in this policy and apparently you can talk about a classroom – its teacher – the grade and location – and the emotionally disturbed student and her disruptive behavior, but my daughter is unable to discuss her son's classroom that is half the size the state recommends and is windowless...and from what we learned Wednesday night from school board attorney Reaves, there are only two students – so who cares? Pfft!

To clear-up this issue of confidentiality, I decided to call the Department of Education in Washington D.C. It appears that it is up to my daughter to decide whether a matter concerning her son is to remain confidential or not by choosing whether or not to speak about it in public. Did Ms. McLaughlin's student or the student's parents care about all this personal information going out about this 7th grade emotionally disturbed student at Syms Middle School? Wouldn't matter because by Hampton's own executive decision if the student or parents did grant permission it would still have to remain confidential – unless it was spun into a positive story of Hampton City Schools' liking then it would appear to be okay. My goodness, teacher got a trip and gift card while violating school board policy and the IDEA. The school board fails to understand that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Regulations are for ALL students and not just those who fall under the IDEA. Remedy – hire someone to counsel the school board on laws and their own policies which they fail to know.