

BREVARD DESERVES BETTER

STRATEGY PACKET FOR AUGUST 12,
2025 BREVARD COUNTY SCHOOL
BOARD MEETING

TIME: 5:30 PM

LOCATION:

2700 JUDGE FRAN
JAMIESON WAY
VIERA, FL 32940



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1) OUR OPENING NARRATIVE

Tonight's meeting is about whether this board keeps its word to the people of Brevard County.

Veteran AP English teacher Melissa Calhoun of Satellite High School was removed from her classroom after using a student's chosen name without written parental permission, which the district said violated Florida's "parental rights" rules. Her contract was not renewed, and the case was referred to the state.

During this time, board members told the community they would reconsider Melissa's reinstatement if the State of Florida cleared her to teach again. That was a public condition, made in front of students, parents, and teachers.

The state has now ruled. Melissa's teaching certificate is valid. She has a written reprimand, a one-year probation, a required ethics course, and a fine. She is fully authorized to teach while on probation. Yet the superintendent and the board have refused to reinstate her. Instead, they are claiming she must complete probation before being considered for rehire, even though probation is designed to be served while working. This is moving the goalposts. It is a political decision, not an educational one.

We are here tonight to show that the board's actions are politically motivated and dishonest, without getting heated or conducting ourselves in a way they can use as an excuse to deny a town hall.

If we let this chamber become toxic and hostile, it will be used against us. We are the parents in the room. **We must be calm, disciplined, and relentless so the public can see that the hostility comes from the board, not from us.**

2) ENCOURAGING SIGNS WE CAN BUILD ON

Some board members have, in the past, said things like Melissa deserved a “second chance” or that the punishment did not match the intent. Those are not victories, but they are openings. They are statements we can bring back up and ask them to repeat on the record tonight. We will press them to explain why, if they once said it, they have not acted on it now. This keeps the focus on their inconsistency without letting them off the hook.

3) FOUR LARGER TALKING POINTS FOR ALL SPEAKERS

1. Promise Made, Promise Broken

This board looked the public in the eye and said they would reconsider Melissa's reinstatement if the state cleared her to teach. The state cleared her. Instead of acting, they broke their word. That is dishonesty in plain view of every student, parent, and teacher in Brevard County.

2. Politics Over Students

The claim that Melissa must complete probation before being rehired is a manufactured excuse. State probation is served while teaching. Delaying her return is not about policy. It is about politics. Every day she is kept out of the classroom, students lose access to a qualified, proven teacher.

3. Toxic Climate Hurts Everyone

When a board retaliates against educators and ignores its own promises, it sends a chilling message. Students and teachers will not feel safe coming to this chamber to speak if they believe it will always be a hostile and politically charged environment where voices are punished instead of heard.

4. Town Hall is the Path Forward

If this board is serious about repairing trust, it must face the people in a neutral, moderated town hall outside this chamber and outside the intimidation of these rules. Without that open forum, distrust will keep spreading and the divide between the board and the community will only grow deeper.

4) OUR CONDUCT IS PART OF THE STRATEGY

We must show the community that we are the leaders in the room.

Leadership means discipline, focus, and respect, even when the board fails to model it. Our composure will make it clear where the hostility is coming from and will protect our call for a town hall from being dismissed on the basis of chaos or disruption.

Positive feedback: Use jazz hands when a board member or community member says something constructive. This shows unity and positivity without interrupting or breaking decorum.

Negative feedback: Use a thumbs down and a head shake only when a board member says something harmful or misleading. This keeps the focus on holding power accountable without creating division between community members.

Never target community speakers: Even if someone says something we disagree with, keep your response neutral. We are not here to argue with our neighbors.

If something feels off or unsafe: Raise a peace sign so SEE organizers can discreetly come to you. This ensures everyone stays safe and supported without escalating tensions.

No insults. No swearing. No yelling over anyone: Losing our composure plays directly into the board's hands and can be used to shut down dialogue.

We control the tone: Our calm and strategic presence is part of the message. We want the cameras, the press, and the public to see that we are the ones in control of ourselves and focused on solutions, not outbursts.

5) CORE PHRASES TO ECHO IN COMMENTS

- 1. Please be honest with Brevard.**
- 2. Bring Melissa Calhoun back now.**
- 3. Brevard families are concerned and confused.**
- 4. Put students before politics.**
- 5. Hold a real town hall.**

6) HOW PUBLIC COMMENT WORKS TONIGHT

Agenda public comments happen before votes on specific items. Tie your remarks to one of these:

- **Item 8 – Instructional Staff Recommendations**
- **Item G.1 – Policies 2260.02, 5136, 5517, 5517.01**
- **Item G.2 – Policy 0165 (Meetings)**

Non-agenda (General) public comments happen later in the meeting. Use them to talk about the broader trust issue and call for the town hall.

Connecting Melissa's Case to Agenda Items

Item 8 – Instructional Staff Recommendations

This is where staffing changes happen. The board set a public condition for reinstatement. It was met. Refusal to act proves the promise was broken.

Item G.1 – Anti-harassment, nondiscrimination, bullying, and wireless device policies

These policies only matter if applied consistently. Refusing reinstatement after state clearance shows selective enforcement.

Item G.2 – Policy 0165 (Meetings)

This policy is about transparency and public participation. A neutral, moderated town hall fulfills its purpose and is necessary to restore trust.

7) EXAMPLE PUBLIC COMMENTS

Version 1 – Instructional Staff Recommendations (Item 8)

Focus: Staffing decision, fairness, consistency

Good evening, Members of the Board, Superintendent Rendell, and members of the community, my name is [Your Name], and I am here tonight to speak to Item 8, Instructional Staff Recommendations. This is the item that determines who will and will not be teaching in our district this year. It is exactly the place where the decision about whether or not to rehire Ms. Melissa Calhoun belongs, and it is why I am here tonight. Earlier this year, the Board made a public statement that it would consider her reinstatement if the state allowed her to continue teaching under probation. That was the standard you set. Now, the state has done exactly that. They have upheld her license, placed it under probation, and cleared her to be in the classroom. The condition you cited has been met. Yet, despite this resolution at the state level, she has not been returned to her position. This is not about politics. It is about integrity, fairness, and consistency. When a governing body makes a public commitment, follows due process, and then fails to honor its own words, it erodes trust, not just between the Board and one individual, but between the Board and every student, parent, and educator in this district. If we want to show our students what accountability looks like, we must model it ourselves by doing exactly what we said we would do. At the same time, this decision is happening against a backdrop of growing concern about the relationship between this Board and the community. In recent weeks, residents have expressed frustration at the lack of open dialogue on major decisions, and they are feeling alienated from the process. That is not sustainable. That is why I am calling for two things tonight. First, amend the instructional staff recommendations to include Ms. Calhoun's reinstatement. Second, commit to holding a moderated, neutral community town hall, not here in this chamber and not under the rigid rules of a Board meeting, where Board members, parents, students, and teachers can come together to speak openly and respectfully. Reinstating Ms. Calhoun would be a concrete act of fairness. Hosting a town hall would be a meaningful step toward repairing trust. Together, these actions would show that this Board is serious about listening to the people it serves and following through on its word. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

7) EXAMPLE PUBLIC COMMENTS

Version 2 – Final Public Hearing on Policies 2260.02, 5517, 5517.01 (Item G.1)

Focus: Policies on anti-harassment, nondiscrimination, fairness.

Good evening, Members of the Board, Superintendent Rendell, and members of the community, my name is [Your Name], and I am here tonight to speak to Item G.1, the final public hearing on revisions to Policies 2260.02, 5517, and 5517.01. These policies govern anti-harassment, nondiscrimination, and bullying. They are meant to ensure fairness, equity, and a safe environment for every student and every staff member. But policies are only as strong as the willingness of leadership to uphold them in practice. The case of Ms. Melissa Calhoun is a direct test of these policies. Earlier this year, this Board said it would consider reinstating her if the state allowed her to continue teaching under probation. That was the condition you set, and the state has now met it, her license is intact, and she has been cleared to work under those terms. Yet, despite this, she has not been reinstated. That decision raises serious questions about whether our district's actions are matching our stated commitments to fairness and non-retaliation. When policies like 2260.02 and 5517 are applied inconsistently, it doesn't just harm one person, it undermines the credibility of the entire system. Students, parents, and educators need to know that these protections apply equally to everyone. If we want these policies to mean something, we have to model the standards they set. This situation is happening in the middle of a period when many in our community already feel shut out of the process. Sensitive and high-impact policy changes, including those we are voting on tonight, have been moving forward with minimal open discussion outside of formal meetings. People tell me they do not feel safe, welcome, or respected in this chamber. That is a dangerous place for a school district to be. That is why I am asking for two clear actions tonight. First, apply the principles of fairness and equity in these very policies to reinstate Ms. Calhoun. Second, commit to holding a neutral, moderated community town hall to give parents, students, educators, and Board members a chance to have a real conversation, one not bound by the procedural constraints of a Board meeting. If these policies are to be more than just words on paper, then the Board must demonstrate, through its own actions, that they matter. Rehiring Ms. Calhoun and creating a forum for open dialogue would be a strong start. Thank you for your time and for your consideration.

7) EXAMPLE PUBLIC COMMENTS

Version 3 – Final Public Hearing on Policy 0165 (Item G.2)

Focus: Transparency, public participation, rebuilding trust.

Good evening, Members of the Board, Superintendent Rendell, and members of the community, my name is [Your Name], and I am here tonight to speak to Item G.2, the final public hearing on revisions to Policy 0165, which governs how this Board conducts its meetings. The stated purpose of this policy is to ensure transparency, accountability, and meaningful public participation in decision-making. That purpose must be reflected not just in the text of the policy, but in how this Board actually operates. The recent decision not to rehire Ms. Melissa Calhoun is a prime example of where transparency is lacking. Earlier this year, this Board stated publicly that it would consider her reinstatement if the state allowed her to continue teaching under probation. That is exactly what has now happened, her license has been upheld, she has been cleared to teach, and the condition you set has been met. Yet she remains off staff, and no clear public explanation has been provided for why. This is not a minor personnel decision, it is a matter that impacts the trust between the Board and the community. Without transparency in this case, how can the public trust the Board's handling of any other decision, including the policy changes being considered tonight. Policy 0165 promises openness and public accountability, but those promises ring hollow if the Board is unwilling to explain its reasoning or follow through on its own stated conditions. The reality is that trust in this chamber is fragile right now. Families, students, and staff are telling me they feel shut out and unheard. The tone of recent meetings has been combative, leaving little room for collaboration or constructive problem-solving. That is not sustainable for a healthy school district. That is why I am asking for two specific actions. First, honor your own stated condition and reinstate Ms. Calhoun. Second, commit to holding a moderated, neutral community town hall outside of this chamber where all stakeholders, parents, students, educators, and Board members, can speak openly and directly with one another. Reinstating Ms. Calhoun would show integrity. Holding a town hall would demonstrate a commitment to repairing relationships and strengthening the connection between this Board and the community it serves. Taken together, these steps would put the principles of Policy 0165 into action. Thank you for your time and for your consideration.

8) EXAMPLE NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

General Public Comment – Melissa Calhoun & Community Trust

Good evening, Members of the Board, Superintendent Rendell, and members of the community, my name is [Your Name], and I am here tonight because the decisions this Board makes do not exist in isolation, they set the tone for how our schools are run, how our teachers are treated, and how our students experience their education. Right now, the tone is not one of trust or collaboration, and that has to change. I want to start with the case of Melissa Calhoun. The state of Florida has upheld her teaching license and allowed her to return to the classroom under probation. This was the very condition this Board cited when stating that her reinstatement would be considered. That condition has been met. Yet, she remains out of her position. This is not a matter of politics or personality, it is a matter of integrity and consistency. When leadership makes a public commitment and then does not follow through once the condition is satisfied, it sends a message to students and the community that promises are negotiable. That is the opposite of the example we should be setting. The reality is that trust between this Board and the community is fragile. Parents, students, and teachers are telling me they do not feel welcome here. They do not feel that their voices are heard. And when decisions like Ms. Calhoun's non-rehire happen without transparency, it deepens that divide. This is not sustainable for a district that claims to serve every student with excellence as the standard. I am asking for two clear, actionable steps. First, reinstate Melissa Calhoun immediately. She has met the condition you set, she is cleared to teach, and she has proven her value to this district. Second, commit to holding a moderated, neutral town hall outside of this chamber, in a space where the rigid procedures of a Board meeting do not limit open conversation. This would give parents, students, teachers, and Board members a chance to engage honestly, share perspectives, and begin repairing the relationships that are essential for a healthy school system. These steps are not about conceding a point or picking sides, they are about demonstrating that this Board is willing to listen, act fairly, and work with the community it serves. Reinstating Ms. Calhoun would show that you keep your word. Hosting a town hall would show that you value dialogue over division. Together, they would be a powerful signal that this Board is ready to lead with both transparency and trust. Thank you for your time and consideration.

MEET TEAM SEE

Youth-led. Data-driven. Future-focused.

We are building a statewide movement to transform the 2026 midterms by focusing on school boards. They are winnable, youth-centered, locally grounded, and uniquely positioned to create change across every level of government.

SEE Alliance is one of the largest youth-led political movements in the country. We are a multigenerational, data-driven organizing force led by young people and built to win lasting change across Florida, starting at the school board. We've organized with high school and college students in over 50 of Florida's 67 school districts. We've shifted school board dynamics in some of the most politically challenging counties in Florida by organizing communities, informing voters, and holding elected officials accountable, all while remaining nonpartisan, grassroots, and grounded in community coalitions.

Our strategy is both proactive and responsive. We build long-term infrastructure to shift power while responding in real time to the political threats facing students, educators, and schools.

We don't just show up. We resource youth organizers across the state with training, data, communications support, and political strategy.

We provide the infrastructure needed for community coalitions to lead powerful campaigns in their districts. Whether it's helping students prepare testimony, coordinating legal and press responses, bringing national media to local fights, organizing full-scale rallies, running strategy sessions, or building statewide narrative pressure, we are there every step of the way.