

# BPS IS STAYING SILENT. WE AREN'T.

BREVARD COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

2700 JUDGE FRAN JAMIESON WAY VIERA, FL

MAY 20<sup>TH</sup> 2025



see!

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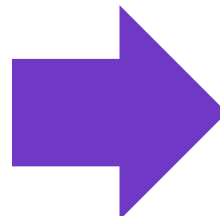
## What's Inside This Packet

This packet is designed to help you speak powerfully, stay grounded, and understand the stakes at the May 20th Brevard County School Board meeting. Inside, you'll find:

- **Today's Strategy (p. 3):** How we're showing up, what we're asking for, and what comes next.
- **Brevard School Board Context (p. 5):** A quick overview of the five board members and their recent actions.
- **The Long-Term Solution (p. 7):** Why this fight goes beyond today, and how we're building lasting change.
- **De-escalation & Tone (p. 8):** Tips for staying calm, persuasive, and focused—especially if interrupted.
- **Agenda Talking Points & Core Phrases (p. 11):** Key messages tied directly to today's agenda item (I-29).
- **Non-Agenda Talking Points (p. 14):** Broader issues worth raising in public comment.
- **Example Public Comments (p. 16):** Sample 2-minute remarks to inspire and guide your own.

You don't need to use every section—but you'll find everything you need to speak up, speak clearly, and stand with Ms. Calhoun.

**SCAN HERE FOR THE  
FULL BREVARD  
SCHOOL BOARD  
PACKET**



# TODAY'S STRATEGY

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**This is our third school board meeting, and still, no justice for Ms. Calhoun.** That's not a reason to step back. It's a reason to keep going. Every time we show up, we grow this movement, and that growth is how we win. The more people we bring in, the more pressure we build. We're making it clear that Brevard's community supports inclusion, tolerance, and fair enforcement, not political overreach. When enough people speak out, it becomes politically and publicly unsustainable for the board to keep ignoring us. Without continued turnout, people lose direction and momentum. With it, we build the power needed to secure lasting change. This isn't a theory, it's a data-driven, history-proven strategy. ***We'll talk more about how we're evolving our presence in the boardroom, and beyond it, at the strategy session directly before the May 20<sup>th</sup> BPS School Board meeting.***

**If Ms. Calhoun is not reinstated, this sets a dangerous precedent.** It tells the board they can target and remove inclusive educators without public accountability. If we let up now, we risk losing the next teacher too. Staying organized and visible makes it harder for the board to take similar action in the future. This is about more than one decision. It's about protecting every educator and student in Brevard.

## **Our Messaging + Internal Discipline**

- Speak with clarity and calmness. Passion matters, but our power is in being grounded.
- Do not argue with board members or opponents. Let our consistency and coordination speak louder.
- Support each other. Whether you're speaking or sitting in solidarity, your presence matters. Hold a sign!

# TODAY'S STRATEGY

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## **Social Media Plan**

Help us amplify this beyond the room.

- Take a photo or short video while in line, during the rally, or after public comment
- Tag us at @seeourpower on Instagram, Twitter/X, or TikTok
- Use the hashtag #StandWithCalhoun
- Share why you showed up, what you witnessed, or what you want others to understand
- SEE Alliance will repost and amplify every tagged post to push our narrative further

## **Tomorrow's Debrief | May 21st**

We will host a virtual debrief tomorrow to reflect on the board meeting and regroup. We'll talk about:

- What we accomplished
- How the board responded
- What needs to happen next
- What we're building for the next meeting

**Debrief details will be shared via email and Signal.**

## **Visual + Sign Strategy**

Hold signs that are bold, readable, and clear. Some effective messages:

- "Reinstate Ms. Calhoun"
- "Students Before Politics"
- "We Don't Punish Compassion"
- "This Community is Watching"
- "Protect Inclusive Educators"

# BREVARD SCHOOL BOARD CONTEXT

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The Brevard County School Board is made up of five elected members. Since 2022, it has been dominated by a extremist majority that prioritizes partisan agendas over student safety, educator support, and academic freedom.

Here's who currently holds power:

## **Megan Wright (District 1, Term: 2022–2026)**

Wright consistently aligns with policies pushed by Governor DeSantis and groups like Moms for Liberty. She supported restricting public comment and voted in favor of removing inclusive educational content from classrooms.

## **Gene Trent (District 2, Term: 2022–2026)**

As Board Chair, Trent has pushed for harsh disciplinary measures against teachers viewed as “non-compliant.” He backed the decision to not renew Ms. Calhoun’s contract and has supported previous removals with similar political undertones.

## **Katye Campbell (District 5, Term: 2022–2026)**

While Campbell has occasionally voiced concern about the politicization of school governance, she has rarely voted against the extremist majority. She supported limiting access to student health resources and censoring curriculum.

## **Matt Susin (District 4, Term: 2024–2028)**

Susin has led with a top-down style that sidelines student voices and dismisses mental health concerns. He has used his position to drive culture war narratives and consolidate control over the board’s direction.

# BREVARD SCHOOL BOARD CONTEXT

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## **John Thomas (District 3, Term: 2024–2028)**

Thomas generally votes in line with the majority. He recently supported policies that reduce diversity programming and has not publicly opposed the board's decisions on educator discipline or censorship.

At the last meeting, however, Thomas did propose that the Superintendent reconsider the decision not to renew Ms. Calhoun's contract. The Board voted down his proposal.

## **Superintendent Mark Rendell**

Appointed in 2023, Superintendent Mark Rendell has consistently aligned with the board majority. Rather than serving as a check or independent advocate for students and educators, he has supported controversial board decisions and failed to publicly defend teachers targeted by political retaliation.

His silence and compliance have allowed this board's most harmful policies to move forward without challenge. While his role is administrative, his influence on school culture, staff morale, and district response to public concern is significant.

# THE LONG-TERM SOLUTION

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The fight to defend Ms. Calhoun is essential. It also reflects a larger crisis that is affecting students, educators, and entire communities across Brevard.

We are building a long-term campaign to change the conditions that made her removal possible and to ensure that public education in Brevard is guided by care, inclusion, and accountability. This will not be a candidate-centered campaign. It will be rooted in the needs of the community and shaped by people who are ready to lead.

From now through November 2026, we will maintain a strong, organized presence. We will show up to every board meeting, track every vote, document every decision, and keep pressure on those in power. We are training organizers, growing coalitions, and building the infrastructure needed for real change.

This campaign will expand over time. It will include data-driven voter outreach, community-led town halls, strategic advertising, school-based organizing, and clear policy proposals that reflect the voices of those most affected.

All of this is part of Midterms on Our Terms, a youth-led, statewide strategy to transform public engagement with Florida's school boards. These positions control public funding, shape school policy, and influence how entire communities operate.

When we organize at the school board level, we do not just respond to harm. We build a new vision for what education and democracy can look like.

# DE-ESCALATION & TONE

## DE-ESCALATION GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

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At the last board meeting, attendees were forced to stand in the rain prior to the meeting. Based on that experience, as well as prior restrictions to public comment, we expect similar pushback during the May 20th meeting. If these things happens, remember to stay calm and stick to your message. Here's how to handle it:

**Stay calm and speak clearly.** Don't raise your voice or argue. If a board member interrupts or questions your relevance, stay grounded and keep going. Let your prepared remarks do the work.

**Reassert your relevance calmly.** If challenged, use a respectful phrase to connect your comment back to the agenda item. Examples:

*"Respectfully, this comment is relevant to Item G-64 (Policy #3120) and G-65 (Policy #3140). While the item doesn't propose new definitions, it addresses Policy 3140—the exact policy used in Ms. Calhoun's case. That's why I'm raising it."*

*"I understand Ms. Calhoun isn't named in the item, but it covers the policy that led to her dismissal. I'm offering input on how that policy affects educators and students."*

**Focus on shared values.** You are most persuasive when you speak to student well-being, fairness, and clarity—not personalities or politics. For example:

*"I'm here because I believe Brevard Deserves Better. We need policies that support educators who act in students' best interests."*

Close respectfully - even if cut off. Thank the board to keep the tone constructive and to show you came in good faith.

# DE-ESCALATION & TONE:

## OVERALL TONE

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### Make Them Feel It, Make Them Hear You

You have every right to be angry. You have every right to be emotional. What's happening is unjust, and the stakes are real. We're not asking anyone to be quiet or calm. We're asking you to be strategic. Because how we show up in that room doesn't just affect what the board thinks. It affects what the press prints, what the audience believes, and how power moves.

Passion is powerful when it's clear. Emotion is persuasive when it's focused. The goal isn't to hold anything back. The goal is to make sure they have no choice but to listen.

If we walk in composed, direct, and emotionally honest while the board hides behind policies and platitudes, people watching will know exactly who to believe. But if we come off disoriented, scattered, or hostile, even folks who agree with us might tune us out.

This moment isn't just about defending Ms. Calhoun. It's about showing what kind of community we are. Let's be the ones who speak with clarity, hold the line, and refuse to be silenced. We are the reasonable ones. They are the problem.

***Here are a few tools to help you land your message and move the room:***

#### **1. Keep your language sharp and powerful**

*You don't have to water anything down. Just make sure your words land. If something is wrong, say so. But say it in a way that's hard to ignore and easy to quote.*

- **Instead of:** *"This is disgusting and shameful"*
- **Try:** *"This decision is dangerous, and it's isolating students who deserve protection."*

# DE-ESCALATION & TONE:

## OVERALL TONE

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### 2. Use your personal story. It's your strongest tool

*You don't need stats or policy knowledge to make an impact. If you've been affected, that's enough. Speak from your truth. Let them feel what's at stake.*

- **Example:** *"As a student, I've watched teachers like Ms. Calhoun create space for people like me to feel safe. Losing her would change everything."*

### 3. Speak to shared values, not just what went wrong

*Remind the room what we all say we care about: safety, belonging, strong schools, fairness. Bring them back to the basics they've forgotten.*

- **Example:** *"Every student should feel safe walking into school. That's not radical. That's just what every kid deserves."*

### 4. Stay grounded in your own voice

*You don't need to attack the board to make your point. Speak in "I" statements to stay grounded and keep your power.*

- **Instead of:** *"You clearly don't care about students"*
- **Try:** *"I feel dismissed by this decision, and I worry about the message it sends to every student who's watching."*

### 5. Make the board look unreasonable, not you

*They want to paint us as emotional and unhinged. Don't give them that headline. If they're sitting stone-faced while we speak truth with heart and clarity, it becomes obvious who's out of touch.*

***You don't need to be perfect. You just need to be real, focused, and clear. Speak your truth like it matters, because it does. Let your passion come through. Let your voice shake if it has to. Just make sure everyone watching knows which side is fighting for something worth listening to.***

# AGENDA TALKING POINTS & CORE PHRASES

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## **Agenda Items:**

- **F-19** - "Reappointment Nominations of Annual Contract Teachers for 2025-26 School Year"
- **G-64** - "Employment of Staff" (policy 3120)
- **G-65** - "Suspension or Dismissal of Staff" (policy 3140)

## **Core Phrases:**

- *Brevard Deserves Better*
- *We Don't Punish Compassion*
- *Students Before Politics*
- *Teachers Deserve Support, Not Retaliation*

## **F-19 Talking Points:**

### **Procedural Gaps in Reappointment Decisions**

*The exclusion of Melissa Calhoun lacks transparent, documented justification, raising concerns about adherence to fair employment and due process standards.*

### **Inconsistent Policy Enforcement**

*Disciplinary measures under the Parental Rights in Education Act appear selectively applied, suggesting unequal treatment of similarly situated educators.*

### **Loss of Instructional Value**

*Calhoun's proven teaching record, especially in AP coursework, represents lost instructional capital that should factor into reappointment.*

### **Disregard for Public Input**

*The board has not addressed sustained public support for Calhoun, undermining participatory governance norms.*

### **Requested Action**

- *Amend the reappointment list to include Calhoun or publicly disclose the policy basis and evaluative data supporting her exclusion.*

# AGENDA TALKING POINTS & CORE PHRASES

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## **G-64 (Policy 3120) Talking Points:**

### **Procedural Irregularity in Reappointment**

*Ms. Melissa Calhoun's exclusion from the reappointment list is not accompanied by documented evidence of performance deficiency, raising due process concerns and violating equitable employment practices.*

### **Selective and Disproportionate Enforcement**

*Among several staff implicated in alleged policy violations, Ms. Calhoun faced non-renewal. This inconsistency points to uneven application of standards and raises questions about internal accountability.*

### **Vague and Subjective Policy Language**

*The proposed revisions to Policy 3120 include terms like "gross insubordination," "willful neglect," and "immorality" without operational definitions. These vague terms risk arbitrary interpretation, especially in politically charged contexts.*

### **Disconnect from Community Input**

*There has been overwhelming support for Ms. Calhoun's reinstatement. Continued dismissal of this feedback erodes public trust and undermines democratic governance.*

### **Requested Actions**

- *Amend the reappointment list to include Ms. Calhoun and apply consistent evaluative criteria across staff.*
- *Delay or revise Policy 3120 updates to include clearly defined language around termination standards.*
- *Require a transparent review method to safeguard against misuse of vague behavioral charges.*

# AGENDA TALKING POINTS & CORE PHRASES

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## **G-65 (Policy 3140) Talking Points:**

### **Expansion of Discretion Without Safeguards**

*The policy grants broad suspension authority to the Superintendent without procedural checks or clear evidentiary standards—enabling potentially arbitrary enforcement, as seen in Ms. Calhoun’s case.*

### **Vague Termination Grounds**

*Terms like “gross insubordination,” “willful neglect,” and “immorality” are undefined and open to broad interpretation. This invites inconsistent, and possibly ideological, application.*

### **Lack of Contextual Consideration**

“Just cause” standards ignore intent, prior conduct, or mitigating factors—critical in evaluating cases like Calhoun’s, where a good-faith instructional decision resulted in disproportionate punishment.

### **Weak Appeals Process**

*The FS 120.57 hearing process is reactive, legalistic, and burdensome—offering no proactive review or protection against inconsistent discipline.*

### **Chilling Effect on Instruction**

Vague disciplinary policies discourage teacher autonomy and student support, as demonstrated in Ms. Calhoun’s defense of her students’ identities.

### **Requested Actions**

- Clearly define “just cause” terms in objective, behavior-based language.
- Create pre-disciplinary review panels for consistent enforcement.
- Incorporate educator intent and proportionality into policy.
- Reevaluate prior applications—especially Calhoun’s case—to prevent selective discipline.

# NON-AGENDA TALKING POINTS

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## A Breakdown in Trust Between the Board and the Community

- **Framing:** Tensions at recent board meetings—shouting matches, walkouts, etc—show that trust between the School Board and the community is fractured. Families feel ignored, students feel silenced, and many in the public feel decisions are made behind closed doors or for political theater, not genuine collaboration.
- **Talking Point:** The Board must rebuild trust by modeling the respect and transparency we expect in our schools. That means listening to families, protecting space for public input, and working with—not against—the community. The Board sets the tone for the district. Right now, that tone is conflict. **Brevard Deserves Better.**

## Teacher Shortages

- **Framing:** Brevard's teacher shortage is no longer a future concern—it's a current collapse. Vacancies remain across critical subjects like math, science, and ESE. Educators are underpaid, disrespected, and overwhelmed, and district leadership is failing to address it. Recent policies and punitive decisions, such as that with Ms Calhoun, have only deepened the crisis.
- **Talking Point:** The Board must prioritize recruiting and retaining qualified educators by improving pay, classroom support, and working conditions. Punitive actions like Ms. Calhoun's dismissal and tighter restrictions on adjunct hiring under Policy 3120 send the wrong message to current and future teachers. This Board must stop pushing good educators out and start bringing them in. **Brevard Deserves Better.**

## Censorship That Silences Students and Educators

- **Framing:** Florida's laws and this district's policies have created an environment of fear in classrooms. Book bans, vague mandates, and retaliation against teachers have led to self-censorship by educators and confusion for students. This climate stifles honest education and undermines trust.
- **Talking Point:** Students deserve access to diverse, accurate information—and teachers deserve clarity and protection when doing their jobs. The Board must ensure transparency in book review processes, safeguard academic freedom, and protect teachers from politically motivated punishment. Ms. Calhoun's removal is a warning of what happens when censorship trumps trust. **Brevard Deserves Better.**

# NON-AGENDA TALKING POINTS

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## School Safety & Mental Health

- **Framing:** Today's students are facing a national mental health crisis—from trauma and grief to social media pressure and economic stress. Yet in Brevard, support systems are missing or stretched thin. Teachers are left to fill the gap without training or resources, putting everyone at risk.
- **Talking Point:** The Board must invest in trained mental health professionals, expand counseling services, and support school climates that foster care and connection. When mental health needs are ignored, both students and educators suffer. Real safety starts with emotional safety. **Brevard Deserves Better.**

## A Culture of Surveillance and Criminalization

- **Framing:** Discipline in Brevard schools is not applied equally. Surveillance and harsh punishment disproportionately impact Black students, disabled students, and LGBTQ+ youth. The result is a culture of fear—not safety—and a pipeline pushing kids out of school instead of keeping them in.
- **Talking Point:** The Board should invest in restorative practices, equity-based discipline reforms, and support systems that build student success. Discipline shouldn't criminalize—it should guide. Safety comes from connection, not control. **Brevard Deserves Better.**

## A Board Focused on Headlines, Not Helping

- **Framing:** From book bans to culture war policies, this Board has made headlines—but not progress. While real problems pile up—teacher vacancies, low morale, student mental health—leadership is focused on media attention, not meaningful action.
- **Talking Point:** The Board must shift its priorities from PR to problem-solving. It's time to stop chasing controversy and start addressing the real needs of students, families, and staff. This community wants action, not theater. **Students Before Politics. Brevard Deserves Better.**

# EXAMPLE COMMENTS

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## **2-Minute Version (A):**

Good evening, board members. My name is [name] and I'm speaking today on Agenda Item G-65, specifically the proposed revisions to Policy 3140, which governs the suspension and dismissal of staff.

This policy uses vague terms like "willful neglect," "gross insubordination," and "misconduct in office," yet offers no clear definitions. That opens the door to subjective enforcement and political interpretation.

That's exactly what happened to Ms. Calhoun. Her decision to support a student's identity—a decision grounded in compassion and aligned with inclusive education—was labeled "insubordination." But in the absence of clear definitions, that label becomes a judgment about values, not conduct. And when this board treated her dismissal as an administrative non-renewal instead of a disciplinary action, she was denied the due process promised in this very policy.

**Brevard Deserves Better.** We need fair, transparent, and consistently applied policies—especially at a time when we're struggling to retain dedicated educators. Ms. Calhoun's case is not just about one teacher; it's about the environment we're creating for every teacher. If professional judgment can be punished arbitrarily, we are undermining the very people we rely on to care for and educate our children.

Please ensure this policy protects both our students and the educators who serve them. Thank you.

**Frame the comments in your own words, speak from your own personal experience, background, or profession. You're going to crush it!**

# EXAMPLE COMMENTS

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## **2-Minute Version (B):**

Good evening, board members. My name is [name] and I'd like to address Agenda Item G-64, and specifically the changes proposed to Policy 3120, including new restrictions on adjunct instructor requirements.

At a time when Brevard is facing a severe and growing teacher shortage, especially in subjects like math and science, and in ESE programs, these proposed revisions make it harder, not easier, to bring in qualified instructors. Instead of expanding access to the classroom for community professionals with real-world experience, we're tightening requirements and narrowing the pipeline.

Pair that with what happened to Ms. Calhoun, and we're sending a very clear message: You're not welcome here unless you conform. Her dismissal—based on undefined language and a questionable process—shows how we're pushing good educators out while simultaneously making it harder to bring new ones in.

This isn't just unsustainable—it's harmful to students.

**Students Before Politics.** That means fixing the teacher pipeline, not shrinking it. That means treating our educators with dignity, not fear. And it means crafting policies that value retention, fairness, and flexibility—not just compliance and discipline.

Brevard's families are watching. Let's show them we're serious about putting students—and solutions—first. Thank you.

**Frame the comments in your own words, speak from your own personal experience, background, or profession. You're going to crush it!**

# YOU'RE MORE THAN READY!

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**WE'VE GOT A GOAL!**  
**WE'VE GOT A PLAN!**  
**WE'VE GOT ONE ANOTHER!**  
**WE'VE GOT THIS!**