

NEWS RELEASE

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Jerry Rutherford, Collier County School Board Member-Elect, District 1 [November 12, 2022]

Jerry Rutherford Addresses November 10, 2022 Naples Daily News reporting.

NAPLES, FL, [11/12/2022] – Jerry Rutherford, Collier County School Board Member -Elect, District 1 released a statement today addressing a November 10, 2022 Naples Daily News report that was published and is being re-reported.

#### Facilitating a Positive Learning Environment in Our Classrooms

Many stakeholders are unaware that Florida law, *like the laws in many other states*, permits corporal punishment. That being said, it is not my intent to call for Collier County to adopt a corporal punishment policy. My objective and hope is to have a constructive and long overdue discussion with our public school stakeholders, especially with our teachers, about how we can best help and support our teachers and students to improve the learning environment in our classrooms. I, like many in our community, have my own experiences that resulted in improved classroom learning environments, but a lot of things have changed since I was in school, and I would like to hear input from all stakeholders. From what our teachers are saying, we can and must do better in facilitating a positive learning environment and supporting our wonderful teachers as they do their difficult job and work to improve classroom discipline. As we hear from all stakeholders and counsel together, I am confident that we will build a strong community consensus on how to improve our current school board policy so that we can support our wonderful teachers in their desire to improve the classroom learning environment.

Also, there is growing trend in Collier (and across the US) towards more IEPs and 504 plans, and the general belief is that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act fully insulates such students from experiencing consequences for conduct and sets them apart from the District's regular disciplinary procedures. I am aware of stories of students whose behavior, threatens the safety of staff and students, disrupting learning for themselves and other students.

The rules under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are complicated, but they cover two main areas:

1. When a child is removed from school, which prevents the child from receiving services. This is called a change in placement.
2. When a child's misbehavior is caused by a disability, like a learning or thinking difference. This is called manifestation.

That being said, all of our wonderful students should be treated fairly according to the law and they also deserve well-disciplined learning environments that are positive, focused, and full of creative/productive energy. From what many of our teachers are saying, we can and must have a constructive and long overdue discussion with our public-school stakeholders, especially with our teachers, about how we can address both the requirements of law and also help our teachers and students improve the learning

environment in our classrooms. I intend on having these needed stakeholder discussions in order to explore ways to improve board policy in this regard. High standards of discipline, morals, accurate history, and love of country are timeless needs for the education of our citizenry. Teachers should be able to teach without disruptive students. And students should be able to learn without disruptive students stealing their education. My aim is not to get deep into school operations. I'm not looking to micromanage school administrators and teachers. Rather, I intend to work with my fellow board members to oversee the Superintendent, ensuring that he or she implements board policy and abides by the law to maintain high standards of discipline, morals, and love of country in our schools. We have wonderful teachers, administrators, and students in Collier County.

### No Bullying and Harassment

Our school board polices must and will protect all of our wonderful students from bullying and harassment that can impede their access to education. I am also aware of Title IX protections for our students. However, many in our community are rightly concerned when the Biden administration issues new guidance that threatens to withhold federal funding for school lunch and other USDA programs if states fail to protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Florida Education Commissioner Manny Diaz Jr. has told superintendents, school boards, private school owners and charter school governing boards they have "no obligation" to follow the new Title IX equity rules laid out by the Biden administration, and I will work with our school board attorney to ensure that our board policies are consistent with guidance from both our Florida Education Commissioner and Title IX.