Hateful, Devious and Deceitful School Board Throws Kids to the Wolves at Feb 11, 2019 School Board meeting!!! Blanton Embarrasses School Board—Three BIG times!!! Plus, several smaller glitches they fell into!!! They had to know this was coming!! Commissioners Doug Bridges and Deb Hardin in attendance Report by Robert A. Williams

Yes Virginia, I called the School Board, except for Danny Blanton, a bunch of “nit-wits” and “nincompoops” in my last article. Then they wasted no time in proving me right at their February 11, 2019 School Board meeting. And then some. With Commissioners Doug Bridges and Deb Hardin watching them at every gaffe.

The said meeting started out as usual. A Pledge of Allegiance, no Prayer-just a moment of silence, the usual show and tell with students. The usual fluff to bring out parents, who then leave before the business actually gets started.

One show and tell regarded teachers who had just gotten their certifications for the first time or renewed. The introduction to that brought out the first embarrassment, without anybody's help. The presenter noted that North Carolina led the Nation in the number of certified teachers in schools and that Cleveland County Schools led the "Region." The presenter did not define just what the "Region" consisted of.

But, any relatively quick thinker familiar with CCS's statistics knows 46% of graduating students cannot read, write or do arithmetic proficiently. So, what does all this bragging about "Certifications" have to do about anything? It should be obvious to the most casual observer that Cleveland County Schools are failing to provide our children with the proper education to render them proficient with the Three "R's." And, I am not even counting that as an embarrassment. Things get worse from here on out.

The Minutes of the disastrous January 28, 2019 meeting are approved without comment. But what could they say? My last article blew them out of the water about their waste and cover-ups from that meeting.

Entering into a contract for legal services comes up quick enough. Board member Danny Blanton is about to bust some bubbles.

For years CCS has retained Tharrington & Smith, an expensive Raleigh law firm as the school board's attorney. When CCS Board Chairman Shearra Miller announces that item on the agenda. Danny Blanton immediately raises his hand for permission to speak. Exactly the right thing at the right time for Blanton to do. But Miller, very unwisely, asks the school board for a motion to approve the contract. The motion to approve the motion is made and seconded. Then Miller asks for any discussion.

Again, Danny Blanton raises his hand for permission to speak.

And this time Miller yields the floor to Danny Blanton. Blanton's simple question was, did CCS get any other bids from other law firms to provide this service? (I suspect Danny Blanton already knew the answer to that question.) Superintendent Dr. Stephen Fisher reluctantly admitted that CCS had NOT gone out for competitive bids for this expensive contract. A flagrant violation of common sense and probably a violation of CCS Policies on top of that.

Fisher immediately goes into his "fast talking" mode. Words come out of his mouth fast and furious. Often not meaning a thing. I have noted Fisher's "fast talking" mode several times over the years in previous articles and I can tell he is working on keeping a "poker face." But, when Fisher is caught like this with no valid comment to make, he reverts to his old ways.

But not only is Fisher caught in a mess of his own making. Chairman Miller is too. And the rest of the school board!! If Miller had only recognized Danny Blanton before the motion to approve was made, even the nit-wits and nincompoops would have had enough sense to instruct Dr. Fisher to go get competitive bids and come back to the board for approval of the low bid.

But they were caught between a rock and a hard place. And the slow thinkers didn't know what to do. So, they do what they always do, like Fisher and his fast talking, they started running off at the mouth too without fully recognizing just how bad they were caught having to defend the undefendable.

What they did after some speechifying? They ended up approving the motion to approve the contract, when the right thing to have been done was to withdraw the motion and instruct Fisher to get some other bids.

But, during the speechifying noted above, school board former chairman Phillip "Bully" Glover, came on strong defending Tharrington & Smith. They had given CCS good serviced said

Glover. Along with saying that cheap legal service was OK, but you need the best when you are in a lawsuit. To that Danny Blanton asked “what kind of lawsuits are we in?” To that simple question Blanton got no answer either. The best answer, if they were truthful, would have been, we have NO lawsuits against us. But they refused to answer, knowing that-by this time-they were stuck to the Tar Baby with no way of getting loose.

The meeting went on to the Personnel Report. Again, Danny Blanton brought up the fact that lots of teachers were leaving CCS and was CCS trying to figure out why? Supt. Dr. Stephen Fisher stated that CCS DID know why the teachers were leaving and despite all Danny Blanton’s cajoling, Fisher refuses to provide those reasons. Then the nit-wits and nincompoops fired up again. Jeff Jones had some paperwork that he purported CCS was below the state average for teacher turnover-but not including the fact that the NC General Assembly and the State School Board have called for something to be done about the high teacher turnover in North Carolina. Exactly what Danny Blanton has been working on for years now. All the while Jones acknowledges that he had the paperwork, had not showed the paperwork to anybody, but would pass it along to Dr. Fisher for distribution. Of course, making the paperwork a public record that legally any member of the public has the right to see. But too late to be discussed in this meeting and likely never will be discussed. Except for the next time Danny Blanton asks this question.

Hey Jeff Jones and Supt. Dr. Stephen Fisher, I want to see those public documents. Preferably in this century please.

Then, when it came to making a motion to approve the Personnel Report, Shearra Miller added another item to the Personnel Report and asked for a motion to approve both reports with one vote. Which they did. Then, Danny Blanton reminded Chairman Miller and the other nit-wits and nincompoops that they had refused to add his three requested items to the January 28,

2019 School Board meeting Agenda, which brought an apology, sort of, from Chairman Miller.

Folks, keep on reading!! We are just now getting to the good part. Uhhh, bad part I should say as it soon became obvious that the Children of Cleveland County have been short changed of a quality education for many years. At least 15 years that school board member Roger Harris claimed that he knew about.

First, some cold hard facts:

• Various Cleveland County Officials have identified the Workforce skills and development are severely sub-standard to support the present businesses in Cleveland County
• Cleveland County Schools have been singled out as being severely sub-standard in the area of vocational training
• Up until the present, no CCS Representative has been involved with official Workforce Development issues-i.e. looking for deficiencies in the programs and fixing the deficiencies
• The Cleveland County Commissioners have recently appointed CCS School Board Member Danny Blanton to the Region C Workforce Development Board to begin the effort to improve workforce development training at CCS and also to investigate how CCS can best develop their vocational program to mesh with Cleveland Community College's Advanced Manufacturing training programs
• At the January 28, 2019 School Board meeting Board member Danny Blanton requested the first ever Region C Workforce Development report to the CCS Board be placed on the CCS Board Meeting Agenda
• The CCS School Board and Administration refused to allow Danny Blanton the opportunity to present his report and suggestions
• Three days later The Shelby Star, per information provided by the CCS Superintendent (and not reported to the CCS Board) reported that CCS had initiated a very limited and stop-gap vocational training partnership with Cleveland Community

College to begin in the 2019-2020 school year (perhaps to coincide with the 2020 School Board Elections)
• My article published Feb 4,2019 stated:
“CCS’s Fisher says free bus transportation will be available. Like there will be large numbers enrolled in the program. That is doubtful since, unless State law changes, the state mandated calendar for CCS and the Schedule for classes at CCC do not match. Therefore, thirty days or so will be lost per school year due to the difference in schedules. (Hmmmm, I wonder if this applies to all the dual enrollment courses too??? That’s a question for another day.)”

Note that my Feb 4th 2019 article was officially sent to all the School Board members and Supt. Dr. Stephen Fisher, as well as CCC, for information and comments prior to publication. I do that for every article that I write about the schools and anybody else I mention in my articles. I don’t blind-side anybody. But the underlined and “bolded” print shown above hit a spot that exposed the school board and administration’s shenanigans to the core. So much so that an item was added to the Feb 11, 2019 School Board Meeting agenda to, not fix, but hide major problems with several CCS-CCC partnerships. The problem and CCS discussion are as follows:

The obvious problem is CCS and CCC calendars DO NOT MATCH. This means that such things as the so-called dual enrollment programs, programs where high school students take college level courses include up to 30-day gaps because of this mis-matched calendar situation. Same with the Career Promise Program. And even the so-called Early College Program where high school students actually go to the LeGrand Center to take both high school AND College courses that are actually located on CCC property. Could this Early College program just be a scam to justify building the high dollar money losing LeGrand Center in the first place. With the mismatched calendar situation just being covered up.

No matter about all of that. This new CCS-CCC partnership

program CCS's Fisher conjured up would take kids from their various high schools to CCC. 30-day gap in operational schedule or not. Now exposed as a half-baked idea. But it exposed much more than that.

The item added to the Feb 11, 2019 School Board Meeting agenda was titled; 7.06 School Calendar Flexibility Resolution. A benign sounding title obviously intended to deceive casual observers. Obviously also intended to hide the foul-up from any commissioners that happen to attend the meeting. (As did Commissioner Doug Bridges and Deb Hardin. Perhaps more commissioners will be showing up to future CCS board meetings to see for themselves what is going on.)

But I am not a casual observer. When I see such as this, I see a Red Flag that indicates there is much more than meets the eye. And, in this case, there is. More on that a little later.

Folks, at this point I would suggest readers also go the CCS website and pull up the video of this meeting. Fast forward to about the 57-minute mark, The CCS Board always puts its most controversial items at the end of the meeting, hoping those in attendance would have already gone home.

Now, the Calendar gap between CCS and CCC discussion.

This item starts off with CCS Board Chairman Shearra Miller stating that CCS Supt. Fisher had drafted a letter to State Senator Ted Alexander asking for control of the CCS calendar be brought back to local authorities. Like Dr. Fisher just now discovered a problem with the calendar gap. Then Miller starts reading a resolution that accuses the NC General Assembly of "seizing control" of school calendars, "imposing a one size fits all mandate" on school calendars, etc. Basically, blaming the NC General Assembly, under Republican control, for all kinds of problems that CCS has totally created for themselves. All the while following the same old line of "resistance" proclaimed by the NC Association of School Boards (or whatever

it is called”). Not very conducive for the General Assembly to cooperate with CCS I would say.

At second glance, this so-called “Resolution” drafted by Supt. Fisher at Chairman Miller’s direction, including the accusations noted above and other more subtle language that was actually a hateful, devious and deceptive ploy by the School Board to sabotage the whole process with the General Assembly while holding hostage the vocational educational opportunity for many Cleveland County students.

Such language accusing the NC General Assembly of “Seizing Control” and “imposing mandates” and other such language in this resolution is more than just the run of the mill “resistance” as seen every day that President Donald Trump has been President. The School Board is blaming every single problem at CCS on the Republicans in the General Assembly and Danny Blanton too. If the General Assembly accepts the Resolution as is, in the name of helping in the vocational educational development of our children, politically they have “bought” the idea that they, the NC General Assembly, were the problem to begin with. If the NCGA rightly kicks back this Resolution because of the improper “political” language and the calendars are not changed, the NCGA will be blamed for depriving kids of a proper education. And, in the process, make Danny Blanton look bad for pushing such a resolution with such offensive language. There is more.

Then, and seeming to be an incredible act, Chairman Shearra Miller lays it upon Danny Blanton to get the ball rolling with getting the Commissioners, CCC, Town Mayors and others onboard with endorsing this resolution that will essentially only provide a short-term fix to long term problems at CCS. As well as provide political “hay” for attacking the Republicans in the NC General Assembly as well as any Republican candidates for the School Board in the 2020 Elections.

Many of us would, if we were in Danny Blanton’s shoes, (that

is being undercut and ignored so many times and even more so in the January 28, 2019 CCS Board meeting) might just say, let Dr. Fisher handle this. That is what all of you other Board Members say is his job. But Danny Blanton rose above all of the other Board members pettiness, for the noble purpose of trying to help the children of Cleveland County, accepted the responsibility of getting signatures on all the documents and getting the documents to Raleigh. But, in fact, Miller's actions of letting Danny Blanton handle the task of running this Resolution, "Poison Pills" and all, is clearly a planned scheme to cast blame on the NCGA as well as Danny Blanton.

But even more issues cropped up with this Resolution to resolve this school calendar "flexibility" fix that were not originally caught by anyone. It took several hours of sleepless thinking in the middle of the night to realize some of the other problems. Big problems too.

One problem that ironically came from Danny Blanton's own comments was when he stated that rearranging the school calendar to where students take tests right after the lessons would improve test scores. An example was taking exams right before the Christmas Holidays instead of after. Also so sated in one of the Resolution Whereas's. Something seemed amiss about this approach. I am sure Danny Blanton's main concern was eliminating that 30-day calendar gap and his comment on better scores was the result of improper influences as described below.

I realized that this "raising scores" or" lowering scores" concept was the major reason that a Year-Round schedule had been adopted several years ago for several failing Cleveland County schools in an artificial attempt to get their scores up. The year-round school schedule did not add one minute of additional instruction time for students. It just rearranged the failing school schedules so state mandated tests were taken right after the student were "crammed" for the tests. I also realized that many students, including myself in college,

would “cram for exams” the day (and night) before exams. Probably every student in the world has done that at one time or another.

I also began to realize that this “cram for exams” does work to get better scores on a particular test. But I also realized the “education” for our children that we pay so dearly for is for the long-term. We go to school to learn the lessons we will need and use for the rest of our individual lives. “Cramming” today for a test tomorrow is not nearly as effective as long-term learning technique based on repetition over time. Building today on what you learned yesterday. Building tomorrow on what you learn today. And so on. I soon concluded that having schools with such Year-Round schedules are actually very devious and deceptive frauds. An artificial way that test scores are only slightly raised a bit to indicate some improvement. Which only helps the school system look good to the State Board of Education and citizens too, but to the actual detriment of students who were only taught to take the test and were vulnerable to begin with. And will now be lacking in many skills for the rest of their lives.

The discussion on this “calendar flexibility” Resolution also took other twists and turns. Often to the “dark” side. And in hateful, devious and deceptive ways.

Several of the “Whereas’s” in the Resolution state that due to state mandates certain “winter graduates” will not be able to start community college or universities in the second semester. The fact is most colleges and universities have their courses laid out in a certain order. An order where you take introductory courses in the first semester mand more advanced courses after that. The fact is also that most high school students that graduate in the winter are graduating early because they have run out of high school courses to take.

All this boils down to two things:

1. The High Schools do not provide enough advanced courses for college bound students to take.
2. If this calendar flexibility resolution results in a calendar change, the students who might graduate early and then immediately enter college at the more advanced level, many more will likely flunk out of college.

And our school board is wanting to put into place measures that will increase the flunk-out rate for these college students? Wouldn't it be better to keep a full high school schedule with appropriate coursework to better prepare college students for college? Isn't that answer obvious? Yet, our school board wants to take the easy way out for them without giving a hoot about students. Is that hateful, devious and deceptive or what?

Probably the silliest "Whereas" was that Sports and Band schedules have not changed from before the so-called state mandated schedule. My thoughts on that: So what???

Probable the most cynical "Whereas" is local boards of education "are best equipped to understanding the balancing act of meeting the community's needs and maximizing student success." After attending or watching videos of every single school board meeting for over five years now, and paying attention; I would say the CCS statistic that says 46% of graduating students do not read, write and do math at proficient levels is proof enough that whatever the CCS Board Members goals really are; properly educating the children of Cleveland County is not one of them.

Now folks, after saying all of that, I would suggest that we support a CCS school calendar change as a temporary fix to help those students that are in the pipeline this very minute. The key word is TEMPORARY!!! All the while we have to demand that the CCS Board immediately review their curricula, demographics, "community needs", etc. and develop a real live strategic plan to return our Cleveland County education

system, both CCS and CCC, to the levels and standards of years back when the education system in the USA was the best in the world. To educate our children to become first class productive citizens instead of spitting out socialist sympathizing indoctrinated morons who can’t read, write and do arithmetic proficiently. Or find a job.

Cleaning house on the school board at the 2020 elections would also be a good idea. They have lost the trust of citizens. They have lost the trust of the County Commissioners who have already taken the step of removing the School Board’s authority to appoint CCC Board of Trustees. We need a school board that will work toward what is in the best interest of our children’s education and not some Raleigh based liberal-socialist political agenda.

That’s my 2 cents. Stay tuned for the news about this “calendar flexibility” stuff as it develops.