



## **May the Work That I Have Done (With Your Support) Speak For Me**

RENE FLOWERS, PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

My how time flies when you enjoy what you are doing. Since my election to the Pinellas County School Board, I have tried to implement those things the community desires, focus on moving the needle for our most struggling students, provide opportunities for our students expressing high academic rigor, advancing technical trade trainings, and serving the residents of District 7 as well as Pinellas County in any way that I can.

Last year, I was remiss in sharing just a few of the notable achievements that have occurred. While this list is not an exhaustive one, I have listed those items that were hot topics. By no means am I attempting to convey a panacea of “all is well”. Pinellas County Schools has more work to do and we are up to the challenge. I also realize that we could not have achieved many of our goals if it were not for the students doing the work, the superintendent, my colleagues, teachers, administration, support staff, and yes YOU- the community.

I have noted a few items form 2012-2017 and then 2018-2019:

2012-2017

(This is a small list of what I have been able to accomplish)

Upon the Failure Factory article, co-hosted with Terri Lipsey- Scott, a community forum regarding the actions that PCS was taking to address the problem- a problem which began in 1964 the year that I was born! A lawsuit that was filed while I was a child, continued through my education, and my children's education. <http://theweeklychallenger.com/what-to-do-about-pinellas-county-schools/>

Pushed for an increase in African American principals- we now have the highest number of African American Principals in the county.

Requested and received support for the Pilot Project for "Winning Reading Boost"- program began at Campbell Park Elementary and Lakewood Elementary Schools. Currently, students from Melrose participate in this program at the SPC Midtown Center after school.

Fought to have the Dr Carter G Woodson African American Museum as a destination approved for field trips for PCS students.

Upon my first year in the board and the revelation from the Southern Poverty Law Center (See article in the Weekly Challenger regarding meeting held at Bethel Community Church) regarding minority student suspension rates, openly agreed to, pushed for and is now protocol for a reduction in the number of days a student can be suspended. <http://theweeklychallenger.com/remedies/>

Students cannot be suspended without the principal having utilized all other exhaustive measures and receive final approval from the Area Superintendent.

Attended Restorative Justice Restorative Practices/ Implicit Bias Training in Atlanta- training format brought back to the county- process implemented county wide- a part of the regularly scheduled committee meetings to assess the improvement within the district

Hosted Restorative Justice/Restorative Practices Training for PCS SRO's at Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services, Inc. ( SPPD, Sheriff Office , and PCS School Police)  
<http://theweeklychallenger.com/restoration-instead-of-incarceration/>

**Brought back the Vyrle Davis Student Achievement Awards to recognize African American Students for their academic achievements I South County. <http://theweeklychallenger.com/vyrle-davis-student-achievement-awards/> <http://theweeklychallenger.com/the-inaugural-vyrle-davis-student-achievement-awards/>. Over \$10,000 in college scholarships awarded.**

Proposed two meetings a year off-site (one south county and one north county). Did not receive the votes to proceed. Agreed, for now, to a condensed version which ended up as the Bridging the Gap Sessions. Will continue to bring forth the proposal to have two meetings off site in the community. <http://theweeklychallenger.com/information-sessions-and-updates-regarding-education-in-pinellas-county-schools/>

Diversion programs instituted as an alternative to suspensions.

Students that are suspended receive full credit for the work completed during the suspension rather than a reduction in a letter grade

Several students who should have been expelled and directed towards Tele-School diverted to Pinellas Secondary so that they can have adult supervision during the day and progress in their studies

Enhancement of services provided at Pinellas Technical College/expanding program offerings

PCS students attend Pinellas County Technical College at no charge

Funding for PCS to assure that every school has a school nurse (funding came from Pinellas County Government and the Pinellas County Health Department)

Partnered with Congressman Charlie Crist to work on curtailing the issues surrounding teen auto thefts

Charter Board Member for JDAI (Juvenile Detention Assessment Intervention) to address juvenile detention issues, recidivism rate and Direct Filing issues.

Pushed for PCS to purchase University Preparatory Academy (UPA) when they were abandoned mid-year. School Board purchased the facility ( 3.1 million) and called for the naming of the school to reflect the community- Midtown Academy! <http://theweeklychallenger.com/we-took-a-chance-on-university-preparatory-academy/>

#### **2018-2019 Achievements**

**Successful in having two School Board Meetings per year off site in the community. Oldsmar and Gulfport were the sites for 2019. In 2020, the meetings will be at Lakewood High School and Tarpon Springs High School**

**Advocated and received support from my colleagues for the new construction of Melrose Elementary School .New Construction of Melrose Elementary School – 75,000 sq ft 18 million dollar project**

**<https://www.tampabay.com/news/education/pinellas-breaks-ground-for-new-melrose-elementary-school/2325637/>**

**Held Bidders conferences to advise minority contractors on how to become vendors for PCS projects and how to bid at Lakewood High School in 2013 and in 2018 in partnership with Pinellas County Government and the City of St. Petersburg Greenhouse project**

**Held Sub-Contractors information session at Melrose regarding contracting bids for work on Melrose Elementary School- 6 minority contractors selected <http://theweeklychallenger.com/a-fresh-start-at-midtown-academy/>**

**New construction and renovations at Lakewood High School <http://theweeklychallenger.com/a-change-can-and-does-make-a-difference/>**

**Collaborated with Safe Plans to improve the overall safety of PCS as a result of the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas Act**

**Advocated strongly for R'Club to purchase Happy Workers- R'Club now owns Happy Workers, sought and received funding to upgrade the facility, playground, enhance staff, eradicate the debt, maintain**

consistency in licensing concerns and renovate the church portion for use by the public when available all while maintaining the Historic Designation of the building.

Four of the five struggling schools improved from a State Grade of an F to a C.2019

Hiring of a Minority Affairs Officer- Lewis Brinson was selected for the position (an African American Male)

Advocated for partnerships with the "Call Me Mister" Program to recruit African American Male Teachers

Partnered with University of South Florida School of Education to recruit teachers early

Working to establish recruitment programs with Edward Waters College and FAMU for teacher recruitment

Selection of Luke Williams as Chief of Police for Pinellas County Schools

Pinellas County Schools partnered with the Homeless Emergency Project (HEP), donate land for \$1 for 99 years for the construction of a facility that will house homeless women and children

Fought for and achieved enhancements in the recruitment division with a focus on HBCU's.  
<http://theweeklychallenger.com/remedies/>

Collaborated with PERC and Mike Jalazzo to provide meals and transportation to those students on probation who are assigned to his program after school.

Implementation of the IIRP (Restorative Practices) program throughout Pinellas County Schools

Instruct a writing and speech class for the past 8 years for middle school and now high school students leading up to Black History Month presentations.

Created and lead the discussion to convert Midtown in to Midtown Academy for Cultural Arts and Gifted Studies after requesting data for the number of Black students who tested gifted- over 1400!  
2018

Sponsored a fundraiser for Midtown Academy to raise money to buy instruments for students who cannot afford them at the St Petersburg Country Club. 2018

Sponsor and purchased shirts for St. Petersburg High School Girlfriends Club

Established partnership with Advantage Village Academy and Pepsi-Cola 2018

Co-Hort to College Program at Gibbs High School. 2018

Advocated for the purchase of the Melrose Clubhouse to expand Melrose Elementary School

Signed for \$90 Million in Bonds in 2017 for the new construction of Melrose Elementary, Rehabilitation of Lakewood High School, Pinellas Park Middle School

Purchased the Melrose Women's Club

Signed for \$70 million in bonds for the continuation of the 5 Year Construction Plan for PCS

**Voted by my colleagues to serve as Chairman of the Pinellas County School Board for 2 Consecutive Years 2017-2018, 2018-2019**

**Advocacy Committee Chair for the Florida School Board Association**

**PCS Representative to the FSBA Legislative Committee**

**Held Contractor and Sub-Contractor “ How To Do Business with PCS” Sessions at Lakewood High School and Melrose Elementary School**

**Honoring the First African American Principal of Melrose Elementary School with a plaque displayed on the library (Ms. Sallie B Davis)**

**Finalist (One of 11 Finalist from all over the United States) for the 2019 Green Garner Urban Educator Award via Great City Schools)**

**Purchased a Washer and Dryer for Fairmont Park to wash student’s clothes**

**Provided training for Young Entrepreneurs via the 2020 Program**

**Serve on the SCLC MLK Planning Team**

**Raised \$10,000 for the MLK Parade (2019)**

**Fought the ousting of seniors from Senior Village by the St. Pete Housing Authority Executive Director**

**Fought the plan to destroy the apartment units in Jordan Park known as Senior Village**

**Worked to save the Dr. Carter G Woodson Museum from takeover, purchase/demolition**

## **Pinellas County Schools Student Stats**

**Graduation Rate- 88.44% (up 2.44 percent from last year and 16.5% since 2013)**

**Graduation Rate for Black Students- 81.3% up 5.1% from last year and 25 points from 2013**

**Achievement Gap shrunk to 8.7% from 11.9%. Six years ago the Achievement Gap was 18%**

### **Graduation Rate By Schools In South Pinellas County**

**Boca Ciega High School- 94.7%**

**Gibbs High School- 88.5%**

**Lakewood High School- 96.1%**

**Volunteered time to collect signatures for Amendment 4**

**Working with Esme Rodriguez to bring light to LGBTQ Youth Bullying issues in PCS**

**Support and perform for Jai Henson in the Chocolate Nutcracker and now the Family Blessing**

## **Actively Involved In Several Community Organization Affiliations**

Zeta Upsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Pinellas County Urban League Guild (former President)

Greater Metropolitan Section of the National Council of Negro Women (**NCNW**)

Advantage Village Academy (MLK Commemorative Parade Committee)

2020 Pinellas County Census Complete Count Vice Chair, Youth, Education and Aging Committee Chair

Greater Pinellas Democratic Club

South St. Petersburg Democratic Club

St. Petersburg Democratic Club

Pinellas County Democratic Black Caucus

National Organization for Women (**NOW**)

Ruth's List

Eckerd College Alumni Association

Capella University Honor Society

Greater Florida Consortium

Member of the Steward Board at Greater Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church

Paid Dues Member of the St. Petersburg Branch of the NAACP

While I cannot be everywhere at once, I have certainly made every effort to respond to the concerns and requests of the community. In addition, I have tried to remain in touch with the very prestigious and notable organizations, large or small – all of whom are doing great work to help all residents in Pinellas County? I am thankful and grateful for the ability to serve as your current Pinellas County School Board Member, District 7.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Rene Y Robinson-Flowers