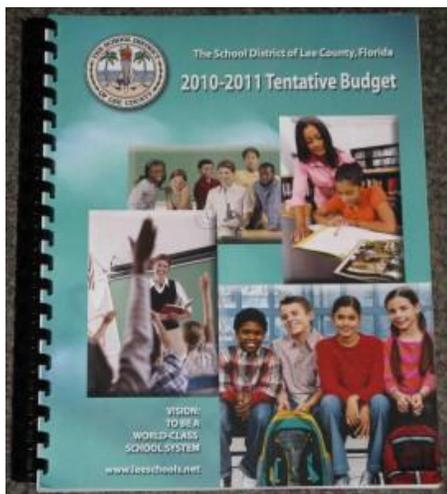




## Nice sweater, kid, but this is Southwest Florida

When I received a copy of the school district's 2010-11 tentative budget book, its glossy cover struck my eye. Something didn't quite look right.

The teachers depicted looked a little too perfect. The students were a tad too photogenic, but certainly had the demographic base covered: white, black, Hispanic and Asian. But hey, maybe the school district spent a little extra time arranging this year's cover shot, I thought, and wanted diverse photos to reflect Lee County's growing diversity.



And then I looked a little closer. Several students were wearing sweaters (it's Florida — that's a fashion faux pas). In the background, there was an old-fashioned green chalkboard (whiteboards have long since replaced green chalkboards in Lee classrooms). Then the kicker — the “school” depicted had wire mesh security windows (like the kind you'd see in an urban school up North). And is that snow outside?

My hunch was right; those aren't Lee County children or local teachers on the cover; they are stock photos plucked from an out-of-state company's image collection. The school district has almost 82,000 children and 5,000 teachers at its disposal, but its tentative budget book features models from some unknown locale.

So I approached school officials for an explanation.

According to budget director Ami Desamours, the school district produced all 75 interior pages, then shipped the file to Minuteman Press of Fort Myers for a mass printing. It was Minuteman that designed the cover, Desamours said, and the cover photos weren't a concern so “long as the price we paid for the books was low.” The district paid \$5 per budget book for 50 copies. The school board will approve the final 2010-11 budget on Tuesday, so another set of budget books will be printed in the next few days.

It's not the first time district materials have used stock photos. Some previous budget books and annual reports also featured images bought from other sources.

So what do you think? Should the school district feature Lee County children on its publications? Please leave your comments in the reply box below.