

Ms. Evelyn Langlieb Greer, Board Member

**SUBJECT: REQUEST TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE AUTISM TASK
FORCE**

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO DISTRICT

STRATEGIC PLAN: IMPROVE AND EXPAND CURRENT CURRICULUM

The Autism Task Force was created by the Board on July 11, 2007, and the members of the Committee were appointed on August 9, 2007. The Committee has met on August 27, 2007, September 18, 2007 and September 25, 2007. The Report of such Task Force is required to be presented to the Board at the December 2007 Board meeting.

In order to keep the Board advised as to the discussions and progress of the independent Autism Task Force, attached please find the Committee members roster and the Agenda and Minutes of the three meetings held to date.

The next meeting of the Autism Task Force is scheduled for October 9, 2007 at 10 am.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

EVELYN LANGLIEB GREER: That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida:

1. Receive information on the Autism Task Force.

AUTISM TASK FORCE ROSTER

Ms.	Evelyn	Greer	Board Member
Mr.	Renier	Diaz de la Portilla	Board Member
Mr.	Will	Gordillo	Administrative Director, Division of Special Education
Dr.	Ann	Sasseville	Instructional Supervisor, Programs for Students with Autism
Ms.	Kathy	Maguire	Regional Instructional Supervisor
Ms.	Aida	Marrero	Principal
Ms.	Adrienne	Green	Staff member
Ms.	Lidia	Carbonell	Teacher
Mr.	Joselin	Cabrera	Teacher
Mr.	Ed	Brown	Staff person Special Education funding
Dr.	Michael	Alessandri	Director & Clinical Professor of Psychology
Ms.	Teresa	Becerra	President and Parent, Autism Society of Miami
Ms.	Jackie	Merens	South Florida Regional Director, Autism Speaks
Mr.	Angel	Zayon	Parent
Ms.	Yolanda	Gonzalez	Parent

AUTISM TASK FORCE

Fall 2007

Monday, August 27, 2007

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

1450 NE 2nd Avenue, Miami, Florida, Room 726

I. Call to Order

II. Introduction of Panel Members and Visitors

Review of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Board Item H-6
Establishing the Autism Spectrum Disorder Task Force

The purpose of the Task Force is to review the current programs offered by M-DCPS, to review best practices around the country at other public and private educational institutions and to make recommendations for changes in M-DCPS programs and practices, as may be necessary or advisable and to prepare a roadmap for parents, to be posted on the M-DCPS website, setting forth clearly the steps the federal and state guidelines the District implements in identifying ASD children, offering programs to ASD children, developing criteria used to establish Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) and placement options, and providing the Summary of Procedural safeguards for Parents of Students with Disabilities which outlines the procedures for resolving conflicts.

III. Selection of Chairperson

IV. What Does MDCPS Offer Today: Presentation of Current Services Offered to
Autism Spectrum Disorder Students

Mr. Will Gordillo, Administrative Director, Division of Special Education

Dr. Ann Marie Sasseville, Instructional Supervisor, Programs for Students

V. What Can MDCPS Do Better: Discussion of Current Issues in Autism Disorder
Spectrum Treatment

VI. Determine Dates for Future Meetings

VII. Review of By Laws

VIII. Adjournment

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
AUTISM TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

9:00a.m. to 11:00a.m.
1450 Northeast Second Avenue
SBAB Conference Room 726

Excerpts from Unofficial Minutes of the August 27, 2007 Autism Task Force Meeting

1. 9:13 a.m. – The meeting was called to order.
2. Introductions of all present were made. Attendees listed below;
 - Ms. Diane Adreon, UM/NSU CARD
 - Dr. Michael Alessandri, University of Miami
 - Ms. Viviana Arias, Staff Liaison (Will Gordillo)
 - Ms. Rosa M. Barbara, Parent
 - Ms. Teresa Becerra, Autism Society of Miami
 - Mr. Leslie Bowe, M-DCPS
 - Mr. Ed Brown, M-DCPS
 - Ms. Nora Bueno, AP, Kinloch Park Middle
 - Mr. Joselin Cabrera, M-DCPS
 - Ms. Lidia Carbonell, M-DCPS
 - Ms. Shebah Carfagne, Parent, ESE Advisory Board
 - Ms. Fran Collette, Superintendents Advisory Panel
 - Ms. Ana N. Craft, Board Attorney's Office
 - Ms. Isabel C. Garcia, Parent to Parent of Miami
 - Ms. Yolanda Gonzales, Parent
 - Mr. Will Gordillo, M-DCPS
 - Ms. Evelyn Greer, Board Member, M-DCPS
 - Mr. Keith Ivory, Parent
 - Ms. Karin Jawitz, Parent
 - Ms. Ana Laria, M-DCPS
 - Ms. Susan Lauredo, Parent
 - Ms. Mary Lawson, School Board Attorney's Office
 - Ms. Kathy Maguire, M-DCPS
 - Ms. Aida Marrero, M-DCPS
 - Ms. Dolores Mendoza, M-DCPS Pre-K Disabilities
 - Ms. Jaclyn Merens, Autism Speaks
 - Ms. Tina McAlpin, M-DCPS Pre-K Program for Disabilities
 - Ms. Mindy McNichols, School Board Attorney's Office
 - Ms. Noslen Penaranda, SPED
 - Mr. Carlos Saladrigas, Parent
 - Dr. Ann Marie Sasseville, M-DCPS
 - Mr. Richard Tapia, M-DCPS
 - Ms. Kathy Velazquez, Pre-K SPED District
 - Dr. Angel Velez-Diaz, Psychologist, M-DCPS ASD
 - Ms. Marie-Ilene Whitehurst, Parent

3. Ms. Evelyn Greer, Board Member, extended an apology for the absence of Mr. Renier Diaz de la Portilla, Board Member.
4. This meeting was held because the School Board authorized the creation of an Autism Task Force (Item H-6) due to an increase in enrollment of student with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorders) in schools nationally, and to provide a report of the outcome of such by the end of November for the December 2007 School Board meeting in order to include requests prior to the budget mapping meetings.
5. The Autism Task Force was given the following tasks:
 - a. A review of the current programs offered by M-DCPS;
 - b. A review of the best practices around the country at other public and private educational institutions;
 - c. Making recommendations for changes in M-DCPS programs and practices, as may be necessary or advisable.
 - d. Overseeing the preparation of a roadmap for parents, to be posted on the M-DCPS website.

6. Nominations for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson – Dr. Michael Alessandri of the University of Miami volunteered for Chairperson; Mr. Will Gordillo of SPED volunteered for Vice-Chair; Board Member Evelyn Greer moved the selections, seconded by Ms. Jaclyn Merens, South Florida Regional Director, Autism Speaks.

ACTION
Selection of Chair and Vice-Chair
 Dr. Michael Alessandri – Chair
 Mr. Will Gordillo – Vice Chair
 MOVED: Ms. Evelyn Greer
 SECONDED: Ms. Jaclyn Merens

7. Acknowledgement of new Chair and Vice-Chair by Evelyn Greer.
8. The meeting was turned over to Dr. Michael Alessandri, Chair, Autism Task Force by Ms. Evelyn Greer, Board Member.
9. A report to the Board to be prepared and reviewed by Tuesday, November 13, 2007.
10. Introduction of ASD presentation by Mr. Will Gordillo included the starting point of self contained classes in a special day school for ASD students in the 1970's run by an organization active at the time named The South Florida Society for Autistic Children. Many of the students served in this special day school were introduced to the public school system for the very first time in the mid seventies. He noted the tremendous growth of students diagnosed with ASD over the years and highlighted that M-DCPS currently serves over 1,700 ASD students.
11. A Pre-K presentation was made by Dolores Mendoza, Instructional Supervisor, representing Roni Bader-Tables, Executive Director.
12. The biggest issue is that most children served in Pre-K are labeled developmentally delayed instead of ASD due to the difficulty in the diagnosis of very young children.
13. There was an overview of what is offered by M-DCPS in Pre-K for students with ASD.
14. Half-day programs are also available for those turning 3 years of age or those students with a milder form of ASD.
15. Most self contained classes will have a few role models to develop and improve students' social skills.
16. Educating Children with Autism, a book by the National Research Council, was recommended as a guiding foundation for students with ASD.

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON
AND IMPROVE

17. Dr. Alessandri, Chair, Autism Task Force, expressed the need to implement effective screening and diagnostic tools to allow for early identification and appropriate diagnosis to better serve our students as well as more seamless Pre-K to Kindergarten transition programs (e.g., Kindergarten programs comparable to LEAP Pre-K model).
18. Kathy Velasquez gave explanations of "TEACCH" and "LEAP" programs that help build social skills and language development for students and offer "Positive Parenting Practices" a nine week parent training.
19. The LEAP model is being studied in Minnesota, Colorado, North Carolina, and Florida.
20. K-12 presentation was introduced by Vice Chair, Mr. Will Gordillo, Administrative Director, Division of Special Education. He provided a historical perspective on the provision of educational and related services to students with ASD in M-DCPS.
21. Overall there has been a decrease in population of students with disabilities being served, however, the population growth in the ASD category has been exceptional.
22. K-12 presentation was made by Ann Marie Sasseville, Instructional Supervisor, ASD.
23. Service to students with ASD has expanded over the years.
24. Highlight of programs, changes and growth.
 - a. Emphasis was placed on 2 intensive program schools for Residential/Step Down and prevention; Robert Renick and Ruth Owens Krusé Educational Centers
 - b. MAPS – Inclusive model at Palmetto Sr. and Hiialeah Sr. aligned with the regular school academics.
 - c. Project Victory – Work Experience and on the job training.
 - d. ACCEPT – Self contained college classes at Miami-Dade.
 - e. BRIDGE – Targeting students that like to work outdoors (i.e. recreational management, parks, etc.)
 - f. Parent training.
 - g. New Total Communication programs.
 - h. Full inclusion programs for Art, P.E., Music, and Lunch.
 - i. Wraparound program that goes from full inclusion to resource room.
25. Acknowledgement of collaboration from UM/CARD, Autism Speaks, the Autism Society of Miami-Dade, and the YMCA.
26. End of Presentation.
27. Chair, Dr. Michael Alessandri, opened discussion with a question:
 - "What can M-DCPS do better?"
28. Board member, Ms. Evelyn Greer, highlighted email requests to create a place to find all information related to Autism on the webpage or make it easier to access.
29. Ms. Laura Bueno, AP, Kinloch Park Middle, stated that middle schools are lacking transitioning programs for kids on the spectrum and that parents have expressed a high level of difficulty to go through and understand the IEP process.
30. The Chair, Dr. Alessandri agreed and expressed the need to focus on transitioning programs.

31. Guest-parent expressed the need to support integration to the work force.
32. Vice-Chair, Will Gordillo, explained that transition specialists are available in all schools for integration support and for post school links.
33. Ms. Jacklin Merens questioned whether any entity follows up on the employment of students with ASD once they leave the schools.
34. Chair – FDOE tracks whether they are employed but not which programs they went through and the employment ratio of each.
35. Dr. Ann Marie Sasseville explained that the agencies for transition pick up at age 22 and M-DCPS is no longer funded or involved with the students but that M-DCPS does prepare students very well long before graduation.
36. Ms. Evelyn Greer, Board Member suggested to create a generic letter perhaps at age 16 to register students for agency transitions in order to smooth the overall process.
37. Parents and guests expressed their following concerns;
 - a. Lack of parent education and suggested to form a parent education group/subcommittee.
 - b. Spend less time on FAB's and more time on the student.
 - c. Offer more accessible and rewarding trainings for teachers.
 - d. Offer training and preparation for our students to enter the workforce.
38. The Autism Task Force decided to focus on these main topics in future meetings.
 - a. Training
 - b. Communication and Language
 - c. Transition Outreach
 - d. Parent participation
39. Future meetings were agreed upon and scheduled for Tuesday's every other week and between 10:00a.m. – 12:00p.m.
40. Communication of future meeting dates was suggested to be conducted through a variety of methods such as email, website posting, flyers, Connect ED (prerecorded telephone messages to parents) and announcements at the upcoming District meetings.
41. Future meeting dates agreed upon;
 - September 11, 2007
 - September 25, 2007
 - October 9, 2007
 - October 23, 2007
 - November 13, 2007
42. All present agreed to address one topic at a time in subsequent meetings.
43. 11:10 a.m. – The meeting adjourned.

**ISSUES TO FOCUS ON
UPCOMING MEETINGS**

M-DCPS Autism Task Force

Tuesday, September 18, 2007

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

1450 NE 2nd Avenue, Miami, Florida, Room 726

- | | | |
|------|---|----------|
| I. | Call to Order, Introductions, & Brief Video | 10:00 AM |
| II. | Approval of Minutes from 8/27/07 | 10:05 AM |
| III. | Brief Review of Outreach Efforts | 10:10 AM |
| | a. M-DCPS Autism Task Force Website | |
| | b. CARD | |
| | c. Autism Society of Miami-Dade | |
| | d. Autism Speaks | |
| IV. | Brief Review of Task Force Priorities and Goals | 10:20 AM |
| V. | Task Force Organizational Structure | 10:30 AM |
| | a. Communication | |
| | b. Roles & Responsibilities | |
| | c. Subcommittee Formation | |
| | d. Report Writing | |
| VI. | Parental Involvement | 10:45 AM |
| | a. Defining Task Force Objective Related to this Item | |
| | b. M-DCPS Successes Related to Parental Involvement | |
| | c. Barriers to Parental Involvement | |
| | d. Possible Solutions | 11:00 AM |
| VII. | Wrap Up & Adjournment | 11:50 AM |

Next Meeting: September 25, 2007

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
AUTISM TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

10:00a.m. to 12:00p.m.
1450 Northeast Second Avenue
SBAB Conference Room 726

Excerpts from Unofficial Minutes of the September 18, 2007 Autism Task Force Meeting

1. 10:09 a.m. Meeting was called to order.
2. Dr. Alessandri expressed Ms. Evelyn Greer, and Mr. Renier Diaz de la Portilla, Board Members, could not attend.
3. Introduction of all members present.

Dr. Michael Alessandri, University of Miami
Ms. Teresa Becerra, Autism Society of Miami
Mr. Ed Brown, M-DCPS
Mr. Joselin Cabrera, M-DCPS
Ms. Lidia Carbonell, M-DCPS
Ms. Yolanda Gonzalez, Parent
Mr. Will Gordillo, M-DCPS

Ms. Adrienne Green
Ms. Kathy Maguire, M-DCPS
Ms. Aida Marrero, M-DCPS
Ms. Jaclyn Merens, Autism Speaks
Dr. Ann Marie Sasseville, M-DCPS
Mr. Angel Zayon, Parent

List of guests attending:

Ms. Diane Adreon, UM/NSU CARD
Ms. Alyssa A Alicea, Parent
Mr. Pedro Alvarez, Hope for Autism
Ms. Marianeia Alvarez, Parent
Ms. Regina Anderson, Parent
Ms. Mary Ann Keeling, Parent
Ms. Viviana Arias, Staff Liaison (Will Gordillo)
Ms. Rosa M Barbara, Parent
Mr. Eduardo A Blanco
Ms. Maria Blanco, Parent/Hope for Autism
Mr. Leslie Bowe, M-DCPS
Ms. Cristina Canales, Parent
Ms. Lourdes Darias, Parent
Ms. Cristina Ferrero, Parent
Ms. Julie Figueredo, Parent
Ms. Maria Flores, Parent/Hope for Autism
Ms. Sandra Flores, Parent/Hope for Autism
Ms. Christina Garcia, M-DCPS Curriculum Support for Inclusion
Mr. Juan Garcia, Parent
Ms. Mercedes Gavilan, Grandmother/Hope for Autism
Mr. Reynaldo Gavilan Jr. Uncle/Hope for Autism
Mr. Reynaldo Gavilan Sr. Grandfather/Hope for Autism
Ms. Iliana Hernandez, FDLRS
Ms. Allison Hertog
Ms. Grisel Hurtado, Parent
Mr. Keith Ivory, Parent
Ms. Agata Jacek, Parent
Ms. Karin Jawitz, Parent

Ms. Susan Laredo, Parent/Chairperson for Advocacy M Dade Autism Speaks
Ms. Ivette Lopez, Parent
Ms. Ruby Mac Namara
Ms. Marilyn Machado, Parent
Ms. Dolores Mendoza, M-DCPS Pre-K
Ms. Sandy Moise, Dean, The Parent Academy
Ms. Shannon Mora, Parent to Parent of Miami
Ms. Amy Mora-Perez, Autism Support
Ms. Christin Mueller
Ms. Suzanne Murray, Autism Support
Ms. Noslen Penaranda, SPED
Ms. Ofelia Salazar, Parent
Ms. Maria Salomon, Parent
Ms. Eileen Sanchez, Parent/Hope for Autism
Ms. Anabel Serralta, Parent
Ms. Lina Spalding Ramsay, Autism Support
Mr. Jorge Stelling, Parent
Ms. Christina Sullivan, Social Worker, Autism
Ms. Anne Thompson, Office of Parental Involvement
Ms. Karen Uhle, Teacher, M-DCPS
Ms. Luz Valle, Parent/Hope for Autism
Ms. Kathy Velazquez, M-DCPS Pre-K Autism Support
Dr. Angel Velez-Diaz, M-DCPS Autism Spectrum
Ms. Cassie Venedicto, Parent
Mr. Jose Venedicto, Parent
Ms. Patricia Visurna, Hope for Autism
Ms. Marie Ilene Whitehurst, Parent

4. Dr. Alessandri informs everyone that Ms. Greer has asked Mr. Ed Brown, Executive Director, M-DCPS schools budget, to present in one of the Autism Task Force future meetings possibly the first meeting to be held in October.
5. Introduction of Mr. Keith Ivory, parent/presenter was made; a 5 minute video about autism was played with the hopes it will be placed on the ATF webpage to help all that are in one way or another related with Autistic students.

6. Motion to approve the "Minutes for the August 27, 2007, Autism Task Force meeting."
 - MOVED—Yolanda Gonzalez, Parent/ ATF Member
 - SECONDED—Lidia Carbonell, MDCPS/ATF Member
 - APPROVED—Dr. Michael Alessandri, University of Miami/ATF Chair

ACTION TAKEN
August 27, 2007 Autism Task Force meeting minutes "Approval."
 MOVED: Ms. Yolanda Gonzalez
 SECONDED: Ms. Lidia Carbonell
 APPROVED: Dr. Michael Alessandri

7. Introduction was made for the newly created Autism Task Force website previously requested at the August 27, 2007 meeting. Points highlighted were;
 - Website address: atf.dadeschools.net.
 - Where to find meeting information such as agenda, minutes, and presentations.
 - Accessibility to contact the Task Force through the link.
 - Parent Flyer link with meeting postings.

RESOLVED ISSUE/S
August 27, 2007 request to create an Autism Task Force website was successfully completed
 Web Address: atf.dadeschools.net

8. Dr. Michael Alessandri, Ms. Teresa Becerra and Ms. Jaclyn Merens have also been reaching out to all about the Task Force Meetings through their respective agencies (CARD, ASMDC, Autism Speaks).
9. Mr. Gordillo, Vice Chair, announced they were able to reach 2,400 parents by telephone, via Connect Ed, to inform them about the Task Force Meeting dates.
10. 10:28 a. m. Dr. Alessandri acknowledged the arrival of Mr. Zayon, ATF member.

IMPROVEMENT

11. Dr. Alessandri asked for volunteers to Chair & Co-Chair several workgroups/subcommittees for the ATF.
 - Ms. Kathy Maguire volunteered for Chair of subcommittee reporting on MDCPS autism programs.
 - Ms. Adrienne Green volunteered for Co-Chair.
 - Ms. Teresa Becerra volunteered for Chair of subcommittee reporting on recommendations for enhancing parent involvement.
 - Ms. Jaclyn Merens and Ms. Yolanda Gonzalez also volunteered to serve on this subcommittee.
 - Dr. Alessandri volunteered, with the assistance of Dr. Sasseville, to Chair the subcommittee reviewing best practices around the country for purposes of submitting a report to the Board with recommendations going forward.

ACTION TAKEN
Formation of a Sub-Committee group for the Autism Task Force Volunteers;
 CHAIR: Kathy Maguire
 CO-CHAIR: Adrienne Green

CO-CHAIR (Parent Involvement):
 Teresa Becerra
VOLUNTEERS: Jaclyn Merens and Yolanda Gonzalez

CHAIR: (Best Practices Review)
 Dr. Michael Alessandri and
 Dr. Ann Marie Sasseville

12. Dr. Alessandri with the assistance of Dr. Sasseville will do a review of best practices around the country for purposes of submitting a report to the Board with

recommendations going forward. Additionally parent involvement will be taken care of by Jaclyn Merens and Teresa Becerra with the assistance of others.

13. Drafts of reports to the Board need to be prepared with all the recommendations.
14. Superintendent's District Advisory Panel booklet was distributed to members as a guide on how to write a report to the Board by Mr. Gordillo.
15. Parental involvement was stressed by the Chair and Ms. Yolanda Gonzalez went over an email she had sent the Chair about her interest in improvement and involvement.
16. Ms. Teresa Becerra suggested a parent liaison for each school for more parent involvement and improvement.

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON
AND IMPROVE

- Question: Would parent to parent liaisons be involved in more than providing info?
- Answer: Parent to Parent explained what liaisons do and how they assist parents by simply guiding them on where to go and what to do to resolve issues accordingly. When legal service is required they refer parents elsewhere but are usually able to resolve issues by informing parents of the right steps to take. (60% of the requests Parent-to-Parent receives are from parents of students with Autism)

17. Parent highlighted the success of the program at Blue Lakes Elementary.

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON
AND IMPROVE

18. Parent expressed everyone wants to be involved but fear retaliation;

- Question: How does MDCPS see them as concerned parents?
- Answer: Anne Thompson stated "We are there to help."

19. Parent dislikes that her daughter is being taught in the most restrictive way instead of in a free environment.

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON
AND IMPROVE

20. Parent/ATF member, expressed his daughter does not want to go to school because they make them feel bad in school. Stated the system is not providing answers and it shows that the system is against the kids;

- Question: Is there a legal team that can explain how to go about solving problems or can we create one?
- Answer: Co-Chair explained, this is governed through the Individuals with Disabilities Act. We do have an attorney, Ms. Mary Lawson who is the representative and normally attends these meetings. After a decision is made on an IEP, if parent is not in agreement they may participate in mediation, which is informal and non-litigious, or they may request an impartial due process hearing.

21. Parent requested translation services for those who do not speak English.

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON
AND IMPROVE

- When asked whether this was feasible, Mr. Leslie Bowe responded that yes this is.
- Mr. Will Gordillo suggested that if there are any persons in the room that speak Haitian-Creole that translation services also be available to them.

22. Parent expressed that she does not feel the system is against our kids but there is no commitment from staff and administrators. She suggested that they receive training and

also expressed her concern with bureaucracy by stating; "The kids are stuck in a bureaucracy, the solutions are not fast enough."

23. Vice Chair stated that your concerns and suggestions are appreciated; there is always room for improvement.

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON
AND IMPROVE

24. Member, Jaclyn Merens, agrees with the provisions of more administrative training.

25. Parent mentioned the need to change "the attitude as a parent and come up with ideas instead" she suggested we need to acknowledge good programs and good teachers. She took the opportunity to acknowledge Parent Academy.

26. Sandy Moise, Dean, Parent Academy shared information about parent resources and that they will be having a Family Day on the 24th at FDLRS-North. She suggested Connect Ed targeted calls to reach parents about workshops and other informative meetings.

OTHER RELATED
MEETING

27. Ann Thompson of the Office of Parental Involvement informed of their end of month "Creating Friendliness in Schools" event at Miami Children's Museum on Saturday.

OTHER RELATED
MEETING

28. Parent felt there were adequate allocations for programs but there is a wall and mentioned the need for a good liaison, not just someone that would stand there and not help.

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON
AND IMPROVE

➤ Parent and ATF member suggested it to be someone from administration.

➤ Parent objected stating that the wall would still be there if that were the case.

29. Vice chair stated that Bilingual ESE offers a lot of training for parents and provided examples.

30. Parent requested assistance in Math be provided to the students.

31. ATF Chair informed there is a manual being developed by CARD that would inform teachers of various Reading, Writing and Math educational programs to facilitate learning and instruction in these areas.

32. Ileana Hernandez from FDLRS states they target parents of young students and inform about the importance of being involved and about CARD, Autism Society of Miami Dade, Autism Speaks, and their resources. As a parent she also saw the barriers of communication to the schools but in 20 years in the system has never seen so much information and training available.

IMPROVEMENT

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON
AND IMPROVE

33. The chair ask of parents and everyone involved to think of creative ways to get the info to parents such as online trainings, public access TV and more.

34. Parent feels a solution would be to have a specialized school for students with ASD..

➤ Dr. Alessandri explained how the Federal Government doesn't agree since the law states that students have to be educated in their home schools if appropriate and in the least restrictive way.

- Ann Marie Sasseville stated how MDCPS already has mini clusters throughout schools and this helps Inclusion whenever possible since these clusters are housed at home/proximity schools.
35. Parent said there is no appropriate placement for students when there are not enough students of the same high functioning level in a school. She suggested grouping by ability and behavior.
- Chair explained how the families of low functioning students are just as concerned and want their children exposed to other higher functioning peers.
36. Parent – Susan Lauredo, expressed how funding was approved for Fast ForWord a program that was piloted and her son was able to take advantage of. "He soared after the taking this program." she said, but the program was acquired with 10 licenses at that time and only 1 student (her son) was placed in it.
37. The Chair calls for a wrap-up of the meeting were members and guests provide ideas:
- Ms. Merens – Break down walls and bring together parents, principals and paraprofessionals.
 - Mr. Zayon – Hold meetings after school to make more accessible for all.
 - Mr. Brown – Communication is a big factor, we need to keep that. He stated that 1/3 of the money distributed to schools comes to the tri-county, Broward-Dade-Palm Beach. He encouraged everyone to speak with their legislators and be informed when voting.
 - Mr. Cabrera – We can work together so that teachers from a close proximity of a Center school can inform of students feeding into the Center school this way the student is noticed before they even come in. Everyone can work together to disseminate information to our feeder pattern.
 - Ms. Carbonell – An educated consumer is our best customer. Professionals working with the students know the students, parents need to trust professionals and assist them in improving.
 - Ms. Maguire – Break down the perception, whether there was a bad experience, it needs to be put behind and move forward to help the students.
 - Ms. Becerra – There will be a Town hall meetings at Miami Children's Hospital October, 4th and November 5th to inform parents that are not able to come to the ATF meetings.
 - Ms. Marrero – Attitude is a must and we need to work as a team.
 - Ms. Gonzalez – Continue to come to the meetings and let others know (advocate) and give your children a voice.
 - Mr. Will Gordillo – Heard important concerns and good recommendations threaded through a common theme that will help us improve our program and

come up with some good recommendations. We need to work together to remove the barriers and to create a more parent friendly school system, whenever this is not the case; we need to know to be able to change it.

➤ Dr. Alessandri – Stay engaged, next meeting will be next Tuesday same place.

38. 12:15 p.m. – The meeting adjourned.

M-DCPS Autism Task Force

Tuesday, September 25, 2007

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

1450 NE 2nd Avenue, Miami, Florida, Room 726

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|------|--|----------|
| I. | Call to Order & Introductions | 10:00 AM |
| II. | Approval of Minutes from 9/18/07 | 10:05 AM |
| III. | Review and Synthesis of Parent Involvement
Recommendations/Suggestions from 9/18/07 Meeting | 10:10 AM |
| IV. | Discussion of Transition of Students with ASD | 10:30 AM |
| | a. Selection of Transition Subcommittee Chairperson | |
| | b. Existing M-DCPS Transition Services and Supports | |
| | c. Documented Transition Outcomes | |
| | d. Barriers to Successful Transition | |
| | e. Possible Solutions | |
| V. | Adjournment | 11:50 AM |

Next Meeting: October 9, 2007