

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, September 25, 2007, October 9, 2007, October 23, 2007 and November 13, 2007.

In order to keep the Board advised as to the discussions and progress of this independent Autism Task Force, attached please find the Minutes of the October 9, 2007, October 23, 2007 and November 13, 2007 Committee meetings.

A final report of the Autism Task Force is scheduled for December 19, 2007 Board meeting.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

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

1. Receive information on the Autism Task Force.

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 October 9, 2007 Autism Task Force Meeting

1. Introduction of all members present.

Dr. Michael Alessandri, University of Miami	Ms. Adrienne Green
Ms. Teresa Becerra, Autism Society of Miami	Ms. Evelyn Greer
Mr. Ed Brown, M-DCPS	Ms. Kathy Maguire, M-DCPS
Mr. Joselin Cabrera, M-DCPS	Ms. Aida Marrero, M-DCPS
Ms. Lidia Carbonell, M-DCPS	Ms. Jackie Merens, Autism Speaks
Mr. Renier Diaz de la Portilla, Board Member	Dr. Ann Marie Sasseville, M-DCPS
Ms. Yolanda Gonzalez, Parent	Mr. Angel Zayon, Parent
Mr. Will Gordillo, M-DCPS	

ACTION TAKEN

10:07 am

Meeting was called to order

List of guests attending:

Mr. Pedro Alvarez, Parent	Ms. Mindy McNichols, School Board Attorney's Office
Ms. Marianela Alvarez, Parent	Ms. Ruby Mac Namara, Parent
Ms. Claudia Amechazuna, Parent	Ms. Amy Mora-Perez, M-DCPS Autism Support
Ms. Shebah Carfagna, Parent	Ms. Christin Mueller, Florida School Partners
Ms. Olimpia Ceballos, Parent	Ms. Angela Obrégon, M-DCPS
Mr. Sean Clancy, Parent	Ms. Myian Orta, Parent
Ms. Fran Collette, Superintendent Advisory Panel	Ms. Maria D. Perez, Parent / SPED Teacher
Ms. Amy de la Cruz-Munoz, Parent	Ms. Eileen Sanchez, Parent
Ms. Sharon Fedor, M-DCPS Autism Spectrum	Mr. Jorge Stelling, Parent
Mr. Eddy Flores, Parent	Mr. Alex Suarez, Parent
Ms. Sandra Flores, Parent	Ms. Christine Tiralla, Parent
Mr. Juan Garcia, Parent	Mr. Steve Tiralla, Parent
Ms. Allison Hertog, Florida School Partners	Ms. Kathy Velazquez, M-DCPS Pre-K Autism Support
Mr. Orin Jacobs, Parent	Dr. Angel Velez-Diaz, M-DCPS Autism Spectrum
Ms. Susan Marie Kairalla, Parent/Florida School Choice	Ms. Patricia Visurna, Hope for Autism
Ms. Susan Lauredo, Parent/Chairperson for Advocacy M Dade Autism Speaks	Ms. Hercilia Zayon, Parent
Ms. Mary Lawson, School Board Attorney's Office	

2. Dr. Alessandri introduced the 2 topics for the meeting:

- Budget for students with disabilities at Miami-Dade County Public Schools.
- Professional Development for teachers of students with disabilities.

3. Presentations:

- Ed Brown, Executive Director, Budget Office, gave us an overview of the student population. Last year's loss 11,500 students, this year it is 8,500.
- Bill McAuliff, Supervisor, Budget Office, passed out handout (see Attachment A).
Explained the process with Florida.

1. In Special Education we look at contact hours of students converted into FTE (Full Time Equivalent).
2. Based on the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) that funds Special Education based on the ESE Matrix for 2 support levels 4 and 5 (254, and 255 on the Matrix).

3. Any students in regular classes, are reported under general education teacher are paid at the basic rate.

➤ Judith Marte, Chief Budget Officer, discussed the analysis of ESE Funded Programs 2002-03 through 2006-07.

IDEA Grant Supplement

- Seek Federal dollars to supplement for the additional needs. IDEA grant funds 70 million. There was a 1% cut this year, over 83% of the grant is spent in salaries for personnel providing support to programs for students with disabilities such as program specialists, behavior management teachers, one-to-one paraprofessionals, bus aides etc.
- State and federal dollars utilization were discussed.
- Other funds discussed were: IDEA, Pre-K, and other sources such as the The Florida Diagnostic Learning Resources (FDLRS), Florida Inclusion Network (FIN), SEDNET, and SchoolWide positive behavioral support.
 - COMMENT: Dr. Alessandri asked how much does it cost to educate students with ASD?
 - RESPONSE: Ms. Marte said that the Budget Office would work with Mr. Gordillo's Office to create a report.
 - Mr. Gordillo, explained that IDEA funds supplement salaries. The escalating cost for One to One Paraprofessionals has been a great expense. There are over 500 positions that are funded by IDEA.
 - There are discrepancies in funding and we are spending more than what we are getting from the district FTD and matrix to support paraprofessional assistants.
 - Mr. Brown, discussed the different categories of FTE for the general population.
 - Ms. Greer commented that she would like another presentation from the Budget Office that gives us some clear answers.
 - Mr. Gordillo explained the proportionate share of money set aside for private schools, required by IDEA.
 - Last year they set aside over 4 million dollars to be spent on private schools through meaningful consultations in accordance with IDEA 2004.
 - If those funds are not spent, they roll forward for one year. Unspent funds are returned back to the state of Florida.

Private Schools Proportionate Share

This year the Division conducted meaningful consultation with private schools once again. The majority of the schools seeking participation are from the Archdiocese of Miami.

- The process for McKay Scholarship for students with disabilities was explained, along with cost factor, and level matrix funding.
- The cost factor for students funded 251-253 is the same. Parents get the same amount.

4. Audience had questions and concerns:

- Questions of a Parent: Parents using the McKay scholarship can use the federal dollars to fund one to one paras that are paid by federal dollars? If you leave the public school do you take the para? Can Federal funds be used with McKay?
- Mr. Gordillo responded and gave explanation of meaningful consultation.
- Question regarding parents taking their students to private schools, can those federal dollars be used along with McKay money?
- Parent suggestion to avoid law suits, resolve parental problems. Have parent friendly schools.

5. Professional Development will covered in-depth next meeting.

6. What happens as part of reviewing the paperwork?

- The LEAs: Program Specialists, Department Heads, and Assistant Principals receive continuous training.
- Have a system in each school working with the clerk. Review IEPs before entering data.
- The regional center monitors their schools, e.g. via the regional center staffing specialists.
- The regional center liaison reports to the district on a monthly basis.
- Regional Centers are asked to submit IEPs to the district for monitoring and reviews.

7. Comments:

- Principal should have more direct responsibility for the LEA.
- Administrators should be evaluated at every school.
- Every year parents are sent a school climate survey.

8. The Chair thanked everyone for attending and urged parents to continue attending.

9. Meeting was adjourned at 12:05 pm.

ACTION TAKEN
Meeting was adjourned at 12:05pm

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 October 23, 2007 Autism Task Force Meeting

Members present:

Dr. Michael Alessandri, University of Miami
Mr. Ed Brown, M-DCPS
Mr. Joselin Cabrera, M-DCPS
Mr. Renier Diaz de la Portilla, Board Member
Ms. Evelyn Greer, Board Member
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

ACTION TAKEN

10:12 AM Meeting was called to order and translation services were offered to those in need of it provided by Maria Santana.

List of guests attending:

Ms. Claudia Amechazurra, Parent
Mr. Manuel Amechazurra, Parent
Ms. Martha A. Arquimbau, Parent
Ms. Cristina Canales, Parent
Ms. Olimpia Ceballos, Parent
Ms. Sonja Clay, MDCPS – SPED
Ms. Fran Collette, Superintendent’s Advisory Panel
Ms. Amy de la Cruz-Munoz, Parent
Ms. Sharon Fedor, MDCPS - SPED
Mr. Juan Garcia, Parent
Ms. Agata Jacek, Parent
Mr. Orin Jacobs, Parent
Ms. Susan Marie Kairalla, Parent/Florida School Choice
Ms. Ana Lara, School Board Ms. Hantman’s office
Ms. Susan Lauredo, Parent/Chairperson for Advocacy M Dade Autism Speaks
Ms. Ruby Mac Namara, Parent
Ms. Mindy McNichols, School Board Attorneys Office
Ms. Tina McAlpin, SLP – MDCPS

Ms. Janet Marrero, MDCPS - SPED
Ms. Margarita Montalvo, Family Network on Disability
Ms. Shannon Mora, Parent to Parent of Miami
Ms. Christin Mueller, Florida School Partners
Ms. Kathryn Murdoch, Parent
Ms. Cathy Orlando, MDCPS - SPED
Mr. Myriam Orta, Parent/PTA PLC
Mr. Pablo Orta, Parent/PTA PLC
Ms. Mary Paz, MDCPS - SPED
Ms. Noslen Penaranda, SPED
Dr. Marta Perez, School Board
Ms. Susan Spinnato, Parent
Ms. Linda Stein, Parent
Ms. Karen Uhle, Teacher, M-DCPS
Ms. Kathy Velazquez, M-DCPS Pre-K Autism Support
Dr. Angel Velez-Diaz, M-DCPS ASD Support
Ms. Maria Zamora, Parent

ACTION TAKEN

September 25, 2007 Autism Task Force meeting minutes "Approval"
MOVED: Ms. Evelyn Greer
SECONDED: Mr. Will Gordillo
ACCEPTED: Dr. Michael Alessandri

1. **September 9, 2007 minute’s approval was deferred to allow every one time to review.**
 2. **Per Ms. Evelyn Greer’s request, a detailed presentation of the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), the State law that funds education was provided by Ms. Judith Marte.**
 - **SPED has 5 groups of students 111, 112, 113, 254, 255, these codes identify students at the state level. 390 million to directly support children with exceptionalities excluding personnel support.**
 - STATE FUNDING 1ST CATEGORY – These are students with some exceptionalities that receive the same amount of allocation as a student without any exceptionality. The state guarantees \$124,880,000 for this category.
 - ◆ 111 = K-3 grade students, 112 = 4-8 graders, 113 = High School students.
 - STATE FUNDING 2ND CATEGORY – These are students with significant exceptionalities requiring a higher service level according to the IEP. The state guarantees basic funds of \$30 million for this category (\$15,000 per student for exceptionality 254 and \$21,000 per students for exceptionality 255) the state recognizes the need for additional funding for children with exceptionalities and guarantees \$125 million more.
 - ◆ 254 and 255 Students with significant exceptionalities requiring higher service levels according to the IEP.
- MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT FUNDING**

- ◆ Services that are covered and reimbursed through Medicaid.

LOCAL TAX FUNDING

- ◆ Makes up the budget gap from what the state gives us to what is needed for the students programmatically.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS FUNDING DEDICATED TO ESE STUDENTS

- ◆ IDEA Part B provides \$70 million
- ◆ IDEA Pre-K provides \$1.3 million

- That is a total funding in the district of \$390,526,896 dollars to directly support children with exceptionalities. These funds also pay for a total of 5,696 positions such as Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Clerks, Psychologists, etc. In addition to this it also pays for \$61,090,214 non-salary funding used for classroom supplies, furniture, assistive technology, contracted services to bring in specialists that we don't have on staff full time, fieldtrips and all other related services. IDEA funds pay for all of the current 579 bus aides.

- Ms. Evelyn Greer explained how it is in the best interest of the District for the students to have the highest category in the Matrix and that the state's interest is to have the lowest category in the Matrix since that decides what funds they will guarantee for each student. Ms. Cathy Orlando shared information that the Matrix is in the process of being changed.

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON AND IMPROVE

Eliminate the resistance shown by staff when parents ask what their child's Matrix Level of support is.

- ATF Member Ms. Yolanda Gonzalez reviewed the recommendations going forward to the Board in December as previously discussed in the meetings.

- Transition Implementation Plan
 - ◆ PreK to Kindergarten
 - ◆ Elementary to Middle school
 - ◆ Middle school to High school
- Train and increase the amount of transition support specialists and transition support teachers to one (1) per school.
- ESY elements of social skills and other programs available to be used by students
- Consider piloting the Broward program in 1 high school in every region and track the results.
- Utilize Rudy Crew's partnership with the business community such as, Carnival for High School Internships to find opportunities for the students in the spectrum.
 - ◆ Mr. Gordillo asked what funding source Broward uses, i.e. Vocational funds, ESE funds? He also explained how funds are used to contract for supported employments to assist with transitions and expressed that employers comfortable with the support on the job but are not as receptive when it comes to employing our students full time.
 - ◆ Ms. Gonzalez will follow up on the funding mechanism in Broward.

- Pre-K presentation by Cathy Velazquez about personnel preparation.

- New teacher trainings discussed for all those that transfer in to a new school or grade level.
- Series of afternoon meetings on different topic specifics each training.
- Mentoring programs; new teachers receive training and meet with a teacher mentor at least once a month during the 1st year.
- Varied parent programs that are optional but highly recommended.

- Parent asked about the possibility of translating the IEP in English and Haitian-Creole.

- Mr. Gordillo indicated that the law requires the district to provide translation to the individuals who require it in any language needed to participate in the IEP process and we do that but not the IEP document itself. The district currently provide copies of consent and notice forms in three languages (Spanish, English, and Haitian-Creole) the state of Florida (FDOE) is moving towards a statewide IEP, the availability of this document translated to multiple languages would need to be addressed with FDOE.
- In the interim the district will explore the cost and feasibility of translating the existing IEP form and WISE automated IEP document and if possible make them available in 3 languages.

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON AND IMPROVE

- Presentation by Dr. Ann Marie Sasseville about barriers to effective personnel preparation and how it has been resolved through different training programs.

Critical needs:

- Many of the teachers that come in are not education professionals by training therefore lack the basics in Autism.
 - ◆ We provide 5-day training over the course of 5 weeks to correct this issue.
- Teachers in inclusive settings are leaving primarily due to the stress of the special education students in those classrooms and their ability to meet the student's needs.
 - ◆ Multiple trainings are provided over the course of the year such as;
 - ❖ IEP driven awareness training are typically 1-2 hours and we have done about 80 this year.
 - ❖ Alternate assessment training lead by Ms. Jill Brookner went from 1 day to 3 day training over the course of 3 consecutive weeks. This year we have trained 35 teachers and will be receiving 15 more new teachers that will require the trainings.

RESOLVED ISSUE/S

Secondary needs:

- Added a Language and Literacy training for teachers with students of cognitive handicaps such as mentally handicapped, Autism, and dual sensory impaired. (Expanded from a 3 day training to a 5 day training over the course of 5 consecutive weeks)
- Functional discussion of behaviors trainings are provided to teachers who address the needs of the Emotional Behavioral Disability low incident population. (2 day training)
- Social communication skills staff trainings for speech and language therapist as well as guidance counselors and teachers of those students in inclusion settings. (from ½ day to 2 day training)
- Autism one-on-one for administrators once a year aside from the IEP awareness training.
- Paraprofessional trainings went from 2 day to 5 day trainings over the course of 5 weeks.

IMPROVEMENT

IMPROVEMENT

Challenges:

- Time is the biggest issue; the moratorium from January through the end of March for FCAT takes out a lot of time.
- We are not able to mandate staff training during the summer because staff is not employed and we are not able to pay them at that time, however it is a better model for professional development to train during the school year because the teachers are actually on site with the students and are able to come back and ask of anything they are having difficulty with over the course of those 5 weeks.
- Scheduling and space; we have a dozen school sites in ESE trying to find a spot during the only 30 school days that we can train on from the middle of September until winter break.
- Contract issues; the personnel available to do the training is the same staff that is doing about 600 IEP based support services across the county. During the training time is so condensed and we still have to make sure that we handle our IEP obligations but at the same time is the same staff doing the trainings district wide.
 - ◆ If a teacher is hires after the training period is completed for the fall, our staff provides individual training in the classroom to make sure the teacher gets the support they need.
- Substitute funding; principals have very limited amount of sub funds that have to cover IEP meetings, alternate assessment days, actual days when teachers are sick plus training.
- Space rental; although we have made a big effort to bring in or go to those needing the training to avoid paying rent for a space to provide the trainings.

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON AND IMPROVE

8. Dr. Alessandri expressed that the Issue of professional training is a major priority but the number of kids with autism and the types of placements they are in is making it realistically difficult to maintain that level of sophisticated instructional talent over time. (Opened for suggestions)

- Teachers want incentives (We have offered 1 Master Point for every hour of training)
- Teachers want to learn and don't want the intensive 2 day training before school starts, they want some training before school and then targeted intervention during the year, this way if issues come up they can have support and learn from those issues.
 - ◆ It is the teacher's responsibility to implement what they have learned and the principal's responsibility to evaluate the teachers if they are not properly implementing what they have learned.
- Teachers are receptive they just need new ways of training and support.
- Since our students are so unique it would benefit to implement "training" before school starts through notes or written anecdotes from last year's teacher to this year's teacher.

GRADING OF TRAINING COURSES

The person doing the course will indicate whether the individual successfully completed the course that was offered and the follow up required in order to get the "Professional Development"

- ◆ Cathy Orlando: This year we have added a requirement to Professional Development. During the Individual Student Planning, (ISP) training comprised of parents, teachers and paraprofessionals in the spring meeting, teachers have to share information about the students via the student profile. Unless this is completed, they don't receive their Master Plan Points. The problem lies in identifying teachers for the new year.
- ◆ Yolanda Gonzalez: Parent component should be added to this profile to input what resolves certain issues for their child and how to prevent it.
- ◆ Shannon Mora: Manage the time during the IEP meeting and incorporate the teachers from the previous and new years to communicate with one another about the student.
- ◆ Parent: Specific types of training directly related to the teacher's exceptionality should be mandatory not up to them to chose.

IMPROVEMENT

ISSUES TO FOCUS ON AND IMPROVE

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9. Angel Zayon, questioned if video surveillance in the classrooms was a possibility.

- Mindy McNichols, School Board Attorney's Office, expressed there could be some privacy issues and was asked by Dr. Alessandri to do a background research of any public school system in the nation using classroom video feed of that nature and to provide a copy of the Video Policy currently signed by parents authorizing recording for educational purpose.

10. Town Hall meeting hosted by the Autism Society of Miami was announced for Monday, November 05, 2007 at Miami Children's Hospital inviting everyone who had individual issues to attend.

12:14 PM Meeting Adjourned

M-DCPS Autism Task Force

AGENDA

Tuesday, November 13, 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 | 10:00 AM |
| II. | Approval of Minutes from 10/9/07 & 10/23/07 | 10:05 AM |
| III. | Review and Synthesis of Personnel Preparation Recommendations/Suggestions from 10/23/07 Meeting (A.M. Sasseville) | 10:10 AM |
| IV. | Classroom Video Surveillance (A. Zayon) | 10:30 AM |
| V. | Grading Policy (Y. Gonzalez) | 10:45 AM |
| VI. | Federal Lawsuit Options (R. Diaz de la Portilla) | 11:00 AM |
| VII. | Report Logistics | 11:15 AM |
| VIII. | Summary of ATF Outcomes | 11:45 AM |
| IX. | Adjournment | 12:00 PM |