

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SUPERINTENDENT'S DISTRICT ADVISORY PANEL FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES  
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT



2009 – 2011

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

## **The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida**

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Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Ava Goldman  
Administrative Director  
Office of Special Education and Educational Services

Mr. Will Gordillo  
District Director  
Division of Special Education

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## MISSION OF THE PANEL

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The mission of the Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities is to assist the Superintendent in reviewing the current status of special education, identify problem areas, develop goals and objectives, and recommend priorities for the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities (SWD).

The panel will advocate for students entitled to special education and their families by offering counsel to the Superintendent and the administration of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) in all areas affecting special education.

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## PURPOSE

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The annual report is submitted to the Superintendent to identify the Panel's accomplishments over the two past years. In addition, it presents a plan of action for the coming year that continues to address improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

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The Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities had an outstanding year working in collaboration with the Division of Special Education. Panel members are dedicated to improving educational services for students with disabilities. Membership includes parents and representatives from community agencies and the school district. The Panel has four active committees: Educational Committee chaired by Frances Collette; Employability Committee chaired by Chris Reigadas; Committee for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing chaired by Barbara Chotiner and Lynn Miskiel; and the Inclusion Committee chaired by Trini Lora. The tremendous accomplishments of Panel committees are reflected in the Panel Accomplishments section of this report.

Awards of Excellence are presented to five outstanding students with disabilities from Miami-Dade County Public Schools at our Annual Awards Ceremony. It is an honor for members of our Panel to meet the students, their teachers and families. This year, I am pleased to report that our Employability Committee established the Reno Cocchi Employer Recognition Award to recognize employers providing the opportunity for employment to students with disabilities in an effort to raise awareness and encourage others to provide employment opportunities. We are extremely grateful to Parent to Parent of Miami for partnering with the Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities on this project and extend congratulations to all of the award recipients and nominees. Special thanks to all of our members for their continued dedication and support throughout the year. In addition, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ava Goldman, Administrative Director, and Will Gordillo, District Director, for their leadership and commitment to educational excellence for children with disabilities and dedication to the mission and purpose of the Panel. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as Chair of the Panel.

Kathleen C. Vergara  
Chair 2010-2011

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## PANEL ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2009-2011 PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

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### Priority #1: Achieve full educational potential

**Goal: To improve academic performance, social interaction, and personal endeavors of students with disabilities**

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**Objective:** To continue the implementation of the Peer Education Project Curriculum.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Cathy Orlando, former Executive Director, Division of Special Education, and Deidre Marshall, Facilitator for the Inclusion Network (FIN), worked with the Education Committee to implement the plan to tie lesson plans from the Peer Education Project Curriculum to social studies benchmarks.

**MAY 2009**

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**Objective:** To analyze results of priority needs survey.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Cathy Orlando and Deidre Marshall reported that the survey was administered to 1,404 teachers in general education and special education and 146 administrators. Survey responses indicated that there was a positive trend in attitudes towards inclusive practices and that there was a continued need for support and resources in order to implement inclusion. In addition, there is a continued need for Professional Development in meeting the needs of diverse learners.

**NOVEMBER 2009**

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**Objective:** To improve parent/school communication.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Will Gordillo, District Director, introduced the plan to transition the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) to the Special Education Management System (SPED-EMS), which would ultimately help improve the process of parent/school communication.

**OCTOBER 2009**

**Panel Accomplishment:** Natalie Foster and Chris Connor, Public Consulting Group, and Carmen Molinaris, M-DCPS SPED, reviewed the Special Education Management System (SPED EMS) Easy IEP.

**DECEMBER 2010**

**Panel Accomplishment:** Keisha C. Robinson, Curriculum Support Specialist, presented the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) Annual ESE Parent Survey. The survey was distributed to parents in 2010 and again in 2011. The data provided by the FDOE pertaining to the parent survey results for Miami-Dade County did not provide enough information to drive future planning for the Panel.

**JANUARY 2010 & MARCH 2011**

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**Objective:** To continue to monitor policies and recommendations regarding grading.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Fran Collette, Chair, Education Committee, participated on the Grading Committee designated by the Superintendent in response to Panel recommendations. To date the committee could not agree upon needed changes.

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**SEPTEMBER 2010**

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**Objective:** To establish guidelines and training for administrators and school resource officers.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Following recommendations from the Education Committee, the Panel made recommendations to the Superintendent to insure that law enforcement officers on campus would have as much information as possible when dealing with students with disabilities; to provide additional training for school resource officers and security monitors to assist them in dealing with students with disabilities; to provide additional training for school administrators on issues and strategies relevant to disciplinary interventions for students with disabilities; and to improve the current process used for assessing the causes of student behavior problems and determining behavior interventions.

**AUGUST 2010**

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**Objective:** To analyze the accommodations available for students with disabilities for standardized testing, with emphasis on allowable FAIR and FCAT accommodations.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Maria Bruguera, Director: Research, Assessment, and Data Analysis, presented information about test accommodations for students with disabilities.

**OCTOBER 2010**

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**Objective:** Review accommodations and their implementation for third grade students for the reading FCAT and reading portfolios.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Ms. Pauline Ward, Supervisor for Elementary Language Arts, presented information about the third grade reading portfolio and the good cause exemption, which allows students to demonstrate reading skills through the Grade 3 Reading Student Portfolio.

**NOVEMBER 2010**

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**Objective:** Follow up on improvements in the enrollment of students with disabilities in Schools of Choice.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Ms. Tiffany Pauline, Administrative Director of Charter School Operations, information about charter schools throughout Miami-Dade County that serve children with disabilities. Several representatives from charter schools designed to serve children with disabilities presented information about their individual programs.

**OCTOBER 2010**

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**Panel Accomplishment:** Dr. Helen Blanch, Assistant Superintendent, and Dr. Robert Strickland, District Director, presented information about Schools of Choice throughout Miami-Dade County that serve children with disabilities. The application process was thoroughly reviewed. Members were happy to learn about the progress that has been made to insure opportunities for children with disabilities.

**DECEMBER 2010**

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**Priority #2: Employability**

**Goal: To improve the employment rate of students with disabilities.**

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**Objective:** To inventory course offerings in secondary education available to students with disabilities on a standard diploma track and for those on a special diploma track to identify barriers toward positive post school outcomes.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Jill Brookner, Instructional Supervisor, sent out a Weekly Briefing outlining the new course codes for students accessing a special diploma and clarifying which students should be given the opportunity to get a standard diploma. As a result, many more students with disabilities are now accessing the standard diploma.

**May-10**

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**Objective:** To identify opportunities for transitioning students with disabilities into dual enrollment, higher education, community agencies, local businesses, and vocational schools.

**Panel Accomplishment:** In collaboration with Jill Brookner, Miami-Dade County Public Schools is in negotiations with Florida International University and the University of Miami to establish a post secondary transition program on each campus. The goal is to start the program in August 2011.

**Sep-10**

The first Students Transitioning to Educational/Employment Pathways for Success (S.T.E.P.S.) conference was successful in bringing together agencies, parents, and students. The second conference will take place at South Miami Senior High School on October 1, 2011.

**Oct-10**

Jill Brookner gave a presentation to members of the Panel about the S.T.E.P.S. conference.

**Jan-11**

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**Objective:** To identify current procedures and key personnel to help connect students with disabilities to employment.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Through extensive collaboration a Vocational Rehabilitation Task Force was created. Panel member Stephanie Mintz chaired the Task Force. The Task Force communicated with members of the Florida Rehabilitation Council to improve communication between Vocational Rehabilitation and Miami-Dade County Public Schools. As a result, the Panel sent a report to the Coordinating Committee of the Florida Rehabilitation Council about its findings and recommendations for improvements. The recommendations have been implemented and there is much improvement in the collaboration process between Vocational Rehabilitation and Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

**Feb-10**

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**Objective:** To work with representatives from Miami Dade College to create more opportunities for students with disabilities.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Ken Marquard, Miami Dade College, has become a member of the Employability Committee. As a result, Lourdes Bravo and Chris Reigadas have been invited to participate in the Miami Dade College Resource Forum.

**Apr-11**

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**Objective:** To support the expansion of community partnerships such as Project ACCEPT.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Jill Brookner and the Employability Committee are continually working on the expansion of community partnerships.  
**May-11**

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**Objective:** To develop a system to track student progress in employability skills within specified programs and in correlation with post school outcomes.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Jill Brookner is in the process of starting this program, which will keep track of students hired by community employers. Miami-Dade County Public Schools now has a coordinator for the Supported Employment Program and has hired nine job coaches to provide services. The job coaches are assigned to regions and are working closely with transition specialists in each region.  
**2010-2011**

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**Objective:** To plan, outline, and start the process for Public Service Announcements on behalf of employing individuals with disabilities.

**Panel Accomplishment:** This project will take two years to complete. The plan is to conduct a contest in October 2011 to showcase students with disabilities in their places of employment. The final public service announcement product will include vignettes from the videos submitted through the contest.  
**2010-2011**

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**Objective:** To develop a plan to recognize employers who employ individuals with disabilities.

**Panel Accomplishment:** The committee asked former students to complete an application to nominate their employer for the Reno Cocchi Employer Recognition Award to be presented at the Panel's Annual Awards Ceremony. Numerous applications were submitted for the award and a new tradition has begun to recognize community businesses that employ students with disabilities.  
**Apr-11**

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**Objective:** To identify and enlist community agencies to participate in planning and supporting the employer recognition ceremony and the public service announcement.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Lourdes Bravo and Chris Reigadas will work on this objective through their membership on Miami Dade College Association of Agencies.  
**Apr-11**

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**Objective:** To work with representatives from Miami Dade College to create more opportunities for students with disabilities.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Opportunities for students with disabilities have increased as a result of collaboration between Miami Dade College and Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Miami Dade College has recently offered any student with a 3.0 grade average the opportunity to attend Miami Dade College free of charge. This will increase opportunities for students with disabilities.  
**2010-2011**

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**Priority #3: Inclusion**

**Goal: To increase the community's involvement and awareness of Miami-Dade County Public Schools inclusion efforts.**

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**Objective:** To develop a plan for Miami-Dade County Public Schools teachers, after school program staff, and families to share information and work to benefit children with disabilities.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Victor Ferrante, Executive Director, Community Education, and Will Gordillo, District Director, Division of Special Education, reported about admission guidelines for after school programs for students with disabilities. The Inclusion Committee followed up with specific recommendations regarding accommodations for students with disabilities.

**Jan-10**

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**Objective:** To increase the community's awareness of "People First Language."

**Panel Accomplishment:** This is an ongoing project for the Inclusion Committee and the Panel. People First Language pins have been distributed throughout Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the logo is being seen on more and more websites.

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**Objective:** To develop a plan to educate family and community members about special education and the Response to Intervention (RTI) process.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Dr. Terrance Vaccaro, Executive Director of RTI Curriculum and Instruction, presented an insightful overview about Miami-Dade County Public Schools Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation process to the Panel.

**Nov-10**

**Priority #4: Educational Opportunities for Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

**Goal: To address educational issues specific to students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.**

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**Objective:** To monitor the placement of students who are deaf or hard of hearing in cluster schools based on their need for language, communication, and socialization.

**Panel Accomplishments:** Through committee meeting discussion and communication with district staff a concern of parents of secondary students who use sign language was identified. Cluster programs were provided by the district with teachers and peers who use sign language.

**Sep-09**

Parents of secondary students expressed concern that their children who use sign language needed to be in a supportive environment. Through collaboration with the committee, the solution was to create a cluster site at South Dade Senior High School. Also in consideration was to form one cluster school for three elementary programs for students with hearing loss who reside in the northern part of Miami-Dade County.

**Sep-10**

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**Objective:** To recommend the inclusion of a communication plan in the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) written for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Committee members developed a series of recommendations for language communication for students who are deaf or hard of hearing to be incorporated into the IEP.

**Sep-09**

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Committee discussed the proposals for the IEP and the use of drop down menus to address the needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Oct-09**

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**Objective:** To develop recommendations for early education programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Committee members reviewed the current programs available for very young children identified as deaf or hard of hearing. It was noted there are few options for a family of a child under the age of three who chooses sign language to educate their child.

**Oct-09**

Jennifer Jones presented information about the Deaf Family Literacy Academy, which serves children from birth to 12 years of age and their families in Broward County.

**Feb-10**

Roni Bader-Tables, Executive Director - PreK Programs for Students with Disabilities, presented about services offered through Miami-Dade County Public Schools for children birth through five.

**Feb-10**

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**Objective:** To monitor the transition of students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors from the DHH Unit presented information about the goals of VR and the process of entry into the VR system.

**Apr-09**

Victor Solano presented information about the strategies that can be used to utilize the new video phone technology in the work place when children with hearing loss transition from high school.

**Dec-09**

**Panel Accomplishment:** The Center for Independent Living (CIL) presented information about the services they provide for students with hearing loss transitioning from high school, including driver's education, citizenship training, advocacy, basic education training, housing application assistance, supportive employment and many other services not replicated from other agencies.

**Feb-11**

**Objective:** To investigate opportunities in after school programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Panel Accomplishment:** John Paul Jebian participated on the Inclusion Committee on behalf of the DHH Committee.

**2010-2011**

**Objective:** To increase community awareness about the ongoing needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Panel Accomplishment:** Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD) presented information via remote tele-conferencing, regarding Project Endeavor, a federally funded grant program, and services ensuring public accessibility and increased public awareness about issues affecting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Jan-11**

Judy Horvath and Myriam De La Asuncion representing the Barton G. Kids Hear Now Cochlear Implant Family Resource Center presented information about their role in providing guidance for families of children with cochlear implants as their children go through the process of evaluation, surgery, and follow-up.

**Dec-10**

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**Annual Award Ceremony**

**2011**

**Sponsored by Parent to Parent of Miami and Public Consulting Group**

**Awards of Excellence**

*Juan Carlos Castaneda (PreK)*  
**Auburndale Elementary School**

Principal: Liliana Salazar  
Sponsor: Diana Guergo

*Tommy Gutierrez (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)*  
**Palm Springs Elementary School**

Principal: Rosana D. Herrera  
Sponsor: Anna Allene McDougall

*Raidel Leon (8<sup>th</sup> Grade)*  
**Hammocks Middle School**

Principal: Peter H. Cabrera  
Sponsor: Gwendolyn Owes-Roberson

*Erika Chirino (11<sup>th</sup> Grade)*  
**Robert Morgan Educational Center**

Principal: Kimberly Davis  
Sponsor: Barbara Chotiner

*Brian Beaubrun (12<sup>th</sup> Grade)*  
**Ruth Owens Krusé Educational Center**

Principal: Angel L. Rodriguez, Ed.D.  
Sponsor: Gordon Parkin

**Annual Award Ceremony 2011**

**Sponsored by Parent to Parent of Miami and Public Consulting Group**

**Reno Cocchi Employer of Excellence Award**

**North Shore Medical Center**

**Reno Cocchi Employer Recognition Award**

**The DeMoya Group**

**North Shore Medical Center**

**Publix – Store #454**

**Loehmann's Fashion Island**

**South Miami Hospital**

**Miami Veterans Administration Medical Center**

**Whole Foods Market**

**Zoo Miami**

**Service System Associates**

**Annual Award Ceremony**

**2010**

**Sponsored by Parent to Parent of Miami**

### Awards of Excellence

*Jordan Calleiro (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade)*  
**Tropical Elementary School**

Principal: Yubeda Miah  
Sponsor: Kathryn Medina  
Parent(s): Gustavo Calleiro & Yessy Perez

*Santiago Chavez (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)*  
**Tropical Elementary School**

Principal: Yubeda Miah  
Sponsor: Liliana Ceballos  
Parent: Yeri Reynosa

*Anthony Torreria (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)*  
**Skyway Elementary School**

Principal: Linda R. Harrison  
Sponsor(s): Victoria Cabrera  
Lisa Schwartz  
Lisa Young  
Parents: Danny Torreria &  
Carmen Martinez

*Roldan Aleman (8<sup>th</sup> Grade)*  
**Ruth Owens Kruse Educational Center**

Principal: Angel L. Rodriguez, Ed.D.  
Sponsor: Michelle Coto-Viltre  
Parent(s): Lorchen Crucet

*Tyrone Harris (12<sup>th</sup> Grade)*  
**Miami Senior High School**

Principal: Benny Valdes  
Sponsor: Gerry R. Latson  
Parent(s): Tyrone & Joni Harris

*Emma Harris (10<sup>th</sup> Grade)*  
**Merrick Educational Center**

Principal: Deborah C. Wehking  
Sponsor: Wendy Athanasiadis  
Parent: Elizabeth Hames



## People First Language

Acting upon recommendations from the Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Exceptional Student Education, on March 12, 2008, the Miami-Dade County School Board adopted the universal use of People First Language for all communication when representing M-DCPS.

This year the Panel expanded its advocacy promoting the use of People First Language not only in schools, but throughout the community. Working in collaboration with CCDH, Inc., the Panel's Inclusion Sub-Committee oversaw the development of a People First Language logo and accompanying web page. Panel members, including community agencies, parents, students, and others will display the logo on their business and personal websites. M-DCPS has set the example: the logo and web page link are posted on [dadeschools.net](http://dadeschools.net).

If you would like to display the logo and link on your site, contact the Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities.

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION

### Roni Bader-Tables

Members of the Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities express their sincere appreciation to Roni Bader-Tables for her years of service as District Liaison to the Panel and as the Panel representative for prekindergarten students with disabilities. Miami-Dade County Public Schools Prekindergarten Programs for Children with Disabilities are recognized throughout the State of Florida and beyond as programs of quality and excellence as a result of her dynamic leadership.

Best wishes on your retirement, Roni. We will miss you!

### Public Consulting Group

Many thanks to the Public Consulting Group for sponsoring our Annual Awards Ceremony and Luncheon.

### Parent to Parent of Miami

Many thanks to Parent to Parent of Miami for partnering with the Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities in support of our Annual Awards Ceremony.

### Ruth Owens Krusé Educational Center

Special thanks to Dr. Angel Rodriguez, Dr. Ana Mendez-Londono and the students of Ruth Owens Krusé Educational Center for hosting our Annual Awards Ceremony and Luncheon.

**PARENTS**

**Kathleen Vergara**  
Chair

**Chris Reigadas**  
Vice Chair

**Lourdes Bravo**  
**Frances Collette**  
**Enrique Escallon**  
**Yolanda Herrera**  
**Stephanie Mintz**  
**Jacquelyn Needelman**  
**Miguel Suau**

**M-DCPS MEMBER(S)**

**Ava Goldman**  
Administrative Director  
Special Education & Educational  
Services Curriculum and Instruction

**Will Gordillo**  
District Director  
Division of Special Education  
District Liaison to the Panel

**Barbara Chotiner**  
Teacher- Deaf or hard of hearing

**Yubeda Miah**  
Principal  
Tropical Elementary

**STUDENT MEMBER**

**Michelle Suau**  
John A. Ferguson Senior High School

**RECORDING SECRETARY**

**Cinthya C. Boza**  
Ruth Owens Krusé Educational Center

**AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES**

**Vickie Burley**  
Association for Retarded Citizens

**Anika Allen**  
Best Buddies

**Trini Lora**  
CCDH

**Olivia Bamishigbin**  
CMS-Florida Resource Specialist

**Dona Daily**  
Easter Seals

**Rosa Maria Barbara**  
Family Care Council

**Elizabeth Cramer**  
Florida International University

**Isabel Garcia**  
Parent to Parent

**Lynn Miskiel**  
UM Mailman Center

**Jane Blake**  
Florida Association of Speech-Language  
Pathologists and Audiologists

**M-DCPS SCHOOL BOARD**

**Panel Member**

**Dr. Martin S. Karp**  
District 3

**M-DCPS SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE**

**Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman**  
District 9

**M-DCPS PERSONNEL**

**Althea Robinson**  
Instructional Supervisor  
Region I

**Katherine Cadieux**  
Instructional Supervisor  
Region II

**Arlene Exelbert**  
Instructional Supervisor  
Region III

**Kathy Maguire**  
Instructional Supervisor  
Region IV

**Helene Chait**  
Instructional Supervisor  
Region V

**Viviana Arias**  
Instructional Supervisor Education  
Transformation Office Region VI

**Roni Bader-Tables**  
Executive Director  
Pre-Kindergarten Programs

**Jill Brookner**  
Instructional Supervisor  
InD & Transition Services

**Mary Paz**  
Instructional Supervisor  
504, McKay & Allocations

**Laurie Malman**  
Parent Liaison, SPED FDLRS  
Parent Services