

Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Exceptional Student Education  
Early Childhood Subcommittee Meeting  
*April 23, 2024*

**MINUTES**

Attendees: Sabrena Bishop, Deanna DeCario, Josee Gregoire, Beverly Heller, Laurie Malman, Lynn Maceyras, Julio Suarez, Delsey Yancoskie

I. Welcome/Introductions

- The meeting was called to order at 10:41 a.m.
- Introductions

II. Review & Approval of Minutes

- Dr. Gregoire shared the meeting agenda and minutes from the previous meeting. Ms. Malman made a motion to accept the agenda. Ms. Heller seconded the motion. The motion to accept the agenda was approved. The minutes were approved without corrections. It was mentioned that at the first fall meeting, the co-chair who will serve alongside Ms. Heller will be identified.

III. Supporting Families: Parent Training:

- Ms. DeCario shared slides with information about the Positive Parenting Practices sessions, a series of six parent workshops this year across a range of topics focused on addressing children's challenging behaviors.
  - Topics included: Making Connections, The ABCs of Behavior/Teaching Children to Follow Directions, How to Use Reinforcement, The Power of Routine, Responding to Undesirable Behaviors, and Encouraging Communication.
  - The sessions were offered at three locations across the district with both daytime and evening options available.
  - Sessions were conducted in English and Spanish with a Creole interpreter at the English session to better serve the needs of Haitian Creole parents.
  - Parents who attended received information about specific strategies, a variety of related course materials, as well as additional resource information related to each topic.

IV. Program Awareness and Participation

- Dr. Gregoire shared the flyer provided by Dr. Hart regarding the FIU Summer Treatment Program for Kindergarteners.
  - The program provides activities that support literacy skills, positive behavior, and coping skills for children who are having learning, behavior, and/or social-emotional difficulties at home or in school.
  - The program will run June 17<sup>th</sup> – August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, 8:30am-4:00pm at Paul Bell Middle School and Thena Crowder Early Learning Center.
  - The program is currently taking applications and there is aftercare available for a small fee.

- Ms. Heller asked about the program being provided in other languages. Dr. Gregoire stated that it is in English for the children.
- Ms. Heller asked how the information was being disseminated and Ms. Yancoskie replied that they sent it via email blast, shared it with the other advisory panels, with the ESE supervisors, and on their social media page. Ms. Heller asked about how it reaches private schools and suggested it could also be posted in community libraries and supermarkets.
- Ms. Malman noted that FIU also refers families to other programs if there is a program more suited to their needs or from which they could additionally benefit.
- Dr. Gregoire will share the flyer virtually.

V. Early Childhood Update:

- Ms. Maceyras reported that this school year, 100% of the VPK Programs in M-DCPS passed CLASS, the observational assessment required by the state, as compared to 99% last year.
  - Ms. Maceyras explained the 4.0 rating threshold that programs must meet to remain open and shared that all M-DCPS VPK programs met or exceeded that rating, which means all programs will remain open for the next school year.
  - Additionally, Ms. Maceyras reported progress related to school programs requiring re-assessment. This year only three schools needed to have a second assessment, as compared to last year when 18 schools had to be re-assessed.
  - A tiered system of support is implemented during the 45 days between assessment periods to remedy issues and also provide additional support or services to children in those programs as needed.
  - Ms. Yancoskie shared that the recent A1 School Board item recognized Early Childhood Week and included a brief slide presentation that included the success of 100% of school passing the CLASS.
- Ms. Maceyras also noted that they are in the process of adopting a new high-quality early childhood curriculum in VPK.
  - Dr. Gregoire offered kudos, noting that all VPK programs reflected effectiveness in providing children and families with the quality care and early education they need to thrive, making M-DCPS the best option for families and children.
  - Ms. Malman offered thanks for the collaboration related to accreditation, mentioning the team at Thena Crowder and Cognia working together to develop solutions to further support children and families in need.
- Ms. Maceyras added that the Week of the Young Child (WOYC) was celebrated and related activities were shared on their re-vamped website and social media accounts with related video highlights.
- Ms. Maceyras also shared information on the new Early Childhood initiative in which the Superintendent asked her to connect and oversee the high school early childhood programs so that they receive monitoring and support.
- Ms. Heller asked about current legislation related to early childhood. Ms. Maceyras responded that the full-day VPK initiative did not pass. It is very costly for the state. However, it is an important initiative that will receive continued attention and support.

- Proponents, including the Early Learning Coalition, The Children’s Trust, and PTA, plan to further promote the need for full-day VPK to address the fiscal cliff that families face in regards to qualifying for necessary programs and services to meet their needs related to school readiness. Ms. Maceyras noted the importance of also reaching out to the new chancellor for the Division of Early Childhood.
- Ms. Heller shared that she made a related motion at the Superintendent’s Advisory Board Meeting and that the issue is a priority for M-DCPS.

VI. PreK ESE Update:

- Mr. Suarez reported that the Pre-K ESE Program is currently articulating over 1,000 students to kindergarten with over 90% of those meeting currently completed.
- The process of setting up summer staffings is underway so that teams can determine children’s eligibility, offer programs and services to prekindergarten children in need, and refill the seats with incoming Pre-K ESE students.

VII. Review of Committee Goals:

- Dr. Gregoire asked for questions or comments related to the committee goals.
- Ms. Heller asked about the list of M-DCPS students participating in the Explorers program, noting it is a question for Dr. Hart.
- Ms. Heller also spoke about the bill to expand VPK hours, stating that it is important that it be addressed as a priority across all organizations.
- Discussion was held on the summary of the accomplishments of the committee this year. It was determined that the minutes serve that purpose.
- Discussion was held regarding the frequency of meetings for next year and four tentative dates were identified for next year’s committee meetings.
  - October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024
  - December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024
  - February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025
  - April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025 (Earth Day)
- It was also decided to continue to hold meetings on a Tuesday.

VIII. Community Agency Updates:

- Ms. Yancoskie stated that The Children’s Trust is holding an event this Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, providing free Youth Mental Health First Aid. Further information can be found on The Children’s Trust website.
- Ms. Yancoskie also shared that The Parent Academy sent out flyers to families in English and Spanish informing them about the Transition Webinars available both day and night that include information about preparing for kindergarten.
  - Ms. Heller asked about the information reaching private schools. Ms. Yancoskie replied that dissemination includes those entities.
- Ms. Maceyras shared that the Department of Early Childhood has Transition to Kindergarten (TTK) ambassadors who are holding webinars as well.
  - There is a Weekly Briefing (WB) going out to schools explaining how to do “watch parties” with families to attract them and have them attend the webinar together in a setting where they can then ask further question and obtain additional information.
- Ms. Bishop provided updates related to Special Olympics.

- The program is successful in many schools and she visits multiple schools each day with the goal of being in more schools each year.
- Culminating events are underway that include family participation. Ms. Bishop mentioned that children, families, and teachers are excited about the culminating activities and the improved skills the children are demonstrating.

IX. Q & A

- There were no additional questions.

X. Next meeting:

- Tuesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024; Time: 10:30 a.m.; Location: TBA

The meeting was adjourned at 11:32 a.m.