

**MINUTES OF THE  
SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SUPERINTENDENT'S DISTRICT ADVISORY PANEL FOR ESE  
IN-PERSON / GOOGLE MEET MEETING  
Thursday, September 11, 2025**

**VOTING MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

**In-Person**

Beverly Heller  
Sandy Ames  
Emily Beltran  
Pierre De Agostini  
Kelli Hunter-Sheppard  
Ernie Martinez  
Gisel Prado  
Maria Ratti  
Lisette Rodriguez  
Patrick Salmasi  
Mark Thompson  
Jennifer Urbay  
Kathy Vergara

**Virtual**

Enrique Escallon  
Laurie Malman  
Nancy Torres  
Valerie Zenni

**MDCPS STAFF IN ATTENDANCE**

**In-Person**

Shannon Gottardi  
LaKisha Richardson Jones  
Olga Gonzalez-Olivera  
Allison Mollman  
Ray Novo

**Virtual**

Dayana Cadaya  
Josee Gregoire  
Rachel Lafrance-Robillard  
Briana Llado  
Luis Loriga  
Carla Magluta  
Giselle Mendieta  
Ansenig Partridge  
Alina Rodriguez  
Marie Sellek  
Natalie Tappert  
Arleen Valdez-Gonzalez

**GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE**

**In-Person**

**Virtual**

Norma Urquiza  
Raul Garcia  
Vanessa Fabricio  
Rocio Leiva  
Lorena Gutierrez  
Kyrstal Giraldo

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for ESE (SDAPESE) meeting was held in-person and via Google Meet on Thursday, September 11, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 11:36 A.M. by Ms. Beverly Heller, Chair.

At 11:46 A.M., Ms. Heller confirmed that a quorum was not yet present; only 11 members were in attendance and 12 were required. As a result, items within the consent agenda could not be approved at that time. Quorum was met at 12:16 P.M.

## **II. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS OF PANEL MEMBERS AND GUESTS**

Standard introductions were made by panel members, guests, and staff.

## **III. AGENDA REVIEW**

Panel Liaison Ms. LaKisha Richardson Jones reviewed the meeting norms and agenda. She explained that approval for future meeting dates and topics would be handled through a consent agenda.

## **IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

Ms. Heller reviewed the approval of the meeting agenda, dates, and topics. She presented the consent agenda and asked if there were any objections to its adoption. Hearing none, the consent agenda was adopted by unanimous consent at 12:17 P.M., with a motion by Dr. Lisette Rodriguez and a second by Ms. Sandy Ames.

- **Approval of SDAPESE Meeting Dates for the 2025–2026 School Year:** Presented through the Chair by Ms. LaKisha Richardson Jones. Hearing no objections, the meeting dates were adopted by unanimous consent at 12:17 P.M.
- **Approval of Discussion Topics for Upcoming Meetings:** Presented through the Chair by Ms. Richardson Jones. Hearing no objections, the discussion topics were adopted by unanimous consent at 12:17 P.M.

## **V. SPECIAL PRESENTATION: SUNSHINE LAW**

### **John-Philip lafelice, Esq. Associate General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel**

Mr. John-Philip lafelice, Esq., Associate General Counsel from the Office of the General Counsel, provided an overview of Florida's Sunshine Laws, Public Records Law, Conflict of Interest Rules, and Parliamentary Rules of Procedure as they apply to advisory committees.

- The "Sunshine" Law - Florida Statutes, 286.0011
  - All meetings must be open to the public, publicly noticed, and held in reasonably accessible locations. 7 days is reasonable for notice. Master Calendar will hold all meeting dates, times, and locations for SDAPESE and all sub-committees.
  - Secret voting is prohibited; abstentions are only allowed when a member declares a legal conflict of interest.
  - Written minutes are required even if the meeting is recorded. A skeletal record is sufficient, provided it reflects the actions taken.
  - Law requirements extend to all forms of meetings, including in-person, phone, virtual, and social media. Members must avoid private conversations about matters that could come before the panel.
  - Violations may result in potential criminal sanctions.
- Public Records Law - Florida Statutes, Chapter 119
  - All written or created records produced by or for the committee are public records and must be made available upon request, including handwritten notes by members during meetings.
  - District staff records and information are public records. Student records containing personally identifiable information remain confidential under FERPA and are not public records.
  - The determination of whether a document is public depends on its content, not the format or location (e.g., emails, texts). For example, texting a teacher about

- personal life plans is not public record – but becomes public record once the message results in discussion about meeting topics.
  - Do not use social media/networking sites (blogs, emails) for communication that should be done in person.
  - Violations may result in civil penalties.
- Conflict of Interest Rules - Florida Statutes, Chapter 112
  - Panel members are considered public officers and are prohibited from accepting gifts, compensation, or special privileges related to their role.
  - Using official position as a member of the panel to secure a special privilege benefit exemption for themselves or others is prohibited.
  - Members are prohibited from holding a continued employment or contractual relationship with any business entity or agency doing business with school board.
  - A voting conflict occurs when a member would be directly affected by an action of the panel or has a specific relationship with a person appearing before the committee.
    - Conflict relationships: officer; director; partner; of counsel; consultant; employee; fiduciary or beneficiary; stockholder, bondholder, debtor or creditor.
  - Members must file Form 8B with the State of Florida to abstain from voting due to a conflict.
  - Questions about potential conflicts may be directed to the Florida Commission on Ethics (850-488-7864, [www.ethics.state.fl.us](http://www.ethics.state.fl.us)).
- Parliamentary Rules of Procedure
  - Parliamentary procedures expedite business, maintain order, ensure justice.
  - Created for large legislative bodies to reach fair and expeditious decisions.
  - The Office of General Counsel serves as parliamentarian for advisory committees in a consultative role.

| <b>Basic Principles of Parliamentary Procedure</b>   |   |
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| A quorum is needed for official action to be taken.  | Personal remarks are out of order.  |
| All members have equal rights.   | Motions must be made “through the chair” and must be seconded.  |
| If desired, discussion may take place on a motion.   | If both are present, an Alternate may not vote for the Appointee.   |
| Amendments to a motion must be approved by the committee if it has been moved and seconded.                                    | No one can be forced to vote in a certain way or be deprived of a voting privilege.                             |
| One main motion is permitted at a time.  | The majority rules.   |
| <b>Basic Principles of Parliamentary Procedure: Debate</b>   |   |
| A member, having obtained the floor to speak on a motion, can generally speak no longer than ten minutes.                      | This time can be shortened or lengthened by adopting a special rule upon a 2/3 affirmative vote.                |
| No one can speak a second time until everyone who wishes to speak a first time has spoken.                                     | No one can speak more than twice on the same issue.   |
| Until a matter has been brought before the assembly in the form of a motion proposing a specific action, it cannot be debated. | When a member has been assigned the floor and has begun to speak, they cannot be interrupted by another member. |
| <b>Modifications for Advisory Committees</b>   |   |
| The Chairman may make motions and debate.  |   |

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| <p>Motions to limit debate (such as “calling the question”), are permitted but must be seconded and must be approved by 2/3 vote; such motions can only be made after everyone has been permitted to speak at least once.</p>   | <p>Motion to reconsider vote: requires 2/3 vote to adopt unless all members who voted on the prevailing side are present; can be made at any time by anyone; no limit to number of times a vote can be reconsidered.</p> |
| <p>Informal discussion is permitted when no motion is pending, but must be one at a time.</p>   |  |
| <p>If a proposal is clear to all, a vote can be taken without a formal motion having been made: unless agreed by unanimous consent, all action must be approved by vote under the same rules as in other assemblies except that it can be by a show of hands or voice vote.</p> |  |

- Quorum and Voting Procedures
  - Quorum must be established by members physically present before action or voting can take place.
  - Once quorum is reached, members participating virtually may vote, but quorum must remain in-person.
  - Be careful not to “double up” (for example: a primary votes online while their alternate is present in person).
  - Each appointed member has one alternate, who may only vote when the primary is absent.

### Discussion and Questions

- Panel members asked about what information is considered public record, particularly regarding minors and student panel members. There was clarification that student records with academic information and personally identifiable details remain confidential, while basic information such as name, address, and email is public record. If there was a public record request for all participants in the room during the panel meeting, the minor/student would be subject to that.
- Questions were raised about sharing information with parents or schools about panel membership and distributing materials in advance of meetings. It was clarified that these actions are permitted, though emails may become public record.
- Question on discussion of votes during the meeting is allowed, but advance coordination between voting members on how they will vote is prohibited.

## VI. DISTRICT UPDATES

### **Dr. Josee Gregoire - Executive Director, Office of Educational Services and ESE**

Dr. Josee Gregoire provided an overview of new pre-K programs for students with disabilities.

- Updates included new programs across MDCPS.
  - New Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) programs:
    - Bob Graham Educational Center (3), Sweetwater ES, Kinloch ES, and Cutler Ridge ES
  - New Reverse Mainstream program:
    - Key Biscayne K-8 and Parkview ES
  - LEAP programs – Converted from half-day to full-day (8:20 A.M.-1:50 P.M.)
    - Hibiscus ES, Everglades K-8, and Winston Park K-8

## Discussion and Questions

- Panel members requested clarification on Reverse Mainstream and ½-day/full-day LEAP programs. Dr. Gregoire explained that Reverse Mainstream classrooms typically serve students with disabilities and general education “role model” students to support social and communication skill development. Full-day LEAP classrooms include 5–6 students with disabilities and 12 general education peers, supported by two full-time adults and one part-time paraprofessional. Half-day programs (8:20 A.M.-10:50 A.M.) remain available at select sites.
- Questions were raised regarding student enrollment caps. Dr. Gregoire noted that while there is no absolute maximum, best practices limit inclusion classrooms to 10 students with disabilities and 10 general education students. Best practices for a program that runs like the one at Bob Graham Educational Center would, is approximately 10-12 students. Enrollment is monitored and if over-enrollment occurs, students are placed in nearby programs with available space to ensure equitable access and quality instruction.
- Panel members inquired about transportation, if there is a case of over-enrollment. Dr. Gregoire confirmed that transportation is provided at no cost when required by the student’s IEP. Parent Choice placements outside of the IEP require application through the Step-Up Scholarship program. Transportation decisions are made based on the student’s individual needs and home school proximity.
- Mr. Patrick Salmasi further clarified that while the best practices are the recommendations made to schools, the principal is the instructional leader of their school site and makes final decisions to meet individual student needs. Program allocations are reviewed annually by district staff to ensure equitable distribution of services across the district.
- Additional questions were raised regarding available transportation services for students. It was confirmed that if transportation is required in a student’s IEP to access their education, it is provided at no cost to the parent. For students attending a school by Parent Choice, transportation is not included in the IEP and families must apply through the Step-Up Scholarship program.

## Patrick Salmasi – Administrative Director, Office of Educational Services and ESE

Mr. Patrick Salmasi provided ESE district updates in MDCPS for the 2025-2026 school year.

- South ESE Service Center/FDLRS Relocation: The South ESE Service Center and FDLRS will move from JRE Lee Educational Center to Miami Killian Senior High School. Communication to families will be provided to ensure access to services during the transition.
- New programs for students with ASD and Intellectual Disabilities (InD) are being implemented across multiple schools. Programming needs and availability are reviewed annually to plan for student enrollment progression.
- BCBA internship opportunities in collaboration with Florida International University. BCBA turned MDCPS Administrator Vanessa Seron provides guidance on these best practices for schools and students with disabilities.
- A six-part Behavior Management Series for paraprofessionals which empowers paraprofessionals to implement evidence-based strategies and provides access to training that registered behavior technicians receive.
- SLD/Inclusion Team initiatives include:
  - Dyslexpert Cohort (ES/K8) – Schools select a representative; participation is decided by administration.

- UFLI Foundations (MS) – Provides targeted support for students needing phonics remediation in middle school, aligning with structured literacy initiatives for all students. SLD/Inclusion team collaborated with University of Florida Literacy Institute and MDCPS secondary ELA department for this program.
- Monthly Power Hours – Professional learning opportunities for teachers.

At this time, a discussion about sharing these offerings through family communication developed and will be detailed in the Discussion and Questions section below. At 1:07 P.M., Mr. Pierre De Agostini proposed a motion to pause the discussion, move the topic to the Family Engagement Subcommittee, directing the subcommittee to advocate for and publicize ESE updates discussed in the panel and report back with outcomes, and was seconded by Ms. Heller. Mr. Salmasi then resumed his presentation of MDCPS ESE Updates for the school year.

- Supporting Communication: Tools and Strategies Cohort – Professional learning opportunities have been implemented to align messaging across teams on assistive technology and AAC use. This ensures consistent communication strategies for students with disabilities.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Team Initiatives include:
  - Monthly Power Hours for teachers
  - Behavior Labs for teachers support, which is aligned with the BCBA initiative.

### **Discussion and Questions**

- As previously stated, a discussion occurred during the presentation regarding the promotion of ESE programs and offerings to families and the broader community. Key points included:
  - Public Awareness and Promotion: Ms. Heller raised the need for increased public awareness to highlight district programs and potentially attract more students. Dr. Rodriguez and the EdVentures Communications Department are actively working to share program information strategically across the district. Mr. Salmasi noted the importance of unified messaging to ensure transition programs and other offerings are effectively communicated.
  - Parent Communication: Several panel members emphasized that families often lack access to information about ESE programs. Concerns were raised about the ESE label and its perceived impact on students' futures, highlighting the need for clearer and more frequent communication directly from the district.
  - Targeted Outreach: Panel members discussed the potential for targeted emails or marketing to parents of students with disabilities, citing previous success during the ESE Parent Survey campaign. While acknowledging ethical considerations, the focus remains on growth and expanding communication to support families.
  - Social Media and Accessibility: Suggestions included improving the visibility of ESE programs on district websites and social media to reach parents who may not engage with traditional communications. Comments made highlighted the need to address diverse communities, including Hispanic families, and to make resources more accessible and understandable.
  - Ms. Sabrina Bishop noted the success of Special Olympics initiatives and the potential to use similar programs to engage families and showcase district offerings.
- The panel agreed that ongoing discussions related to family communication and engagement should continue within the subcommittee and be brought to the SDAPESE Panel after.

### **Dr. Lissette Rodriguez - Executive Director, Division of Academics**

Dr. Rodriguez provided an overview of current initiatives and legislative updates related to advanced academics and gifted services in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

- Gifted Services Enrollment: Despite overall district enrollment declines, gifted services enrollment is being maintained at 11% for the 2025–2026 school year. This is an FTE audit year for ESE, which includes gifted, and the Division is working with schools to ensure compliance.
- Cambridge Programs: Two new Cambridge schools were added this year—Ludlam ES and South Miami MS—to strengthen the Cambridge Diploma program at South Miami High School. This brings the total number of international program schools districtwide to 100.
- Program Funding: Funding for AP, Dual Enrollment, Cambridge, and International Baccalaureate programs has been maintained. These programs now have categorical funding, requiring schools to invest these funds to enhance and promote course offerings.
- AP Capstone Diploma: Beginning with the Class of 2026, students who earn the AP Capstone Diploma and meet qualifying scores in AP Seminar, AP Research, and four additional AP courses will also qualify for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship.
- Dual Enrollment Expansion: Miami Dade College Dual Enrollment course offerings have been expanded, including new introductory courses with eligibility beginning at a 2.0 GPA. These courses provide students with greater exposure to college-level coursework and encourage post-secondary planning.
- Gifted Subcommittee: The first meeting for the 2025–2026 school year is scheduled for October, with in-person and virtual participation options available.

### **Discussion and Questions**

- Gifted Subcommittee Access: Panel members asked about the gifted subcommittee and how to contact the lead. Dr. Rodriguez confirmed her role as the subcommittee lead and provided her email ([LTRodriguez@dadeschools.net](mailto:LTRodriguez@dadeschools.net)).

### **VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Ms. Heller provided updates and reminders regarding membership requirements, subcommittee participation, and meeting procedures:

- Annual Membership in Good Standing:
  - Voting members must attend at least 50% of regularly scheduled panel meetings, as published in the annual calendar, to maintain good standing. Calendar “save-the-date” notifications will be sent for all approved meeting dates to allow members to plan accordingly.
  - Active participation in at least one subcommittee meeting and panel-sponsored activities—including the End-of-Year Awards Ceremony in May—is also required.
  - Each agency or organization must designate one representative and one alternate. Members who have not listed an alternate should email Ms. Richardson Jones ([LRJones@dadeschools.net](mailto:LRJones@dadeschools.net)) and Ms. Olga Gonzalez ([olgogonzalez17@dadeschools.net](mailto:olgogonzalez17@dadeschools.net)) to update the roster.
    - Student alternates are not required, but one parent alternate must be selected.
- Subcommittee Participation:
  - The panel’s work is action-driven and primarily conducted through subcommittees. Subcommittees hold discussions, develop plans, and present proposals to the full panel for approval.

- Sign-ups for subcommittees are currently available via Microsoft Forms. Questions regarding the process or form completion should be directed to Olga Gonzalez, via email.
  - A new Ad Hoc Legislative Subcommittee has been established this year, as decided in the previous year's meeting.
- Meeting Schedule and Structure:
  - Subcommittees meet in October, December, February, and April, on alternating months from regular panel meetings.
  - Subcommittees are responsible for developing goals and action plans, conducting in-depth discussions, and preparing motions or proposals for the full panel to vote on.
- Parent and Student Participation:
  - Subcommittees should include one parent/legal guardian/caregiver and one parent alternate.
  - Student participation is encouraged to provide perspective, but alternates are not required.
- Future Communications:
  - Meeting dates, times, and other relevant information will be shared with panel members in advance. A Master Calendar will be maintained to ensure all members have access to scheduled meetings and deadlines.
- Special Olympics Updates – Mark Thompson and Sabrina Bishop
  - Over 30 years of collaboration between MDCPS and Special Olympics Florida.
  - USA Games: Emily, an MDCPS student, will represent the district in gymnastics at the University of Minnesota next year.
  - Friendship Circle Event: Scheduled for December 12, 2025, focusing on social skills development. Six middle schools and six high schools will participate, along with two schools from Monroe County. Students will engage across grade levels to support transitions and social skill growth.
  - Program Expansion: Increased MDCPS participation in FHSAA Special Olympics teams, offering students additional opportunities and recognition on college applications.
- Miami-Dade Parks & Recreation After-School Programs – Gisel Prado
  - Program Promotion: Miami-Dade Parks & Recreation is promoting available after-school programs for students.
  - Disabilities Fair Participation: Discussion with MDCPS staff for participation in event to connect families and schools with program opportunities.
  - Flyers and informational materials will be distributed to support enrollment and outreach.
- Voting Member Forms: All voting members were asked to complete and submit required forms to Olga Gonzalez before leaving the meeting.
- Ms. Heller shared some upcoming meetings and events within the county:
  - **September 13:** Leadership Meeting – PTA will provide free training on officer roles (president, vice president, treasurer), finance, and legislation. 8:00 AM–1:00 PM at 885 Southwest 50th Terrace, with lunch provided.
  - **September 15:** Family and Community Meeting – Discuss topics of interest to families and communities. 9:30–11:30 AM, Room 559, School Board Building.

- **Citizens Coalition:** Meets immediately afterward to review legislation and provide recommendations to schools and the School Board, including topics related to special education.
- **September 16:** ABC Meeting – Group reviews and recommends changes/support for school facilities. 12:30–4:00 PM, Auditorium.
- **September 29:** Budget Committee Meeting – Provides detailed updates and guidance on district budget matters. 5:30 PM, Superintendent's Office, Room 916.

### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Heller called for adjournment at 01:39 P.M., and the meeting was officially adjourned.