

Miami-Dade County Public Schools
SUPERINTENDENT'S DISTRICT ADVISORY PANEL
FOR EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

Minutes of November 4, 2021

SBAB Room 559

Members Present

Michelle Cumming, FIU (Physical)	Lynn Miskiel, UM Mailman Center (Virtual)	Elias Seife (Physical)
Enrique Escallon, Chairperson (Physical)	Gisel Prado, Miami Parks/Recreation (Virtual)	Mark Thompson, Special Olympics (Physical)
Beverly Heller, 2 nd Vice Chairperson (Physical)	Sandra Rancano, Parent to Parent (Virtual)	Angie Torres, M-DCPS (Physical)
Kelli Hunter-Sheppard, M-DCPS (Physical)	Maria Ratti (Physical)	Alicia Walford, PEN (Virtual)
Laurie Malman (Virtual)	Lisette Rodriguez, M-DCPS (Virtual)	Hermine Wilson-Lang (Virtual)
Ernie Martinez (Physical)	Patrick Salmasi, M-DCPS (Physical)	

Members Absent

Diane Adreon, UM-NSU CARD
 Sandy Ames, Family Care Council
 Rosa Maria Barbara
 Sabrena Bishop
 Irenaida Diaz, Advocacy Network on Disabilities
 Brenda Lampon, VR
 Kathy Vergara

School Board Member

Lucia Baez-Gellar

School Personnel Present

Tracie Abner (Physical)
 Sally Alayon (Physical)
 Iyasell Arrieta (Virtual)
 Lianie Cuba (Physical)
 Marisol Diaz (Virtual)
 Magaly Ercilla (Virtual)

Ava Goldman (Virtual)
Josee Gregoire (Virtual)
Yvonne Leon (Physical)
Georgina Mederos (Virtual)
Ray Novo (Physical)
Vivian Nunez (Physical)
Alina Rodriguez (Virtual)
Maria Selleck (Virtual)
Natalie Tappert (Virtual)
Latanya Troutman (Virtual)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 PM.

Welcome and Introduction of Panel Members/Visitors

Ms. Abner provided a welcome message to the committee. Ms. Angie Torres welcomed special guest Sally Alayon and Lianie Cuba from the Department of Mental Health Services. After member and guest introductions, Ms. Torres introduced Mr. Carvalho, Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), and Ms. Baez-Geller, School Board Member. Enrique Escallon welcomed all members and visitors.

Special Guest

Alberto Carvalho
Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent

Mr. Carvalho welcomed everyone and expressed his appreciation for the committee's efforts in working with families of students with disabilities. The committee thanked Mr. Carvalho for coming and for the support he provides. Mr. Carvalho asked if anyone had any questions he could answer.

The committee asked questions about Covid procedures and guidelines. Mr. Carvalho responded that the decisions made regarding Covid are based on science and specialist recommendations.

Further questions were asked regarding ESSER funds for students and staff. Mr. Carvalho advised that he believes we will get the funding needed. He stated that he has verified that funding will come in and if it does not then he will look for further support. Mr. Carvalho stated that these funds are needed and that there is no time to waste. Mr. Carvalho thanked the group and excused himself.

Meeting Norms

Angie Torres
Administrative Director, Department of Exceptional Student Education

Meeting norms were reviewed by Ms. Torres. Discussion included norms for physical and virtual participants.

Presentations

Mental Health Services Presentation

Sally Alayon
Lianie Cuba
Department of Mental Health Services

Ms. Alayon and Ms. Cuba shared how they work together cohesively with ESE and Student Services. They presented the department's Mission and Vision and how it is aligned to the FDOE Office of Safe Schools and Florida's State Senate Bills to support student social emotional wellbeing and provide additional layer of support.

Topics discussed in the presentation:

- Enhanced school-based supports before and after Covid.
- The hiring of Coordinators and new personnel through ESSER dollars and how these coordinators support K-12 schools.
- Training for mental health support through self-care.
- Training prevention at Tier 1 level.
- The full team approach that is in place through coordinators, school counselors, psychologists, and EBD clinicians.
- Threat Assessment Bill and how K-12 schools have teams in places as referenced through Section 1001.212 of Florida Statute.
- Suicide prevention and the screening and risk assessment done through the Columbia rating scale. This assessment identifies suicidal ideation and behavior through a team approach.
- Community partnership through the Children's Trust/Health connect. The agencies help to support the schools with assigned Mental Health Professionals to support schools.
- Mental health training for staff and the state requirement.
- The importance of reaching out to all stakeholders.
- The Parent Assistant Line is available Monday through Friday from 8:00-4:00 pm with a licensed mental health professional, at 305-995-7100 and the website with resources for all mental health professionals.

Questions about the concerns for mental health were shared. Ms. Cuba explained the preventive model for K-12 social emotional programs at all school sites. Ms. Cuba also discussed training on de-escalation and de-escalation techniques. Ms. Alayon reviewed schedules and the experience of clinical coordinators and how they continuously assess data and the need of the schools. She also explained that the Senate Bill states that the coordinators are hired for direct support for mental health risk, and they must have a degree in the field. She explained that counselors are under the Student Services department, but they support Mental Health and Academic needs. Dr. Kelli Hunter-Sheppard explained the role of the Social Workers and Psychologists, and that both professionals are under the Department of Exceptional Student Education (ESE). Ms. Alayon ensured the committee that this is a team approach.

Questions were asked regarding SEDNET role with Mental Health Services, the referral process for mental health services and supports, and how parents are notified. Ms. Cuba explained how they collaborate with SEDNET as well as with ESE for training, important information, and

services available. She explained the referral process in place and how consent is required and requested for services. She also explained the procedures for referral to outside agencies.

Questions were asked regarding ABA therapy, if it is a mental health therapy and if it is something that can be covered through funding from the school district as a direct service. Ms. Goldman discussed how M-DCPS is exploring the option of establishing a BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analysts) position as well as contracting services. We currently have various staff and personnel who are trained to provide such direct services, such as paraprofessionals. Paras who work with students with autism, Behavior Management Teachers and the Autism Support Team are trained on BCBA strategies. The representative from the Advocacy Network on Disabilities explained that funds from The Children's Trust are available to assist ABA or RBT support in school programs and/or afterschool programs.

Questions were asked regarding equitable services for ESE students with communication concerns. Ms. Cuba stated that they collaborate with other departments to ensure that all needs are met. The first priority is to ensure student safety. Mr. Escallon mentioned that there are other concerns that we need further follow-up at future meetings.

The committee thanked Ms. Alayon and Ms. Cuba for their presentation.

Consent Agenda and Approval

Mr. Escallon reminded the committee that group attendance is important and that we do not have a quorum at this time with only 10 voting members present.

Presentation of Subcommittees

Ms. Torres shared the minutes for each subcommittee by email and asked the committees to share a brief update with the panel.

Awards Subcommittee

Dr. Hunter-Sheppard reported on the Awards sub-committee. She shared that the 2021 Awards presentation published through the EduVision channel was viewed 631 times, which exceeds the previous event attendance. Only one theme option was submitted for the 2022 Awards, which was "BE: Beyond Exceptional". Awards criteria will continue as in past years. There will be two options for the event – a virtual presentation or a ceremony in an auditorium with limited seating and streaming available for individuals not able to attend in person. Dates to consider are May 5th or May 12th at 5:30 pm. Venues to consider are Miami Arts Studio, Ronald Reagan Senior High School, and Coral Park Senior High School. Event format and location may change based on health guidelines. It has been recommended that the Gifted and Inclusion subcommittee be part of the selection process. The Award for Leadership and Service is to be selected by the Gifted Subcommittee and the Champion of Inclusion award will be selected by the Inclusion Subcommittee.

Education Programs and Inclusion Subcommittee

Mr. Salmasi stated that the subcommittee met on October 28, 2021. He shared the goals of the committee and their discussions on the awards, sensitivity training for all staff and the legislative changes on modified curriculum. He informed the group of the selected meeting dates and stated dates would be shared with members to avail themselves of opportunities for all to participate.

Early Childhood Subcommittee

Ms. M. Diaz provided updates on the Early Childhood Subcommittee and Early Childhood Department.

During the subcommittee meeting they discussed change in assessment replacing the Patel Development Inventory (PDI). The new assessment is given when they enter and exit the program on three essential areas. Teachers have been trained on the assessment and on documenting and sharing outcome with families.

On October 29th, professional development was provided to 890 Pre-k teachers and staff members. Through an ongoing endeavor, in order to keep families informed, Pre-K ESE is in the process of developing a new webinar through the Parent Academy and other platforms. The webinar is titled “My child has an IEP, now what?”.

Questions were asked regarding the five-hour emergent literacy training, and how teachers will be trained. Ms. Diaz explained that there will be different options for teachers to be able to receive the training.

Another question was asked regarding transitioning to kindergarten, and where this information is found in the new webinar. Ms. Diaz mentioned that there are a series of videos available from the department to welcome families to Pre-K and transitioning. This webinar is more for the IEP process. Ms. Rancano from Parent to Parent mentioned they have training on Early Steps to Pre-K and Pre-K to Kindergarten as well.

Family Engagement Subcommittee

Ms. Nunez reported that the committee met on October 29, 2021. The subcommittee reviewed the goals from last year and the accomplishments. They then developed a large goal with activities as follow-ups for the goal. Ms. Nunez reviewed the goal, activities, and the upcoming meeting dates.

Ms. Walford stated that the Family Network on Disabilities (FND) has a four-part program called “Parents as Leaders”. They would be happy to collaborate and train parents or to have FND as guest speakers. Mr. Escallon recommended that we compile resources mentioned and provide them to parents to augment what we are doing at the district. Mr. Seife asked what the process was for distribution of the resource flyer currently being published and distributed. Ms. Nunez advise that it would be sent out to schools through a Weekly Briefing which provides instructions to administrators to print the flyer for families and send home with students The resource flyer is also available virtually on the ESE website for other parents.

Gifted Subcommittee

Dr. Rodriguez advised that the gifted subcommittee met on October 13th. They reviewed the recently adopted strategic plan and the impact of the plan for gifted students as well as Board Item H13. They discussed the webinars available to parents for gifted students and committee goals. The next meeting will be December 2nd.

Low Incidence Exceptionalities Subcommittee

Ms. Tappert provided an update for the Low Incidence Subcommittee. They reviewed previous goals and set new goals. She discussed identifying professional development for staff, addressing Pre-K through graduation. Dates were set for meetings for the rest of the year.

Mental Health Subcommittee

Ms. Rodriguez shared the updates for the Mental Health Subcommittee. During the meeting they developed three goals for the year. She discussed the goals and how they plan to collaborate with other departments and the community.

Secondary Transition Subcommittee

Ms. Ercilla provided updates for the Secondary Transition Subcommittee. They met on October 19th, and discussed transition services, the amendment to statute, transitions by age groups, monthly online sessions with VR, and other sessions that have occurred. She also shared the goal for the subcommittee for this school year.

Ms. Torres thanked all Subcommittees for their updates.

ESE Updates

Mr. Salmasi shared information on parent, teacher, and student support. He shared the different parent sessions offered in October, which included collaboration with PEN, Special Olympics, SEDNET, FDLRS and Hands on Literacy. He informed the committee that a parent Q & A on changes for parents of kindergarten students on modified curriculum was sent to parents and a resource list is also available on our website.

As for teacher support, Mr. Salmasi discussed the trainings offered to teachers on Oct 29th. There were 22 sessions offered to teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers, including a special partnership with Lighthouse for the Blind. Over 1329 professionals participated in these sessions.

Dyslexperts

On October 29th, training was provided to build capacity at school sites for assisting students with dyslexia. Each elementary school has identified a Dyslexpert. Monthly sessions will be offered to these individuals in hourly and full day or half day formats. The department also is working on partnerships with FIU and FMU, as well as parent sessions.

Gifted/Advanced Academics

Dr. Rodriguez stated that this is Gifted Education Week which recognizes outstanding programs and experiences for gifted students. After the official October FTE count, there is a drop in gifted student enrollment this year. Board Item H-13 was discussed during the subcommittee and a follow-up was done through a Weekly Briefing to schools regarding academic competitions available. As for professional development, four sessions have been offered to parents in three languages through partnership with The Parent Academy. Sessions have also been provided to school administrators during Leader-to-Leader meetings.

Ms. Barbara asked about activities during October Disability Awareness month. Ms. Torres discussed the board item on employment for individuals with disabilities by Board Member Baez-

Geller. She expressed that Ms. Ercilla, supervisor for Transition Programs, highlighted M-DCPS employment programs through social media. The highlights focused on employment skills programs for post-secondary employment and beyond. Ms. Ercilla also had an open house with a large turnout for our project programs. Parent sessions on employability skills were also held. Mr. Salmasi mentioned how Mr. Thompson from Special Olympics provided a virtual session on disability history and awareness as well.

Mr. Escallon asked to extend the meeting 15 minutes. The committee agreed.

Early Childhood

Ms. Diaz repeated the updates she provided earlier during her subcommittee presentation.

Meeting Wrap-Up

Mr. Escallon asked for adjournment at 5:16 PM but other members asked to extend a few minutes to provide time for further requests, comments, and details on current happenings:

- Special Olympics Race for Inclusion on November 11th at Bayfront Park.
- The need for more parents to join the different subcommittees.
- The need for members to try to attend the panel meetings physically.
- School Board Members to also join our committees.
- ADA compliance for the website

Mr. Escallon and Ms. Torres thanked everyone for attending.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 5:19 PM.