

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

**Minutes of March 18, 2021**

**SBAB Room 559**

**Members Present**

Diane Adreon, UM/NSU CARD (Physical)	Kelli Hunter-Sheppard, M-DCPS (Physical)	Maria Ratti (Virtual)
Sandy Ames, Family Care Council (Physical)	Brenda Lampon, VR (Physical)	Chris Reigadas (Virtual)
Emily Andrade, Student Representative (Virtual)	Hermine Wilson –Lang (Virtual)	Lisette Rodriguez, M-DCPS (Physical)
Rosa Maria Barbara, Vice Chair (Physical)	Laurie Malman (Virtual)	Elias Seife (Physical)
Michelle Cumming, FIU (Virtual)	Ernie Martinez (Physical)	Angie Torres, M-DCPS (Physical)
Irie Diaz, Advocacy Network (Virtual)	Lynn Miskiel, UM Mailman Center (Physical)	Kathy Vergara (Physical)
Enrique Escallon, Chairperson (Physical)	Gisel Prado, Miami Parks/Recreation (Virtual)	Allicia Walford, PEN (Virtual)
Beverly Heller (Physical)	Sandra Rancano, Parent to Parent (Virtual)	

**School Board Member and/or Representatives**

Lucia Baez-Geller (Virtual)

**Members Absent**

Sabrena Bishop  
Yvonne Leon  
Mark Thompson

**School Personnel Present**

Magaly Abrahante (Virtual)  
Suzeline Michel Antoine (Virtual)  
(Reagan Chalmers (Virtual)  
Marisol Diaz (Virtual)  
Magaly Ercilla (Physical)

Ava Goldman (Virtual)  
Juan Carlos Gonzalez (Virtual)  
Arlene Lindsay-Marshall (Virtual)  
Joanna Palmer (Virtual)  
Mary Paz (Virtual)  
Angel Rodriguez (Virtual)  
Patrick Salmasi (Physical)  
Orfirio Sanchez (Virtual)  
Marie Sellek (Virtual)  
Lisa Thurber (Virtual)  
Sara Walkup (Virtual)

### **Call to Order**

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

### **Welcome and Introduction of Panel Members and Guests**

Mr. Enrique Escallon welcomed all members and visitors. All members and guests were introduced.

### **Strategic Planning**

#### **Strategic Blueprint Envisioning Focus Group**

Lisa Thurber, Administrative Director  
Office of Community Engagement

Ms. Thurber shared information about the Strategic Planning survey. Participants were asked questions about the district and were given the opportunity to provide feedback.

What is the district doing well?

- Response to concerns
- Increased pay for teachers
- Social media as a communication method
- Partnerships with agencies
- Response to changes due to Covid
- Providing services virtually early on during school closures
- Virtual IEP meetings
- Efforts to contact and support families of students who have not been engaged
- Promotion of inclusion of all students

What are 3 things the District could change or add that would improve the student experience?

- Different approach and flexibility due to challenges with virtual courses
- Hold students harmless in testing this year
- Testing should not take teachers away from teaching
- Testing should not take instructional time away from students who are not testing
- VPK should be available for the full day

- Adding a course for students that covers Time Management Skills
- Improve class size
- More mental health support and services in schools
- Adding a mental health counselor to every school
- Increase training for general education teachers on how to work with students with disabilities
- Improvement with connecting students and families to all the available resources

What have we learned this past year during Covid-19 that we should extend moving forward?

- Virtual IEPs have been helpful in increasing parent engagement during IEP meetings
- Increased parent involvement through virtual platforms
- Assistive technology can be a Tier 1 intervention

What do you think is the single most important priority for M-DCPS over the next 5 years?

- Mental Health
- Counseling
- Communication

What would success look like in 5 years at the conclusion of the strategic plan?

- Transparency and communication
- Increase in number of teachers in all areas

What information or advice would you give M-DCPS as we make decisions about long-term priorities and goals?

- Policy and resources to improve outcomes for students with exceptionalities
- Continue communication efforts

Ms. Thurber shared the links to the strategic plan website and the survey for community members.

### **Review of Agenda**

Mr. Escallon reviewed the agenda. He asked if changes were recommended for agenda. No changes were recommended. Mr. Escallon reviewed the minutes from the January 2021 meeting. Chris Regaidas explained that she was present for the January 2021 meeting but left early.

Dr. Abrahante shared with the panel that a new Assistant Superintendent will be overseeing the Department of Exceptional Student Education. She also shared that she will be assisting with the roll out of several grants in the next few months. Mr. Escallon, thanked Dr. Abrahante for her support through the years on behalf of the panel.

Ms. Heller made a motion to approve the minutes, and Ms. Myskiel seconded. Minutes were approved. Ms. Angie Torres displayed the minutes from the December 2020 meeting. Mr. Escallon asked that the December 2020 minutes can be reviewed and approved at the next meeting.

### **Presentations**

#### **Elections for Panel Officers**

Enrique Escallon

Angie Torres

Ms. Angie Torres reviewed the Meeting Norms. Ballots were emailed to voting members on March 18, 2021 before the Panel Meeting. Ms. Torres reviewed the nominations from the January 2021 meeting.

- For Chairperson, Enrique Escallon was nominated and accepted nomination.
- Hermine Wilson-Lang was nominated for First Vice-Chair. She accepted nomination.
- Rosa Maria Barbara nominated Maria Ratti for First Vice-Chair. Ms. Ratti declined.
- Enrique Escallon nominated Ernie Martinez for First Vice-Chair. Ernie Martinez accepted.
- Elias Seife nominated Beverly Heller for First Vice Chair. Ms. Heller declined.
- Ernie Martinez was nominated for Second Vice-Chair and he accepted.
- Enrique Escallon nominated Hermine Wilson-Lang for Second Vice-Chair. Ms. Wilson-Lang declined the nomination.
- Lisette Rodriguez nominated Beverly Heller for Second Vice-Chair. Ms. Heller accepted the nomination.

### **SP&P Overview**

Mary Paz, Executive Director  
Exceptional Student Education

Mr. Seife asked how latest funds received by the district will be used and if specific amounts will be allocated for ESY. Rosa Maria Barbara asked about FSA tests being administered to students who are participating in MSO. Mary Paz clarified that students will be reporting to the school site to take the assessments. Dr. Abrahante shared that the district has been planning and organizing for supports and services that will be provided to all students to address learning loss.

### **Sub-Committee Reports and Legislative Update**

Enrique Escallon

Awards Subcommittee – discussed the date and format of awards

Early Childhood Subcommittee – reviewed subcommittee goals

Inclusion Subcommittee – provided the updated LRE rate

Mr. Escallon asked for motion to extend meeting past 5:00 PM

- Gifted Subcommittee – Item C100 was reviewed; increase PD opportunities for teachers of the gifted.
- Secondary Transition Subcommittee – discussed M-DCPS and VR collaboration virtual sessions; shared subcommittee goals.
- Low Incidence Subcommittee – Discussed data gathering and increasing resource development.
- Family Engagement – Reviewed subcommittee reports from the last subcommittee meeting. Mr. Seife recommended establishing a general email address for the subcommittee and panel members, so that parents can reach out. Angie Torres shared that panel member contact information is provided on the panel website. Escallon emphasized the importance of updating website links and keeping sites active and current.

### **Elections**

Elections results were reviewed and announced:

Enrique Escallon – Chair

Hermine Wilson-Lang – First Vice-Chair

Beverly Heller – Second Vice-Chair

### **Meeting Wrap-Up**

Angie announced she will be sharing several flyers with the panel participants via email after today's meeting.

Enrique Escallon mentioned if we may need a committee to address or track the impact of COVID-19 on students' health and progress. He also shared information about attendance and how this will be impacted as students return to school.

Rosa Maria Barbara discussed an article about a study of Covid 19 risk factors from Disability Scoop, which includes data. She will email the article to Angie for distribution. Rosa Maria asked for access to the building WiFi during the next meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Rosa Maria made a motion to adjourn at 5:25 PM. Lynn Miskiel seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 5:25 PM.