

MINUTES

Miami-Dade County Public Schools SUPERINTENDENT'S DISTRICT ADVISORY PANEL FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (SWD)

Minutes of January 24, 2013
School Board Administration Building – Room 916
3:00 P.M.

Members Present

Mariana Barbara	Elizabeth Cramer	Lynn Miskiel
Rosa Maria Barbara	Dean Crews	Christine Reigadas
Lourdes Bravo	Enrique Escallon	Liliana Salazar
Vickie Burley	Isabel Garcia	Miguel Suau
Elsa Clarke	Stephanie Mintz	Kathy Vergara

Alternates Present

Jerold Blumstein for Dr. Karp
Marie Delgado for Dr. Karp

Honorary Members Present

Jane Blake
Yolanda Herrera

School Board Members Present

Laurie Malman – Alternate Dr. Lawrence Feldman

School Personnel Present

Jill Brookner
Helene Chait
Sonja Clay
Rosalia Gallo
Kathy Maguire
Deborah Montilla

Guests Present

Marie C. Anterior, PLC
Marie Auguste, Sabal Palm
Marie D. Laguerre, Parent
Rose Painson, PLC
Linda Sachs, LCSW JAFCO
Nancy Torres
Carlos Viera

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm.

Introduction and Welcome

Ms Chris Reigadas asked members and guests to introduce themselves. Following introductions, Ms. Chris Reigadas, Panel Chair, welcomed members and guests.

Approval of Minutes

Members of the Panel approved the minutes of the meeting of December 13, 2012 as presented or corrected. Elizabeth Cramer moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Elsa Clarke seconded the motion. Chris Reigadas asked members to approve the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Items

Ms. Reigadas welcomed and introduced the following presentation and speakers:

Transition and College Preparation/Access: Deborah Montilla, District Director Student Services; Jill Brookner, Instructional Supervisor ESE; Carlos Viera, Curriculum Support Specialist and Guidance Services.

Ms. Montilla began the presentation by describing services provided by the Division of Student Services. She reported that the Miami-Dade County Public Schools College Assistance Program was started by former School Board member G. Holmes Braddock. Jane Blake added that founding members of the Panel also helped begin this program. The program has come a long way and now includes students with disabilities. Mr. Viera now works with Ms. Montilla in Student Services but continues to work closely with Exceptional Student Education (ESE).

Jill Brookner represents the transition team. She reported that there are nine (9) transition specialists throughout the District. Mr. Viera added that special education and general education personnel now work closely together. He continued that the ability to analyze student data has made and will continue to make a tremendous difference in their ability to locate students who may have fallen through the cracks. Mr. Viera previously worked at Edison High School and experienced the importance of collaboration in improvement of graduation rates.

The College Assistant Program addresses various aspects of the student's journey to college. The journey begins with early childhood education and continues with a meaningful path to graduation. One important feature of the program is the College Fair. This year the College Fair will take place on February 24th at the Miami Airport Convention Center from 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm. More students with disabilities are needed to attend College Fair.

Throughout the year workshops are offered for students and parents to help them with the transition to college. Ms. Brookner stated that the Transition Team understands the importance of parent involvement. At team meetings the appointed LEA represents school and ESE. General education teachers are also invited to the team meetings as well as community agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). The key member of the Team is the Transition Specialist.

The Transition Team provides an orientation for all graduating students with disabilities including those on standard and special diploma track. All seniors are required to bring a Career Portfolio to the meeting. In the future, the student portfolio will be recorded in ConnectEDU. Those students with

disabilities on a college track are invited to attend a special meeting regarding transition to higher education. The purpose is to prepare the students for the college experience. The Transition Specialist will add a follow-up meeting to check-in with college bound students in May. The application process for the Student Resources Office is explained to the student and family. Miguel Suau said that parents should be informed that parent guardianship may be crucial for their student's success.

Mr. Viera added that organization skills are critical for success in college. He stated that when there is a Counseling Management Agreement the team is able to work together for the benefit of the student. Ms. Montilla referred members to a Technical Assistance Paper on post secondary education. There are some post secondary institutions that do not provide services that are in the best interest of students. It is very important for families to work closely with their CAP Advisors, who will be able to caution them about potential problems. Mr Viera added that sometimes college offers are really not in the best interest of the students.

Ms. Brookner noted that all families must complete the Free Application for Federal and Student Aid and the application for Bright Future Scholarships. Jane Blake asked how to get the word out about student scholarships. It was recommended that she contact Carlos Viera. Jane Blake described the Mary Jo Battle MacDonald Scholarship Foundation. Ms. MacDonald was a founding member of the Panel. One scholarship per year is awarded for a student with disabilities. Mr. Viera offered to place an announcement in the Weekly Briefing.

Jill Brookner reviewed the following programs available to students with disabilities:

Project Victory is open to all students with disabilities. Usually, those on standard diplomas are too busy to participate. Almost every high school is connected to this project.

Project SEARCH is a one year Program for students eighteen (18) to twenty-two (22) years of age.

Project BRIDGE provides the marine experience at Shake a Leg for students eighteen (18) to twenty-two (22) years of age.

STEPS Program is a work oriented and independent skills program for students eighteen (18) to twenty-two (22) years of age. The purpose is to prepare students with disabilities to leave M-DCPS at age twenty-two (22). Eighty percent (80%) of high schools participate in this program.

Project ACCEPT was the first college program followed by M-DCPS at Miami Dade College Inter-American Campus.

Project Panther Life at Florida International University is a Transition Post Secondary Program for Student with Intellectual Disabilities.

Mr. Viera stated that it is never too early to help students begin to prepare for college. There is an emphasis on this in elementary school, middle school, and high school. Early emphasis facilitates exploration of career interests and rigor in academic pursuits.

Stephanie Mintz asked if students with disabilities have the opportunity to talk to ACCESS officers when visiting local universities. Jill Brookner responded that yes they do have the opportunity. Ms. Montilla noted that research reveals that students do so much better in high school if they have a goal to go to college. Ms. Mintz asked about recording transition on the IEP. Ms. Brookner stated that the

diploma option decision is recorded on the IEP when students are in eighth grade.

Ms. Montilla noted that the United States Department of Education Race to the TOP Grant Award will award ten points if the District proposes wrap around student services. Two million was allocated for to Miami-Dade County Public Schools for wrap around services to be implemented in forty-nine (49) middle schools.

Ms. Montilla continued that monitoring social emotional development is very important, particularly for students in middle school. ConnectEDU will be in the middle schools as well as high schools. Assessments that include social/emotional components will be incorporated into the program. Mr. Viera stated that ConnectEDU is a fabulous partner because the possibilities for data management are tremendous.

In ConnectEDU, the students access the system through a student portal. There students can access their support team and can begin to build an electronic portfolio that can be expanded overtime. Parents and counselors can track student progress and provide assistance when needed. The program includes interactive planning tools, communication tools, college search tools, and centralized student tracking. Lourdes Bravo asked how this program will specifically help students with disabilities. Mr. Viera said that students at risk will be included in system. He thinks that this program will bring M-DCPS into the twenty first century. He added that schools earn more points for students who are at risk are on track to graduate. Enrique Escallon said that this is great. He asked about students with disabilities who are more involved. Mr. Viera said that we now have MECA, which targets low-incidence students with disabilities. Focusing on these students will be the next issue so that the systems can connect. The good thing is that technology is constantly improving.

Mr. Viera stated that the implementation of ConnectEDU began with train the trainer workshops for CAP specialists. Regional follow-up support is everywhere. Information about district wide scholarships can be distributed and tracked through ConnectEDU. Representatives from the United States Department of Education visited and observed ConnectEDU and were all very impressed.

Ms. Montilla said that she and M-DCPS School Board Member Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman have been appointed the official chairs of the Miami National College Fair on February 24th. Approximately two-hundred colleges and universities from around the world will attend the event. Rosa Maria Barbara said that she and her daughter have attended twice and that it is a wonderful event. Over twelve thousand (12,000) attendees attended the College Fair last year.

Miami Dade College presents information about their program for students with disabilities. Jill Brookner added that transition specialists will present information about more programs this year. Ms. Montilla noted that in the past there has not been a great interest in information for students with disabilities. This year they will have college forums including students from other colleges. Their hope is to have a student with disabilities there to tell their story.

Jill Brookner is planning to host a transition table at the College Fair. Transition specialists are going to go to various sessions to offer their assistance to anyone interested in issues regarding students with disabilities. Rosa Maria Barbara thanked everyone for making these changes. Stephanie Mintz said that her son, Kevin Mintz, is now in graduate school. He actually wanted to attend the meeting via skype to provide his feedback. Kevin Mintz will attend our April meeting to share his experience at graduate level in a foreign country.

She continued that PSAT would have been very helpful to him but at the time no one thought of it. All students with disabilities are individuals. His strong suggestions are that when a student is taking PSAT there should be a Transition Team Specialist there to observe exactly what the student's specific needs are. This early data collection will help the team determine what accommodations are needed for students when they go to college. The standardized list does not meet needs of individual students. Marianna Barbara said that she has taken PSAT. She thinks that parents do not know that this option is available for their children. It is important that they know about this option. ConnectEDU does provide opportunities for this.

Chris Reigadas thanked the presenters and asked them to please return to complete their wonderful presentation.

Isabel Garcia noted that if presenters followed the allocated time lines they would not be rushed during their presentations.

Chris Reigadas introduced Linda Sachs, the Program Coordinator for the Jewish Adoption and Foster Care Options (JAFCO) Respite and Family Resource Center for Children with Developmental Disabilities. Ms. Sachs said that she was very excited to have been invited to present to the Panel and that she was thrilled to be able to introduce a new facility in Sunrise being built to provide help for families of children with disabilities. JAFCO's mission is to help students entering foster care maintain their cultural identity. Ms. Sachs said that she has been with JAFCO for three years and has become aware of the fact that so many families of children with disabilities need support and guidance. They are now creating a village designed to serve families of children with disabilities from birth to twenty-one years of age who reside in Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties. Their objective is to partner with all agencies and serve all people. The initial funding was secured from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. Senator Nan Rich supported this project and helped secure the funding. The land was donated by the Jewish Foundation. The Sam and Adele Berger Campus of the David Posnack Jewish Children's Center will provide respite care for children with disabilities to allow parents and other siblings to have an essential break from the sometimes overwhelming stress of parenting a child with special needs. It will also provide state-of-the-art treatment, support, research, and education for parents, siblings, and professionals in the community relating to the care of children with developmental disabilities.

Families will be charged for the services on a sliding scale. JAFCO is applying for Medicaid Waiver and will take Medicaid. Lourdes Bravo asked about services for bilingual families. Ms. Sachs responded that there would be services for bilingual families.

JAFCO is associated with Florida International University, Florida Atlantic University, and NOVA Southeastern University.

Ms. Sachs said that tours of the site are being conducted now. Chris Reigadas thanked her so much for her presentation. Jane Blake reported that she went to see the facilities. Parent to Parent is wonderful but cannot provide all of the services needed alone. Every parent needs respite.

Chris Reigadas asked members and guests who came in late to introduce themselves. She then gave a brief explanation about the Panel and our membership requirements.

Committee Reports

Awards Committee

Kathy Vergara/Jill Brookner

Kathy Vergara distributed the minutes of the meeting of January 16, 2013. She also distributed a draft of the Award of Excellence for Students with Disabilities Application Form for members to review. Members approved the draft of the Student Application Form. It will be distributed as a weekly briefing by Thursday, January 31st. Applications will be due to Parent to Parent of Miami on April 1, 2013 by 4:30 pm.

Jill Brookner reported that Employer Nominations are sent to supported employment teams and to career technical education for evaluation.

Liz Cramer and Stephanie Mintz had agreed to represent the Panel on the Parent to Parent selection committee. Applications will be reviewed by the committee at Parent to Parent of Miami on April 17 at 7:00 pm. Stephanie Mintz said that she could not attend the meeting on April 17. Rosa Maria Barbara volunteered to take her place. Jill Brookner will represent the District.

A total of four awards are usually given. One for students in each of the following groups: prekindergarten; elementary school; middle school; and senior high school.

Employer Nominations are sent to supported employment teams and to career technical education for evaluation. A total of four awards are given.

Rosalia Gallo and her team will select the Inclusion School of the Year.

D/HH Committee

Lynn Miskiel/Linda Reiter

Lynn Miskiel announced that the DHH Committee met on January 23, 2013. Jill Brookner, Sonja Clay, and Dean Crews attended the meeting. They discussed three objectives including transition. Teachers attended the transition task force meeting and are looking into systems.

Sonja Clay added said that an itinerant teacher of the deaf will also be working on transition so this is a good fit and is a new endeavor. All agreed that this is a terrific opportunity for everyone. Jill Brookner added that Dean Crews asked that the students be able to access instruction about life skills through a life skills course on line. This is a wonderful idea that will actually help many students with disabilities.

Education/Inclusion Committee

Trini Lora/Rosalia Gallo

Rosalia Gallo reported that the committee met on January 18, 2013. Last year's merger of the Education and Inclusion Committees was discussed. This resulted in the Professional Development Workshop that was conducted last summer. As a result, there were sixty-five (65) Inclusion/Achievement Actions Plans developed at the workshops by the participating schools.

Goals and Action Steps were discussed. The committee's priority is to achieve full educational and inclusion potential of students with disabilities in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Their primary goal is to improve academic performance and access to the general education curriculum for students

with disabilities. Four action steps were developed to work on during the year (see committee minutes).

The Education/Inclusion Committee will monitor the schools and identify school for award.

Panel Secondary Transition Committee Lourdes Bravo/Jill Brookner

Jill Brookner announced that soon there will be surprising and positive news that is being kept under wraps. No clues today but there are exciting irons in the fire. M-DCPS submitted a grant to The Children's Trust for expansion of Project Panther Life. This will be great for additional students to enroll in the Biscayne Bay Campus of Florida International University (FIU). Miami-Dade College may also become another site.

Lourdes Bravo asked a question about the submission of a grant to Vocational Rehabilitation to support students over the age of 22 with disabilities. Ms. Brookner responded that they have not yet heard about this. Chris Reigadas thanked Ms. Brookner for her fabulous development of programs for students with disabilities. Everyone agreed. Lourdes Bravo agreed and emphasized how many new opportunities have been created for students with disabilities because of all these wonderful programs.

Jill Brookner thanked everyone and added that another new program started Monday at Barbara Goldman Senior High School. The program will provide a vocational opportunity (culinary arts and industrial arts laboratories) for students with disabilities.

Family and Community Chris Reigadas
Involvement Advisory Committee

No report.

Attendance Boundary Committee Yolanda Herrera

No report.

Other

Lynn Miskiel announced that the Medical Issues and Growing Child Conference scheduled for Friday, February 1st, at the Mailman Center for Child Development would provide valuable information about auditory training, hearing aids, and cochlear implants. Lourdes Bravo reminded everyone that there had been a request for this type of workshop last year. She thanked Ms. Miskiel for helping organize this Professional Development opportunity for teachers, speech-language pathologists, and audiologists.

Lynn Miskiel announced that that US Representative Tim Ryan was scheduled to speak about the Mindful Mind on February 9, 2013 in Coral Gables.

Isabel Garcia reminded everyone that Dan Marino's WalkAbout Autism would take place on Saturday, January 26th at Sun Life Stadium.

Laurie Malman distributed flyers about a M-DCPS Open House for parents of students with disabilities at the Exceptional Student Education Center South on January 30, 2013.

Kathy Vergara suggested that information about the changes in the Matrix be presented to the Panel.

Rosa Maria Barbara would like to invite the principal of TARA to attend our meetings.

Chris Reigadas is planning to invite representatives of the Red Cross to present to the Panel. They would like M-DCPS personnel to work closely with Red Cross Emergency Centers.

Elsa Clarke would like Children's Medical Services to give a presentation to the Panel. Vickie Burley said it would be good to have Children's Medical Services speak to the Young Children with Disabilities and Special Needs Council as well.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:08 pm.

Next Meeting

The General Membership meeting is scheduled for April 4, 2012 at 3:00 pm in Room 916 of the School Board Administration Building.