

## MINUTES

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

Minutes of March 16, 2017

School Board Administration Building – Room 559  
1450 Northeast 2nd Avenue  
Miami, Florida 33132

### **Members Present**

Magaly Abrahante	Elizabeth Cramer-FIU	Lynn Miskiel-MCCD
Diane Adreon	Odile da Silva-AND	Linda Reiter
Sandy Ames-FCC	Ava Goldman	Elias Seife
Rosa Maria Barbara	Ernie Martinez	Kathy Vergara
Lauren Bustos	Janet McDaniel	

### **Alternates Present**

Amam Condsy (Easter Seals)  
Maria Delgado (Martin Karp)  
Maria Jakoniuk Ratti (Rosa Maria Barbara)  
Michelle Schladant (MCCD)

### **Members Absent**

Lauren Bustos-PTP  
Eric Cintron  
Elsa Clarke  
Myrna Charlton-ARC  
Enrique Escallon  
Katherine Fuentes  
Martin Karp  
Yubeta Miah  
Camila Rocha-Easter Seals  
Elaine Silny-FLASHA  
Madeline Spado-Best Buddies  
Miguel Suau

### **Honorary Members Present**

Vickie Burley  
Christine Reigadas

### **School Board Members Present**

Maria Delgado (Martin Karp)

### **School Personnel Present**

Martha Berman  
Reagan Chalmers  
Marisol Diaz  
Juan Carlos Gonzalez  
Jamena Hines  
Kelli Hunter-Sheppard  
Laurie Malman – Alternate Dr. Lawrence Feldman  
Shiela Miguel  
Robin Morrison  
Vivian Nunez  
Ana Maria Sasseville

### **Guests Present**

Lucia Barbeyto	Parent
Chantel Blake	Hope for Miami
Samuel Joseph	City of Coral Gables
Rosana Onorato	Miami Family Friendly Hands
Mary Palacios	Miami-Dade Parks
Susana Piscocoya	Hope for Miami
Ivanna Sawyer	Hope for Miami

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:12 pm.

### **Introduction and Welcome**

Following introductions, Ms. Rosa Maria Barbara, Panel Chair, welcomed members and guests.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Members of the Panel approved the minutes of the meeting of February 16, 2017 as corrected as well as the minutes of the Awards Committee and Early Childhood PreK Committee.

Liz Cramer moved to approve Panel meeting minutes as corrected. Janet McDaniel seconded the motion. Rosa Maria Barbara asked members to approve the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Ernie Martinez moved to approve the minutes of the Awards Committee and Early Childhood PreK Committee. Lynn Miskiel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Chair Report**

Rosa Maria Barbara announced the following upcoming meetings:

March 20: Spectrum Fair – Illuminating Autism – Westland Hialeah Senior High School  
March 25: SFACS Autism Community Workshops – South Florida Autism Charter Schools, Inc.  
April 2: Autism Speaks Walk – Doral Central Park

Ms. Barbara asked members to encourage parents to participate in the meetings. Flyers were distributed to members.

Ms. Barbara announced that School Board Member Lubby Navarro introduce a resolution at the School

Board Meeting of March 15 to “Request The School Board of Miami-Dade County Florida To Recognize April 2017 As National Autism Awareness Month.”

Odile da Silva asked what are schools doing to celebrate Autism Awareness Month. Ava Goldman responded that all schools are aware of Autism Awareness Month and are doing many exciting activities such as wearing blue. Chris Reigadas said this was wonderful and we need to recognize organizations such as Best Buddies as well. Ernie Martinez said that he agrees that it is important to recognize every disability. Magaly Abrahante reminded members that a member of the School Board proposed the resolution and Autism Spectrum Disorder is the fastest growing disability group. The District understands that all groups need recognition as well. Diane Adreon said that she understands the concern but nationally, April is Autism Awareness Month. Dr. Abrahante continued that October is Disabilities Awareness Month when all disabilities are recognized.

Ernie Martinez recommended that a different disability should be recognized each month. He asked if we needed a motion? Ava Goldman explained importance of Disabilities Awareness Month in October. She said that there are many opportunities to recognize individual disabilities throughout the year. Mr. Martinez repeated his recommendation and stated that the Panel should take leadership on this issue. Ms. Barbara recommended that the Education Inclusion Committee explore this recommendation and bring their recommendation back to the Board. Maria Ratti said there are specific months designated for different disabilities.

Ernie Martinez moved that Education-Inclusion Committee review the possibility of recommending that Miami-Dade County Public Schools initiate a policy to recognize individual disabilities on a monthly basis. Sandy Ames seconded the motion. Ms. Barbara called the question. The motion passed unanimously. The Education-Inclusion Committee will review their recommendations with the Panel after they have reviewed this issue.

Ann Marie Sasseville announced that May 1<sup>st</sup> is Mental Health Awareness Day.

A second resolution introduced at the School Board Meeting was the Safe Haven Resolution regarding students in jeopardy due to changes in immigration policies. Magaly Abrahante noted that Miami-Dade County Public Schools is required to operate within the bounds of the law. Mr. Seife verified that there was great support for this Resolution at the School Board Meeting. Immigration Custom Enforcement (ICE) has stated that they will respect the sovereignty of the schools. Dr. Abrahante said that many parents do not understand this policy and are concerned. As a result there has been a reduction in attendance due to parent concerns about changes in immigration policies.

Ernie Martinez announced that Miami Dade College Association of Agencies (AOA) developed Emergency Guide for individuals with disabilities. The original was outdated so AOA partnered with Miami Dade County to update information. He brought copies of the Emergency Information Kits developed by Miami Dade County for members. Additional copies of the Emergence Information Form can be downloaded from the following website: <http://www.aosf.org/living/>. Ms. Barbara thanked Mr. Martinez for this information.

## **Presentations**

### **Assistive Technology-Envision the Possibilities**

**Sheila Miguel, Chairperson Assistive Technology M-DCPS and Martha Berman, AT Specialist**

Ms. Miguel and Ms. Berman presented information about the importance of the title change from Envision the Possibilities to Envision the Probability. Vivian Nunez is the Supervisor of the Assistive Technology Team. Their vision is that Assistive Technology (AT) will be seamless in the environment. Technology is seamless today and now we must make sure that Assistive Technology is seamless in the classroom. There has been an increase in the use of AT by students so they can access their Individual Educational Plan (IEP) goals. The numbers of students served has increased from 111 to 189 from 2013 to 2016. As a result more devices are being provided to students.

Examples of Technology:

The Go Talk 20 is an example of technology that provides a unique learning experience for students. A video demonstrating the use of Go Talk was shown to the Panel.

Technology is powerful, tangible and all around us. Today, we would be lost without it. For example, our phones are Assistive Technology. Assistive Technology spans a range from low technology to high technology. It is important to build timely access to assistive technology throughout the school system and state. Miami-Dade County Public Schools is using the School Based Team Assessment Model where AT Specialists provide support to the school and IEP team. Each school has an AT resource person, who provides support to individual students and helps the school build AT capacity as technology changes. This model is highly recognized throughout Florida.

Odile Da Silva asked how many children are receiving support? Ava Goldman said that Exceptional Student Education is able to order whatever is needed. In addition, there is state loan library. Ms. Da Silva said that it is very important to include AT recommendations in the IEP process. She asked if there was AT training available for teachers? Ms. Miguel said that, yes, there are numerous trainings offered throughout the school system.

The Local Assistive Technology Specialists (LATS) Specialist are available to provide support. Ms. Miguel explained that the IEP team makes the referral for AT. AT assessments are frequently conducted through equipment trials. Linda Reiter said that there are experts in every school. She attended a training last month and it was fantastic. Ava Goldman said that when a student needs assistance, an AT referral is made when necessary. Florida has a sixty (60) day trial timeline to see if the accommodation is appropriate. Rosana Onorato said she was concerned because her son's AT had not been updated. Ms. Miguel said that the parent is part of the process. Ms. Onorato said that she had tried but could not get anyone to listen to her concerns. Ms. Goldman said that they will provide assistance. Ms. Nunez said that the AT Team would help the parent as well. Dr. Abrahante was very empathetic and asked Ms. Onorato to talk to the Principal because this is a school site issue. The District will be happy to provide assistance. The District has recently made an investment in AT equipment for Early Childhood. Ann Marie Sasseville said that they have a class cart at Palmetto Elementary School.

Rose Maria Barbara asked if the Panel could assist Ms. Onorato. Ms. Goldman said that AT is in a different category from school technology and distribution is individualized. She continue by stating that the District would be happy to work with the Panel on Assistive Technology.

Ms. Miguel said that the Miami Dade County Public Schools website has a direct link to Assistive Technology, which has many resources. Maria Ratti said that she has been trying to do research for her son. Michelle Schladant said the FFAST Laboratory at the Mailman Center for Child Development would be happy to assist.

Ms. Barbara thanked Sheila Miguel and Martha Berman for their wonderful presentation.

### **An Overview of Specific Learning Disabilities: Reagan Chalmers, Inst Supervisor ESE MDCPS**

Rosa Maria Barbara introduced Reagan Chalmers to members. Ms. Chalmers began her presentation by stating that Specific Learning Disability is a language based disability and can be expressed through spoken or written modalities. Over three thousand students enrolled in Miami-Dade County Public Schools have Learning Disabilities (LD), which occurs more often in males.

The evaluation process to determine LD follows a discrepancy formula where the IQ is compared to specific skills in reading and math. Many students are not found through this model so in the past they used the wait to fail model. This has been replaced by Response To Intervention.

The Wonder Works Series is used as an intervention in elementary schools while Intensive Reading Class is provided in middle school and high school where they use the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Series for students in Response to Intervention Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3.

It is important for teachers working with students diagnosed with LD to follow an approach that considers Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, and Tactile (VAKT) learning methodologies. Instruction should be explicit, systematic, and sequential. Students need to be talking more and teachers listening more. The Sea of Strengths Model of Dyslexia is a good resource. Parent involvement and support is critical.

Rosa Maria Barbara expressed concerns because RTI changes from school to school. Sometimes the breakdown is at the specific school. What can we do about this? How can we help schools? Dr. Abrahante suggested inviting School Operations to discuss this issue with Panel members. Ms. Goldman said that Professional Development is offered every summer to help principals and teachers understand RTI. It is important to have Region Directors at the Table and Early Childhood Directors.

Ms. Barbara thanked Ms. Chalmers for her presentation.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Awards Committee**

**Kathy Vergara/Ava Goldman**

Kathy Vergara reminded members that the Awards Ceremony is scheduled on May 18, 2017 at 11:30 AM at Ruth Krusé Educational Center.

Student Applications are being distributed through M-DCPS Weekly Briefing and are due to Parent to Parent of Miami by April 7, 2017.

Reno Cocchi Employer Application Award is being coordinated by Vivian Nunez and has been distributed to M-DCPS Transition Team with a deadline of April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Inclusion Award of Excellence: Education-Inclusion Committee has selected Winston Park K-8 Center

to receive the award this year.

Champion of Inclusion Award and Champion of Parent Engagement Awards are new this year. Dr. Hunter has developed the application and distributed it through the Weekly Briefing.

The Award Selection Meeting will be on April 19 at 9:00 AM at Parent to Parent of Miami. The next Awards Committee Meeting will be on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

**D/HH Committee**

**Lynn Miskiel/Linda Reiter**

No meeting

**Education-Inclusion Committee**

**Janet McDaniel/Reagan Chalmers**

Janet McDaniel reported that the committee is working on the selection of the Inclusion School for 2017-18.

**ESE Family Engagement Committee**

**Ernie Martinez/Angel Rodriguez/  
Kelli Hunter-Sheppard**

Juan Carlos Gonzalez reported that the all is going well with the Department of Family Support Services. They now have thirty-seven (37) Title One schools.

**Early Childhood PreK Committee**

**Kathy Vergara/Marisol Diaz**

Marisol Diaz reported that the committee met on January 19, 2017. Members were pleased that a parent joined the committee. Dr. Sasseville review the PreK Orientation process for parents whose children will be transitioning to PreK. The committee reviewed a template for schools to follow to assist parents through the transition process. Dr. Sasseville announced that Early Childhood Week is in April. Schools with PreK Programs will be recognized.

**Panel Transition Committee**

**Ernie Martinez/Vivian Nunez**

Vivian Nunez reported that they are updating brochures and links to tie to videos to help parent with the transition process. They are also planning to have Summer Youth and Middle School Boot Camps.

Dr. Abrahante said that there is a new afterschool program names STARS related to career preparation for ninth and tenth graders.

**Ad-Hoc Budget Committee**

**Elias Seife/Magaly Abrahante**

No meeting

**Nominating Committee**

**Report as needed**

No meeting

**Steering Committee**

**Report as needed**

No meeting

**Committee Representation**

**Attendance Boundary Committee**

**Rosa Maria Barbara**

Rosa Maria Barbara reported that the committee has finalized the boundary changes for this year.

**Family and Community  
Involvement Advisory Committee**

**Rosa Maria Barbara**

Rosa Maria Barbara provided Region Superintendents with information about the Awards Ceremony.

**Other**

The Department of Exceptional Education is offering Empowered Parents on the Move: A Carousel Discussion for parents to join a collaborative discussion through a carousel of educational topics to benefit families of students who are receiving ESE services. The meeting is scheduled at Auburndale Elementary School on Monday, March 20<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. A team of ESE specialists will be there to assist.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm. Lynn Miskiel moved to adjourn the meeting. Diane Adreon seconded the motion.

**Next Meeting**

The General Membership meeting is scheduled for April 20, 2017 at 3:00 pm in the School Board Administration Building – Room 559.