

MINUTES

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

Minutes of April 21, 2016

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

Members Present

Diane Adreon-CARD	Enrique Escallon	Christine Reigadas
Rosa Maria Barbara	Ava Goldman	Elias Seife
Lauren Bustos-PTP	Ernie Martinez	Elaine Silny-FLASHA
Elsa Clarke	Lynn Miskiel-MCCD	Kathy Vergara
Odlile Da Silva-CCDH	Linda Reiter	

Alternates Present

Maria Delgado (Martin Karp)
Maria Jakoniuk Ratti (Rosa Maria Barbara)
Michelle Schladant (Lynn Miskiel)

Members Absent

Eric Cintron
Elizabeth Cramer-FIU
Katherine Fuentes
Martin Karp
Janet McDaniel
Yubeda Miah
Camila Rocha-Easter Seals
Madeline Spado-Best Buddies
Miguel Suau

Honorary Members Present

Vickie Burley

School Board Members Present

Laurie Malman – Alternate Dr. Lawrence Feldman

School Personnel Present

Dr. Magaly Abrahante
Gigi Arrita
Jill Brookner
Elena Camacho

Rosalia Gallo
Vivian Nunez

Guests Present

Rosana Onorato, Parent
Nicole Attong, Parent & FIU
Angelica Coronel, Miami Dade College
Martha Hoffmann, Parent & United Way

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 pm.

Introduction and Welcome

After 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 March 17, 2016 as presented or corrected as well as the minutes of the Ad Hoc Budget Committee Meeting of March 11, 2016 and the Education-Inclusion Subcommittee meeting of April 15, 2016. Ernie Martinez moved to approve the minutes as presented. Chris Reigadas seconded the motion. Rosa Maria Barbara asked members to approve the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Report

Rosa Mara Barbara reported that she attended ABC committee meeting and boundary changes were approved. She also attended the FCIAC Committee meeting where there was a presentation on Response to Intervention (RtI). Ava Goldman and Dr. Kelli Hunter Sheppard gave a presentation about Parents as Ambassadors to assist new parents. Their presentation was well received by the members.

School Board Member Lubby Navarro facilitated a beautiful ceremony for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder at TERRA Environmental Research Institute. They also had a fantastic Resource Fair at TERRA as well. Mr. Seife said that the artwork displayed was incredible and the evening was wonderful. Ms. Goldman said that the focus was on abilities and achievements.

Ms. Barbara reminded members about the STEPS Conference on April 30th at Miami Jackson Senior High School. Elaine Silny volunteered to represent the Panel and Elsa Clarke volunteered to assist.

Ms. Barbara said that she is on the ABLE Foundation Committee for the Family Care Council. Grants are available from the ABLE Foundation for adults with disabilities to supplement living needs. Dr. Abrahante said that families should be made aware of this opportunity during transition. Ms. Barbara said that she will invite someone to present to the Panel about this program.

Ms. Barbara announced that three key people are retiring: Jill Brookner, Rosalia Gallo, and Kathy Maguire. All have made incredible contributions to Miami-Dade County Public Schools through the years and will be greatly missed. Panel members offered their special thanks to these three wonderful professionals.

The Awards Ceremony will be on May 19th. Ms. Barbara thanked Kathy Vergara for her work on this project.

The next Panel Meeting will be on June 2nd. The Ad-Hoc Budget Committee will present at that meeting. This meeting will be at JRE Lee.

Presentations

Superintendent's Advisory Panel Award of Excellence

Ms Kathy Vergara, Co-chair Awards Committee, and Jill Brookner Co-Chair Awards Committee

Kathy Vergara reported that the Annual Award of Excellence Ceremony is scheduled at Ruth Krusé Educational Center on May 19, 2016.

The following awards will be presented.

Award of Excellence for Students with Disabilities: Four Students will be selected to represent the following levels: Prekindergarten, Elementary, Middle, and High School. Parent to Parent has received sixty-three (63) applications, which will be evaluated by a team at Parent to Parent of Miami next week.

Reno Cocchi Employer Recognition Award: Four employers will be selected from student nominations which will be evaluated next week.

Inclusion Award of Excellence: Education-Inclusion Committee has selected Hammocks Middle School to receive the award this year.

The luncheon is complimentary for award recipients and their guests as well as dignitaries. Panel members and guests are asked to pay \$20 per person for the luncheon. Ruth Kruse charges \$15. The remaining \$5 helps cover the cost for complimentary meals.

Guests may purchase a table for \$200 to help cover the cost of award recipients, their sponsors, families, etc.

Panel Open Ended Questions

(Please limit your questions/comments to two minutes to allow all members to participate)

The following questions were distributed to members for discussion.

1. What do you feel is the strength of your child's ESE Program at the School?
2. How can your child's school improve their ESE Services?
3. Does your child participate in school-wide activities?

Member Discussion:

Elias Seife said parents support is a critical component of student success.

Maria Ratti said that in her opinion inclusion is critical. She has concerns about many children who are misdiagnosed.

Dr. Abrahante said that she is able to bring a fresh perspective to Exceptional Student Education. As there is a range of needs for students with disabilities, there is a range of commitment among parents. Some are involved, some are not involved, and some are over aggressive and litigious. As a result, various types of programs and trainings and approaches are required for parents.

Elaine Silny said that well trained professionals are critical with a lower student-professional ratio.

Lauren Bustos said that it is very important for school administrators to promote parent involvement as

well as staff development.

Odlile Da Silva said self-advocacy goals for students are very important. She thinks that sometimes the staff and teachers do not welcome students with disabilities and their parents.

Rosana Onorato agreed that parent involvement is important. She said that parents might be more involved if the school valued parent involvement. Many times there is a wall between the parent and the school.

Nicole Attong said that it is important to ask why parents aren't involved. There is not a simple solution to this problem.

Chris Reigadas added that welcoming personnel at the front desk is so important.

Elias Seife said the process must trickle down to parents.

Maria Ratti said that one of the issues is that parents have a hard time accepting their child's disability.

Laurie Malman noted that it starts with the school. There are many examples of non-welcoming schools.

Lynn Miskiel said that Hammocks Middle School is a wonderful example of success. She suggested that maybe one school could support another school. Dr. Abrahante agreed that there are opportunities, especially through the regions. Synergy Programs will be offered through the summer. Principals train and share their best practices and unique programs. This may not be enough but it exists.

Dr. Abrahante agreed that first impression and everyday impressions are critical. Poor attitudes are sometimes related to employee compensation.

Enrique Escallon agreed that customer service is critical and does not always depend on compensation. The Principal sets the tone at every school. The expectation must be good customer service. MDCPS is not always welcoming and parents must be welcomed. Empathy is very important for all parents.

Dr. Abrahante said that another problem is high turnover. She is working very hard to improve compensation to lower turnover.

Rosa Maria Barbara said that the administration is very important. She has heard many parents express concerns due to the lack of consistency in implementation of the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) from school to school. Schools should provide ESE Orientation. Customer Service is critical.

Enrique Escallon said that communication is the key.

Rosalia Gallo reminded members that there are many languages spoken in our schools and parents are from different cultures. She agrees that customer service is critical.

Diana Adreon also agreed that customer service is critical.

Jill Brookner reminded everyone that the size of the Miami-Dade County School District is a huge factor and creates a tremendous challenge.

Dr. Abrahante thanked the members for their contributions and said that she will share the comments

expressed with Human Resources and Operations to improve communication.

Committee Reports

Awards Committee

See above report

Kathy Vergara/Jill Brookner

D/HH Committee

No Report

Lynn Miskiel/Linda Reiter

Education-Inclusion Committee

Rosalia Galo reported that the committee met on April 5th and reviewed the paraprofessional survey and unanimously voted to approve the survey for distribution.

Janet McDaniel/Rosalia Gallo

The survey will be sent to Program Supervisors for distribution. Program Supervisors provide training throughout the District. Data will be used to plan professional development for the next year.

The committee discussed the definition of inclusion and talked about applications for next Inclusion Award. Dr. Gallo reported that inclusion is defined as a student with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) who is placed in the general education setting for 80% - 100% of the school day.

Applications for the 2015-16 year award have been distributed and will be evaluated after June 2015.

Ms. Ratti presented a binder about Autism. Autism Awareness month is this month. Self-Advocacy is very important. Students need to understand their own disability. CCDH- students should be their own advocate. Dr. Gallo said that the Self-Determination Checklist should be completed from ninth to twelfth grade.

Panel Secondary Transition Committee

No meeting

Chris Reigadas/Ernie Martinez/Jill Brookner

Ad-Hoc Budget Committee

No meeting. Dr. Abrahante will complete and present report at the meeting on June 2nd.

Elias Seife

Nominating Committee

No Meeting

Report as needed

Steering Committee

No Meeting

Report as needed

Committee Representation

Attendance Boundary Committee

See above

Rosa Maria Barbara

Family and Community

Involvement Advisory Committee

See above

Rosa Maria Barbara

Other

Jill Brookner reported that the Transition Task Force met and reviewed the development of a Transition Tool Kit for employers. They are interviewing employers to ask why they agreed to employ a student with disabilities

Teacher Appreciation Week is the week of May 2nd – May 6th.

VSA: Press Releases – Perf on May 10 at Adrienne Arscht. Miami History May 12 Visual Arts Display

The Children's Trust and Miami-Dade County Public Schools have partnered to provide internships for 1,300 M-DCPS seniors. One-hundred thirty (130) of this group will be students with disabilities.

Florida International University (FIU) received a training grant for a Masters Degree in education.

Lynn Miskiel announced that a Listening and Spoken Language Track will be presented at the Florida Language, Hearing, and Speech Association (FLASHA) annual meeting on May 26-27-28.

Dr. Abrahante announced that TCT & MDCPS are collaborating on how to help TCT providers learn how to work with children with disabilities.

Adjournment

Rosa Maria Barbara thanked everyone for coming. The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 pm. Lynn Miskiel moved that the meeting adjourn and Elsa Clarke seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting

Panel members were reminded to plan to attend the Annual Awards of Excellence Luncheon Ceremony on Thursday, May 19th at Ruth Owens Kruze Educational Center at 12:00 noon. Please remember to bring your donation for your ticket. Thank you!

The General Membership meeting is scheduled for Thursday June 2, 2016 at 3:00 p.m. at JRE LEE Educational Center, 6521 SW 62nd Ave, Miami, FL 33143.