

**MINUTES**

**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SUPERINTENDENT'S DISTRICT ADVISORY PANEL  
FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (SWD)**

**Minutes of September 15, 2016**

**School Board Administration Building – Room 559  
1450 Northeast 2nd Avenue  
Miami, Florida 33132  
3:00 P.M.**

**Members Present**

Magaly Abrahante	Odile Da Silva-CCDH	Lynn Miskiel-MCCD
Diane Adreon	Enrique Escallon	Linda Reiter
Rosa Maria Barbara	Lauren Bustos-PTP	Christine Reigadas
Lauren Bustos-PTP	Ava Goldman	Elias Seife
Eric Cintron	Ernie Martinez	Kathy Vergara
Elizabeth Cramer-FIU	Janet McDaniel	

**Alternates Present**

Amara Condon (Easter Seals)  
Maria Jakoniuk Ratti (Rosa Maria Barbara)  
Michelle Schladant (MCCD)

**Members Absent**

Elsa Clarke  
Katherine Fuentes  
Martin Karp  
Yubeda Miah  
Camila Rocha  
Myrna Charlton  
Elaine Silny  
Madeline Spado  
Miguel Suau

**Honorary Members Present**

None Present

**School Board Members Present**

Laurie Malman – Alternate Dr. Lawrence Feldman

**School Personnel Present**

Reagan Chalmers  
Sue Clifford

Kelli Hunter-Sheppard  
Robin Morrison  
Vivian Nunez  
Angel Rodriguez (Telephone)  
Ana Maria Sasseville

### **Guests Present**

Cynthia Aucoin – Parent  
Maria Palacio-Pike – Crystal Academy  
Cristina M. Rodriguez – Department of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Mark Thompson – Special Olympics

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 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 June 2, 2016 as presented as well as the minutes of the Steering Committee on August 16, 2016 and Education Inclusion Committee on September 12, 2016. Enrique Escallon moved to approve the minutes as presented. Lynn Miskiel seconded the motion. Rosa Maria Barbara asked members to approve the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Chair Report**

Rosa Maria Barbara commented that the Steering Committee met on August 16, 2016. She also stated that she was honored to have been invited to represent the Panel at the opening of schools ceremony.

### **Presentations**

#### **2016-17 ESE Overview & Update**

#### **Ava Goldman, Administrative Director**

Ms. Goldman said that members of Miami-Dade County Public Schools Department of Exceptional Student Education greatly appreciate the support they receive from members of the Superintendent's District Advisory Panel. She expressed her sincere appreciation to the membership for their ongoing dedication. She said that they are all very excited about the new school year.

She announced that the FDLRS Child Find diagnostic process will be changed for easier accessibility for parents. The changes include a one-stop approach with one phone number for parents to call if they think their child has a disability. Additionally, parents will be provided an appointment for both screening and appropriate diagnostics to decrease the number of visits to complete the process. Dr. Hunter-Sheppard and Dr. Clifford are spearheading this initiative. The goal is to make the process much more parent friendly. Parent liaison greeters will be at the three diagnostic SPED Centers to establish a coordinated, consistent contact process for parents. Ms. Goldman said that they are providing customer service training for the greeters emphasizing parent friendly communication. Parent calls will be tracked to ensure follow-up. This new process will be launched in early November.

Ms. Goldman said that a workgroup has been established to streamline the RtI process. Feedback from Panel members helped them realize that parents need to be informed about each step of the process and that there is room for improvement. Their plan is to streamline the process.

In response to the Panel's interest in professional development for paraprofessionals, MDCPS will provide more opportunities for paraprofessionals to attend workshops.

Ms. Goldman continued her presentation by announcing that the GIFT Conference will now be called the Family Forum. The focus will be on families. Robin Morrison and Kelli Hunter-Sheppard are leading this initiative and will present information about it today. Panel members will assist with planning.

Over one thousand (1000) new teachers attended professional development trainings this summer.

Chris Reigadas thanked Ava Goldman and Magaly Abrahante for listening to Panel suggestions. Many members echoed her sentiments. Ms. Barbara thanked Ms. Goldman for her presentation.

### **Meeting Schedule**

Ms. Barbara reviewed the meeting schedule dates: September 15, October 20, November 17, December 15, January 26, February 16, March 16, April 20, May 18 (Awards Ceremony), and June 1.

Ms. Barbara asked for a motion to approve the meeting dates proposed for the 2016-2017 school year. Liz Cramer so moved and Enrique Escallon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **MDCPS Family Expo: Exceptional Student Education Family Forum and Exposition Kelli Hunter-Sheppard, District Director**

Dr. Hunter-Sheppard announced that the former GIFT Conference has a new name, the 2016 ESE Family Forum & Exposition: Navigating Pathways to Success. It will take place on Saturday, October 29th at Robert Morgan Educational Center and on Saturday, November 19th at North Miami Beach Senior High. This meeting is an outcome of Panel efforts emphasizing the importance of programs like this for families.

Forum goals are to emphasize relevant and timely information, accessibility, and diversity. The purpose is to connect families to resources. Discussion followed about the conference. Registration forms will be distributed through the Panel. Dr. Hunter said that they are developing a marketing plan to distribute information about the conference to families and will advertise through Eventbrite, radio, and television. Dr. Abrahante suggested reaching out to The Children's Trust. It is also important to inform private schools and Charter Schools. Ms. da Silva said that the Advocacy Network on Disabilities will also assist.

Enrique Escallon said that this conference is very important for families. Parking was difficult last year. Dr. Hunter said that the Logistics Committee will focus on the issue of parking.

### **October Disability History and Awareness Weeks Ms. Robin Morrison, Executive Director**

Ms. Morrison reported that Disability Awareness and History Weeks will be celebrated during the first two weeks of October. The School Board will honor Winston Park Elementary for being recognized by

the Panel for their outstanding inclusion program.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Awards Committee**

#### **Kathy Vergara/Ava Goldman**

Kathy Vergara reported that the Awards Committee coordinates the Annual Awards Ceremony. Each year schools are encouraged to nominate students with disabilities that exemplify achievement, attitude, academic progress, and independence for the Award of Excellence. In addition, the Reno Cocchi Employer Recognition Award is presented to community businesses who provide employment opportunities to young adults with disabilities and school is recognized for providing outstanding opportunities for inclusion for students with disabilities.

### **D/HH Committee**

#### **Lynn Miskiel/Linda Reiter/Kelli Hunter-Sheppard**

Lynn Miskiel talked about how the D/HH Committee was founded. This year the committee will focus on social events for students with hearing loss and professional development. Dr. Hunter is also helping with this committee and emphasized the importance of families.

### **Education-Inclusion Committee**

#### **Janet McDaniel/Reagan Chalmers**

Janet McDaniel explained that last year the committee focused on paraprofessionals and designed a survey. During the September 12 meeting the committee reviewed the data presented by applicants for the Education Inclusion Award. The committee selected Winston Park Elementary because they reported a 77% inclusion rate for students with disabilities. In addition, 43% of the students with disabilities passed their reading tests at a level 3 or higher. Next year, the committee is planning to add a question about inclusion in extra curricular activities.

Dr. Feldman will present Proclamation to Winston Park at the October School Board meeting. The committee is very interested in expanding inclusion in extra curricular activities. Mark Thompson said that Special Olympics is a wonderful way for students with disabilities to participate in extra curricular activities.

### **ESE Family Engagement Committee**

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

Via telephone, Dr. Angel Rodriguez announced that the District has established a new Department of Family Support Services to encourage parent engagement and participation in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. As the Family Liaison Officer, Dr. Angel Rodriguez is the leader of this program. Everyone is very excited about this opportunity to establish an atmosphere that is friendly and welcoming to parents.

Dr. Rodriguez thanked Ava Goldman and Dr. Magaly Abrahante for creating this new program. He said that as a parent of a student with disabilities, he understands the parent perspective and is anxious to help parents have a better understanding of the system.

Dr. Rodriguez said that they are beginning with a cadre of twenty-seven (27) Title I schools. During the second year, they hope to be serving 150 schools and by year three they will expand to 300 schools. They are in the process of hiring a Family Support Specialist to implement the program. Parents will be

selected at individual schools and trained to provide parent support at each school. The Department of Family Support Services is modeled after the Parents Helping Parents model developed in Collier County. Parent to Parent of Miami is providing assistance.

Ernie Martinez said that school culture is constantly being challenged. Parents do not feel welcome. Dr. Abrahante said that we all agree that there is a great need for outreach to families of students with disabilities. This unit will target families with unique needs.

**Early Childhood PreK Committee Kathy Vergara/Marisol Diaz**

This committee will focus on transition.

**Panel Secondary Transition Committee Chris Reigadas/Ernie Martinez/Vivian Nunez**

This committee will continue to assist and inform parents about transition.

**Ad-Hoc Budget Committee**

**Elias Seife/Dr. Magaly Abrahante**

Elias Seife distributed and read his report to members. He stressed the importance of funding. Mr. Seife is a member of the Citizens Coalition and stressed how concerned people are because funding for education is so low in Florida. In July, Governor Scott signed the ABLE Act and celebrated the fact that 96 million dollars had been allocated to reduce the Medicaid Waiver waiting list for individuals with disabilities. Mr. Seife is pleased that state legislators have attended our Annual Awards Ceremony during the past two years.

Mr. Seife observed that many exhibitors in the field of special education participated in the Family Expo at Tamiami Fairgrounds. These events help educate the community about the needs of students with disabilities. Another important issue is health insurance costs for Florida Kid Care. Rates have increased by 100% for over 35,000 families in the State of Florida, including his family.

The Ad-Hoc Budget Committee is more relevant and important than ever. Many people think that the work of the Panel under the direction of Ms. Rosa Maria Barbara and Dr. Magaly Abrahante was incredibly positive.

**Nominating Committee Jackie Needelman/Report as needed**

Rosa Maria is planning to review membership status.

**By-Laws Committee**

No report.

**Steering Committee**

See minutes of August meeting.

**Legislative Update**

**Enrique Escallon**

Enrique Escallon said that the Legislative Agenda is not complete and that he will give a legislative update every month.

Ms. Barbara asked members to join a committee. She said that the richness of the Panel comes from committees.

## **MDCPS Committee Representation**

### **Attendance Boundary Committee**

**Rosa Maria Barbara/Kathy Vergara**

### **Family and Community Involvement Advisory Committee**

**Rosa Maria Barbara**

### **Transition Task Force**

**Vivian Nunez**

Ms. Nunez reported that the first meeting will be on October 27<sup>th</sup>.

### **Other**

Laura Malman reported that the Miracle League is continuing its important program and that Pinecrest Gardens is offering a visual art program for all disabilities titled, Amazing Art: The World of Trees on Sundays from 11:00 am to 12:15 pm.

Odile da Silva announced that the Advocacy Network for Disabilities is having their annual Breakfast for Champions on October 18<sup>th</sup>.

Michelle Schladant announced that the Mailman Center for Child Development is having a conference on October 26 titled Innovation and Connection Conference: Strategies for Promoting Positive Behaviors in Children with Disabilities.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 pm. Enrique Escallon moved that the meeting adjourn and Lynn Miskiel seconded the motion.

### **Next Meeting**

The next General Membership meeting is scheduled on October 20, 2016 at 3:00 pm in the School Board Administration Building – Room 559.