

# MINUTES

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

Minutes of October 12, 2017

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

### Members Present

Magaly Abrahante	Lauren Bustos-PTP	Janet McDaniel
Diane Adreon	Elizabeth Cramer-FIU	Elias Seife
Sandy Ames-FCC	Enrique Escallon	Kathy Vergara
Rosa Maria Barbara	Ava Goldman	

### Alternates Present

Maria Delgado (Martin Karp)  
Maria Jakoniuk Ratti (Rosa Maria Barbara)

### Members Absent

Virginia Infante (ACT)  
Katherine Fuentes  
Martin Karp  
Yubeda Miah  
Lynn Miskiel (MCCD)  
Amara Condon (Easter Seals)  
Myrna Charlton (Arc of South Florida)  
Elaine Silny (FLASHA)  
Madeline Spado (Best Buddies)  
Miguel Suau

### Honorary Members Present

Christine Reigadas

### School Board Members Present

### School Personnel Present

Jesus Aviles  
Reagan Chalmers  
Marisol Diaz  
Kelli Hunter-Sheppard  
Robin Morrison

Vivian Nunez  
Angel Rodriguez  
Ana Maria Sasseville

### **Guests Present**

Odile da Silva

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 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 1, 2017 as presented as well as the minutes of the Steering Committee on September 28, 2017.

Enrique Escallon and Janet McDaniel jointly moved to approve the meeting minutes of June 1, 2017 and the Steering Committee minutes of September 28, 2017 as presented. Ms. Goldman seconded the motion. Rosa Maria Barbara asked members to approve the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Chair Report**

Rosa Maria Barbara reminded members that she e-mailed an announcement titled “Potential Resources Available to Individuals with Disabilities Involved in the DCF Child Welfare Out-of-Home Care System. Participants must be enrolled on the APD Budget Waiver. This announcement includes all services eligible for children ages 3 to 17.

### **Presentations**

Rosa Maria Barbara introduced Enrique Escallon who showed a video titled, “Let the Children Have the World”, filmed by students with hearing loss who use sign language. The film was shown once without sound and then with sound. The students signed a song about how all children should be able to live in a world where there is no pain or sorrow. The video was beautiful and Mr. Escallon reminded us all that we are here for the children. He thanked everyone in Exceptional Student Education for all they do for children with disabilities. Everyone enjoyed the video.

Maria Delgado announced that School Board Member, Dr. Martin Karp, is hosting a Town Hall Meeting about the Opioid Crisis on Wednesday, November 1, 2017 at North Miami Beach Senior High School. She invited members to attend and to please distribute information about the Town Hall throughout the community.

Chris Reigadas announced that Palmetto Bay has invited Miami-Dade County Public Schools to participate in their event on December 9<sup>th</sup> at Coral Reef Park.

### **Exceptional Student Education Update**

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

Rosa Maria Barbara asked Ms. Goldman to update members about Exceptional Student Education. Ms. Goldman began with the following quote from Howard Schultz: “When you are surrounded by people who share a passionate commitment around a common purpose, anything is possible.” She shared that she is honored to work with members of the Panel.

Ms. Goldman continued to report that during the 2016-17 school year, the district served 35,057 students with disabilities. The largest exceptionality groups are Learning Disabilities (14,000), Autism Spectrum Disorder (4,800), Other Health Impaired (4,000), and Intellectually Disabled (3,200).

Fifty-one percent (51%) are placed in General Education, twenty-eight (28%) in Resource, and twenty-one percent (21%) in a separate class setting. Two thousand eight hundred fourteen (2,814) are on a Modified Curriculum. Nine thousand six hundred eight-six (9,686) students were provided services and accommodations through a 504 plan.

Forty three thousand one hundred twenty-two (43,122) students are gifted. Of these, eight hundred ninety-four (894) are both students with disabilities and gifted.

State Performance Indicator Data for Miami-Dade County Public Schools revealed that students with disabilities in grades three through ten show an increase of 3% in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Twenty-three (23%) performed at levels 3-5 in English Language Arts and twenty-eight (28%) in Math.

As per the annual parent survey data, seventy-eight percent (78%) of parents with prekindergarten children and seventy-six percent (76%) of parents of kindergarten to twelfth grade students reported that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and outcomes for students with disabilities.

Testing compliance is within ninety-six percent (96%) meaning that students referred for an evaluation with parent consent were evaluated within sixty (60) calendar days of which the student is in attendance.

Ms. Goldman was very pleased to be able to report that the District's LRE/Inclusion rate increased to three point one percent (3.1%). Progress is gradual but steady and this is important.

The Office of Exceptional Student Education conducted two district Family Expos attended by four hundred seventy participants (470). This year they will conduct District wide Family Expo in the Spring of 2018.

Over seven thousand (7,000) teachers attended ESE Professional Development Sessions and over two thousand five-hundred (2,500) teachers participated in training on the new ESE-EMS system. Over one thousand (1,000) participants attended seven (7) summer academies about the IEP. New resources for teachers of students with disabilities are "wikispaces", pacing guides, and newly designed workshops.

Ms. Goldman was pleased to report that the District is launching some exciting new initiatives to this year. The Tele-planning will facilitate opportunities for virtual parent participation in IEP/EP/504 Plan meetings.

Plans are to establish an "ASD EpiCenter" Pilot Model at Citrus Grove Elementary to enhance program, services, and support in schools with high populations of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Over one hundred students with autism attend this school and the classrooms have been upgraded to meet student need. In addition, this year will be a "planning year" for a full inclusion program following the K-8 NEST Inclusion Model used in New York City at Dr. Toni Bilbao Preparatory Academy.

It is a pleasure to introduce three new administrators: Jesus Aviles – Psychological Services, Ana Torres – FDLRS, and Yvonne Leon – ESE Compliance. Ms. Barbara thanked Ms. Goldman for her outstanding

presentation.

## **Superintendent's Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities Update Dr. Magaly C. Abrahante, Assistant Superintendent**

Rosa Maria Barbara introduced Dr. Magaly Abrahante. Dr. Abrahante reported that thirty-five thousand (35,000) students were served by Miami-Dade County Public Schools last year in Exceptional Student Education. Ten thousand (10,000) students had 504 plans.

The Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Students with disabilities has provided important guidance and support to the Superintendent and the Department of Exceptional Student Education for many years. The Panel was founded in 1979 at the recommendation of School Board Member Dr. Ben Sheppard. Since it began, Panel members have been dedicated to improving educational programs for students with disabilities.

Dr. Abrahante said that in Florida Exceptional Student Education is designated for exceptional students including students with disabilities and students who are gifted. Exceptional Student Education is the forefront for both groups. Dr. Lisette Rodriguez is the Executive Director of Gifted Programs. She and her staff do an outstanding job with gifted students. It is important for us to recognize that gifted students need advocacy and support.

The School Board recently passed two Board Actions. The first, Item H-12L, was presented on June 21, 2017 at the School Board Meeting by Board Member Dr. Martin Karp regarding the Subject: Gifted Education Evaluation. One of the recommended actions in this item is to explore reinstating the District Parent Advisory Committee for Gifted Education. The recommendation is that the Parent Advisory Panel for Gifted Education will operate under the same Exceptional Student Education umbrella as the Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities.

The second action, Item H-4 presented on September 6, 2017 at the School Board Meeting by Board Member Dr. Steve Gallon III regarding Subject: Review of Exceptional Student Education Program and Related Services. The recommended actions proposed a review of Special Education programs and a Task Force to be convened to make recommendations regarding ways to improve the education program for exceptional students in M-DCPS. Dr. Abrahante recommended that the item include input from the Superintendent's District Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities. Staff are required to develop a report to the School Board by February 2018.

Members of the School Board and the Superintendent are looking at the possibility of expanding our Panel to include parents and representatives from Gifted. It would then become an all-inclusive committee. This will strengthen the position of Exceptional Student Education tremendously.

Enrique Escallon said that he was formerly member of gifted group and has mixed feelings about the recommendation. Expectations are different for each group but change is good and this could really strengthen our positions.

Janet McDaniel said that she is not convinced that this is a good idea but is willing to see. She recommended that the representatives from Gifted form a sub-committee as a first step. Ms. McDaniel's son is "twice exceptional" and that through this process she recognizes that Gifted has very specific needs.

Dr. Abrahante agreed that we need to go through a process to implement this model. Dr. Rodriguez reported that forty thousand students enrolled in Miami-Dade County Public Schools are designated as Gifted. In order to qualify, students must score two standard deviations above the mean or have an IQ of 130 or above. In 1994 special considerations were established for underrepresented students. Students who are ESOL or eligible for Free Lunch are eligible to qualify for Gifted if their IQ was one (1) standard deviation below the mean. M-DCPS follows these guidelines. Also, gifted students with a disability can have a 504 plan. Approximately two thousand students fall in this area.

Chris Reigadas said that she embraces the School Board's recommendation to join include Gifted. Her children are "twice exceptional" so she is familiar with both.

Elias Seife said that he recognizes that our district is different because we have a huge population of Gifted students, who are not getting extra funding in Miami-Dade County. He thinks that our Panel is a good place for representation from Gifted. He noted that the Ad Hoc Budget Committee compared the number of students with disabilities served in Broward County as compared to Miami-Dade County. In Broward students with disabilities were twelve percent (12%) of the student population while in Miami-Dade County the number was nine percent (9%).

Maria Ratti said that she has met many parents whose children are Gifted and that her experience has not always been positive. She hopes that this would be an opportunity to create a bridge between the groups. Dr. Abrahante added that emotional intelligence is very important.

Enrique Escallon said that he had had a difficult experience as well. He thinks that this is a great opportunity for inclusion.

Lauren Bustos said that she has mixed feelings and would like to see a pilot. Dr. Rodriguez said that he thinks the change will be very positive.

Dr. Abrahante said that we can learn from each other and could become a group that could have tremendous influence. Together we will represent over one hundred thousand (100,000) voices. The Superintendent and Marie Izquierdo are very excited about this project. Now, hard work is ahead. The Bylaws will need to be revised as we envision how to move forward. Goals and objectives would need to be prioritized. We want things to become so broad that we are not productive.

Dr. Abrahante suggested that under the new design, the Panel should have one chair and two vice chairs. It will then be necessary to identify which committees report to which arm. There would be many common areas and goals such as mental health, which falls under both as do behavior and social-emotional development. This will help us establish more support services at the schools and will create opportunities to leverage for additional resources.

Jesus Aviles said that we need to focus on students who fall in the middle and not always on the each end.

Rosa Maria Barbara thanked Dr. Abrahante and said that members of the Panel embrace inclusion. We must remember that some parents of Gifted students might not be as enthusiastic. Our Panel is extremely relevant. This is demonstrated by the fact that it has been around so many years. We are now embarking on a new journey that will benefit all students included in Exceptional Student Education.

Ava Goldman concluded by reminding members that this is Disability Awareness Month, which

represents the heart and soul of why we are here. We must always be centered on our students.

### **Committee Reports**

Mrs. Barbara reported that the D/HH Committee will expand its focus on Low Incidence Exceptionalities that will include Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Dual Sensory Impaired, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Visually Impaired. Committee Chairs will be Kelli Hunter-Shepard, Lynn Miskiel, and Kathy Vergara.

Ms. Barbara would also like to establish a Mental Health Committee.

Rosa Maria Barbara stated that the Ad-Hoc Budget Committee had fulfilled the purpose for which it was designated and will be discontinued. The committee worked very hard to design a financial report template that will be used to present to the updates to the Panel twice a year. Much appreciation was expressed to Elias Seife, Dr. Magaly Abrahante, and Ava Goldman for their hard work on this committee.

Ms. Barbara reviewed the Meeting Dates and Topics recommended by the Steering Committee as follows:

October 12

M-DCPS Update

November 16

Inclusion & Magnet Application Process

December 14

Child Find

January 18

IEP Training & IEP Parent Communication & IEP Tool Kit for Parents to Resolve Problems

February 22

Charter Schools (Acceptance & Services)

March 15

Legislative Session Updates

April 19

Hurricane Preparedness

May

Awards Ceremony

June 14

M-DCPS Update

Liz Cramer moved to accept the proposed meeting dates and topics and Enrique Escallon seconded the motion. Discussion followed regarding meeting times and locations. Ms. Barbara called the question. The motion passed unanimously.

During the discussion, Enrique Escallon suggested that we add teleconference to our committee to

expand to telecommunication. Janet McDaniel supported this idea. Ms. Goldman said that she would start with a call-in number, which she will arrange.

**Awards Committee**

No report.

**Kathy Vergara/Ava Goldman**

**D/HH Committee**

No report.

**Lynn Miskiel/Linda Reiter**

**Education-Inclusion Committee**

No report.

**Janet McDaniel/Reagan Chalmers**

**ESE Family Engagement Committee**

No report.

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

**Early Childhood PreK Committee**

No report.

**Kathy Vergara/Marisol Diaz/  
Ann Marie Sasseville**

**Panel Transition Committee**

No report

**Ernie Martinez/Vivian Nunez/Robin Morrison**

**Ad-Hoc Budget Committee**

No report

**Elias Seife/Magaly Abrahante**

**Nominating Committee**

No report

**Report as needed**

**Steering Committee**

See above

**Report as needed**

**Committee Representation**

**Attendance Boundary Committee**

No report

**Rosa Maria Barbara**

**Family and Community**

**Involvement Advisory Committee**

No report

**Rosa Maria Barbara**

**Other**

Workshops send to Rosa Maria and she will distribute to our membership.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm. Janet McDaniel moved and Sandy Ames seconded the motion.

**Next Meeting**

The General Membership meeting is scheduled for November 16 at 3:00 pm in the School Board Administration Building – Room 559.