

# MINUTES

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

Minutes of December 15, 2016

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

## **Members Present**

Magaly Abrahante	Odile da Silva-AND	Lynn Miskiel-MCCD
Diane Adreon-UM/NSU CARD	Ava Goldman	Elias Seife
Rosa Maria Barbara	Ernie Martinez	Kathy Vergara
Elizabeth Cramer-FIU		

## **Alternates Present**

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

## **Members Absent**

Sandy Ames  
Eric Cintron  
Elsa Clarke  
Enrique Escallon  
Katherine Fuentes  
Martin Karp  
Janet McDaniel  
Yubeda Miah  
Linda Reiter  
Camila Rocha  
Myrna Charlton  
Elaine Silny  
Madeline Spado  
Miguel Suau

## **Honorary Members Present**

None

## **School Board Members Present**

None

### **School Personnel Present**

Reagan Chalmers  
Marisol Diaz  
Fifi Derby  
Juan Carlos Gonzalez  
Kelli Hunter-Sheppard  
Robin Morrison  
Vivian Nunez  
Angel Rodriguez  
Ann Marie Sasseville

### **Guests Present**

Rocid de la Tirana – AND  
Susana Piscocoy – Hope for Miami

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:15 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 November 17, 2016 as presented or corrected as well as the minutes of the D/HH Committee, Education and Inclusion Committee, ESE Family Engagement Committee, Early Childhood PreK Committee, Panel Transition Committee and Ad-Hoc Budget Committee.

Liz Cramer 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 reminded members that they must complete the form titled “Certification of Compliance Code of Ethics for Individuals Serving on Advisory Committees (non-employees) of the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida.”

Ms. Barbara said that the M-DCPS Family Expo: Exceptional Student Education Family Forum and Exposition was a wonderful event for families. Panel members understand that the organization and planning required was an incredible amount of work for everyone. She thanked everyone from the District who participated in the process of making each Expo such a meaningful experience for families.

Ms. Barbara attended the Attendance Boundary Committee meeting. The Family and Community Involvement Advisory Committee will meet in January.

Ms. Barbara announced that Chris Reigadas has decided to move her membership status to Honorary. Everyone thanked Ms. Reigadas for her dedication and contributions to the Panel for many years. She served as Chair of the Panel for six years and has been dedicated supporter of the importance of transition.

Ms. Barbara said that Panel members must stay aware of updates regarding the Medicaid Waiver. Due to a lack of interagency communication, parents are frequently unaware of available services. Please refer parents to the Agency for Persons with Disabilities for assistance with the Medicaid Waiver.

## **Agency Partner Presentations**

Ava Goldman presented a lovely slide show about the celebration of inclusion at several schools. Rosa Maria Barbara asked participating agencies to begin their presentations.

**Debbie School:** The first agency presentation was about the Debbie School by Kathy Vergara. As you know, the University of Miami Debbie School is a family centered early intervention educational and research facility for children who have developmental disabilities. The school is a Division of the Mailman Center for Child Development and has a three-fold purpose: research on the problems that impact children with special needs, training for university students, and service to children and their families. The educational services of the Debbie School are provided through the Auditory-Oral Education Program for children with hearing loss, the B-2 Early Education Program for children with varying exceptionalities, and the Early Childhood Education Program for children who are typically developing.

The Debbie School has partnered with Miami-Dade County Public Schools for over thirty years to provide services for young children with disabilities. M-DCPS and the School Board have been leaders in their recognition of the importance of early intervention. As a result, we are increasing the number of students with disabilities who are graduating and attending college.

**Mailman Center for Child Development:** Lynn Miskiel distributed a flyer about the programs offered at the Mailman Center. The Mailman Center is part of UM's Miller School of Medicine. Programs include Early Steps North Dade, Family Navigator, Pediatric Mobile Clinic, Clinical and Pediatric Psychology, Behavior Pediatrics Clinic, Audiology, Social Work, and the IDES Clinic.

**Hope for Miami Disabilities Services:** Susana Piscocoya distributed a flyer about Hope for Miami and said that the organization is committed to helping bring hope and healing to families, youth, and children. Disabilities services offer Success Club After School and Summer Camp for teens with disabilities and Project Genesis for teens with disabilities in high school to teach independent living skills, improving academics and building bonds of friendship. Hope for Miami locations are in Hialeah, North Miami, Cutler Bay, Kendall, Liberty City, and Dadeland.

**UM/NSU CARD:** Diane Adreon reported that UM/NSU CARD is funded through a Florida Department of Education Discretionary Project Grant. They have five offices throughout the community. Services for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder are provided from identification through the lifespan. Eligibility is met through an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or a medical diagnosis. All of the services are free. Referrals come from many sources throughout the community. In addition, CARD serves individuals who are deaf/blind or have other sensory impairments.

The registration process for families is through CARD. Following enrollment, families are assigned a clinician that remains with them as long as necessary. CARD offers support groups, teen and adult socialization groups, and employment assistance. CARD also has some private pay services including evaluations. Maria Ratti added that they also have an incredible newsletter.

**Advocacy Network on Disabilities (AND formerly CCDH):** Odile da Silva reported that the agency serves children, adults, and family members. There is no charge for family support services that include case management, service coordination, linking to community resources, emergency financial assistance, wheelchair repair funds, and stipends for in home support. The Advocacy Network on Disabilities Frequently refers families to the Medicaid Waiver and tries to help undocumented families.

The Advocacy Network on Disabilities is the home for The Children's Trust All Children Together Network that offers training throughout the community. Maria Ratti said that All Children Together Network really helped her child's teacher understand the importance of inclusion.

Special Olympics: Mark Thompson reported that the Special Olympics has partnered with M-DCPS for many years. The program trains students ages eight and older during the school day. The organization has forty (40) competitions a year providing everyone with a chance to succeed.

In addition, two thousand six-hundred (2,600) children ages two to seven are enrolled in the Young Athletes Program for children with disabilities. The program provides a curriculum, activity guide, and \$500 for equipment.

Special Olympics offers a Motor Activities Training Program for children and adults with severe disabilities. In addition, they have adult programs at Easter Seals, United Cerebral Palsy, and ARC.

The program is currently serving five thousand individuals with disabilities in Miami. Ms. Barbara asked how we can help get more students involved. Odile da Silva noted that one of the problems is that children with significant disabilities are not in after school programs. Dr. Abrahante said that The Children's Trust is trying to work on this problem and M-DCPS is also looking at this issue. All agreed that parents of students with profound disabilities do not try to enroll their children in after school programs, which currently do not offer appropriate supports for children with severe to profound disabilities.

Center for Independent Living (CIL) of South Florida: Ernie Martinez reported that the CIL is an important organization in South Florida that serves individuals with disabilities. Services are not restricted to any specific type of disability. The organization provides services to assist with the journey to independence. After an individual with disabilities is referred to CIL, they complete an assessment for an independent living plan.

CIL advocates work on systemic changes within the community. The new core service is transition from High School. They focus on transportation services and health care. In addition, they work with the FFAST Program.

CIL has partnered with FIU and Panther Plus to help young adults transition to adulthood. This year CIL started a teen youth group and sponsors art groups and drumming groups in Palmetto Bay.

The Florida Department of Education is the gatekeeper of funding for CIL. There are three CIL offices in Miami-Dade County: Miami, North Miami Beach, and Coral Gables.

Florida International University (FIU): Liz Cramer reported that FIU prepares teachers of students with disabilities. In addition, the Center for Children and Families at FIU provides services. Project Panther Life works closely with M-DCPS and now serves students beyond the age of twenty-two (22) and caps at age twenty-six (26). FIU Embrace works with adults and the Dan Marino Center is working with FIU to employ students with autism.

Rosa Maria Barbara reminded everyone that there are needs for students with disabilities that are not met in the community. Rosa Maria and her husband are trying to build a network of individuals that can assist individuals with disabilities.

Dr. Sasseville said there is a need for pediatric dentists and mental health. Robin Morrison said that there are community mental health agencies that are trying to provide afterschool programs.

Elias Seife discussed how the problem of health insurance impacts families of children with disabilities.

South Florida Behavioral Network: This agency provides services for children with mental health needs in our community including respite care, mobile crisis unit, and mental health services.

Family Care Council (FCC): Rosa Maria Barbara said that FCC's primary goal is to empower individuals with disabilities who reside in Florida. This council advises the governor regarding issues that relate to the Medicaid Waiver and the Medicaid Waiver Wait List. The Medicaid Waiver waives the income of the family so that individuals with disabilities are eligible to receive financial support for care. Ms. Barbara asked "How can M-DCPS work collaboratively with agencies to inform parents about the importance of applying for the Medicaid Waiver?" Discussion followed about the tiered Wait List process. It is imperative that our parents are informed about the age in which children can apply for the waiver.

M-DCPS should refer parents to the Agency for Person with Disabilities and/or the Family Care Council as the primary resource for information about the Medicaid Waiver. It was mentioned that there has been a change in the eligibility for Medicaid Waiver of children of undocumented parents. It was noted that the information shared by parents that have completed the process is far more effective when facilitated by parents. It was also suggested that the information regarding the waiver should be shared at IEP meetings. Parents Helping Parents can assist with the dissemination of information to parents.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Awards Committee**

**Kathy Vergara/Ava Goldman**

Ava Goldman reported that the first meeting of the Awards Committee is scheduled on Friday, January 20, 2017 at 10:00 AM at the Debbie School.

### **D/HH Committee**

**Lynn Miskiel/Kelli Hunter Sheppard**

The Deaf/Hard of Hearing Committee met on December 12, 2016. Meeting notes reflected that Professional Development opportunities were discussed at the meeting.

### **Early Childhood PreK Committee**

**Kathy Vergara/Marisol Diaz**

Early Childhood SPED Committee met on November 29, 2016. Marisol Diaz reported that the referral process for students with disabilities was reviewed for clarification of procedures.

### **Education-Inclusion Committee**

**Janet McDaniel/Reagan Chalmers**

Education-Inclusion Committee met on December 5, 2016. Minutes reported that it is important to access the inclusion of students with disabilities in extra-curricular activities.

### **ESE Family Engagement Committee**

**Ernie Martinez/Angel Rodriguez/**

No report.

**Kelli Hunter-Sheppard**

### **Panel Transition Committee**

**Chris Reigadas/Ernie Martinez/Vivian Nunez**

The Transition Committee met on December 12, 2016 at JRE Lee Educational Center. The link has been placed on the M-DCPS Website Home Page. Ms. Cynthia Guillama will assist with data needed in reference to industry certification requirements met by students with disabilities. In addition, the committee is working on Top 10 List of statistical data compilation to allow the Committee to make educated recommendations to the SPED Department. Slides were shared with Panel members from the

Unique Abilities Fair.

Transition Task Force – The next Task Force Meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2016. Agency participation has been exceptional.

**Ad-Hoc Budget Committee**

**Elias Seife/Magaly Abrahante**

Elias Seife and Magaly Abrahante reviewed state reports on student data. Steps moving forward will be discussed at January meeting.

**Nominating Committee**

**Report as needed**

No report.

**Steering Committee**

**Report as needed**

No report.

**Committee Representation**

**Attendance Boundary Committee**

**Rosa Maria Barbara**

**Family and Community  
Involvement Advisory Committee**

**Rosa Maria Barbara**

**Other**

Rosa Maria Barbara asked Dr. Abrahante if she had any announcements. Dr. Abrahante discussed the District's focus on inclusion. Region Administrators are working together to analyze the schedules of students based on their needs to determine inclusive placement of students. The conversation was eye opening and will provide insights into improving opportunities for inclusion.

Rosa Maria thanked everyone for coming, wishing all a Happy Holiday. She thanked members for their commitment to students with disabilities and thanked everyone for allowing the Panel to be a voice for our children with disabilities.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.

**Next Meeting**

The General Membership meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2016 at 3:00 pm in the School Board Administration Building – Room 559.