**ESE ADVISORY COUNCIL GENERAL MEETING, WEDNESDAY AUGUST 27th, 2025**
**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Call to order** 6.15pm

**ROLL CALL:**

**Elected executive board present:**

- Jacqui Luscombe (Chair)
- Jenn Valliere, at-large board member

**Not present:**

- Ana Corujo - Vice Chair. (Arrived later)
- Apologies for absence received from: Bach Todaro, Corresponding Secretary. (ESE-related prior commitment) and Christina Gaskill, at-large board member (Open House commitment)
- Recording sec position vacant
- At-large board member position vacant (resignation received: Lucia Candiotti)

**School Board appointees present:**

- Maria Torrealba (for Maura McCarthy Bulman, District 1)
- Melissa Ramos (for Rebecca Thompson, District 2)
- Sara Tribaudino (for Lori Alhadeff, District 4)
- Seth Hyman (for Adam Cervera, District 6)
- Anabelle Rivera (for Dr Allen Zeman, Seat 8 at-large)
- Jenn Valliere (for Debra Hixon, Seat 9, at-large)

**Not present:**

- Danilo Gutierrez (for Sarah Leonardi, District 3). Arrived later
- Sheilynn Carrasco or (for Dr Jeff Holness, District 5)
- Position vacant (for Nora Rupert, District 7)

**School Board member present:** Adam Cervera, District 6

**CHAIRS REPORT:**

- Overview of ESE Advisory's function
- Redefining Schools: encouraged parents to attend community meetings & give input
- Focus for ESE case mgmt: continuing concerns incl lack of direct access to 504 Plans

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**:

Melissa Ramos, Autism committee (ACE): Upcoming meeting Glades Middle 10am, Sept 2nd. Topic: mental health & suicide awareness month. Guests: Paul Jaquith, president and CEO, Mental Health America, SE Florida, & Veronica Winter, BCPS director of mental health services.

**DISTRICT REPORT:**

**Diane Eagan, Executive Director of ESE**

- Intros to ESE dept leadership team
- Intro to/from Adam Cervera, School Board member

**Saemone Hollingsworth, Chief Student Services Officer (SH)**

- This new role realigns student services: ESE, mental health, Coordinated Student Health Services (CSHS), school counseling, all under one title to better support student needs.
- Addressed concerns from last year re Coordinated Student Health Services dept and nurses:
    - Individual nurses: Students with known individual medical/nursing needs are being staffed in accordance with their IEP/504. She now meets weekly with Coordinated Student Health Services dept to ensure student needs are met.
    - School clinic nurses: funding available for this during the Covid epidemic has subsequently ceased. 50 schools currently have no clinic nurse (down from 73 two wks ago)
    - Telehealth services: 75 visits to date and an estimated 200+ hours of instruction saved
- Redefining Schools: exploring multiple potential options incl. Autism school models
- Attended Behavioral Health Coalition meeting; organizations incl.Children's Services Council, United Way, are funding continuation of important programs such as extra training in disabilities awareness/de-escalation for law enforcement/SROs, with certified counselors and instructors.

Questions/follow-up:

- Chair JL said families of students w/1:1 nurses were poorly treated last year by CSHS; some had quit BCPS or left the state altogether as a result. SH acknowledged that customer service needs improvement and stressed commitment to doing so and building trust and partnership w/families.
- Suggestion for nurses to be at school a day before students come back from summer break, so parents can hand over medicines, make enquiries etc.
- Comment from parent who was told by CSHS that their child's 1:1 nurse could no longer come to school last year; spoke about failures of customer service and communication, but partnership with BCPS had resulted in problems being resolved.
- JL said parents don't generally know where to seek help and report problems if they've exhausted attempts at school level. SH said a parent flyer is being created to assist. ESE dept also has a parent liaison, Stephanie Mireles. Parent outreach programs include ESE dept Lunch and Learn sessions held online to provide info and resources.

**Stacy Demartino-Triangolo, Transition Supervisor, re Certificates of Completion**

- Florida's House Bill 1105 phases out "certificates of completion" for students w/disabilities. These were given to students who earned 24 credits but did not meet GPA or state testing requirements.
- The certificates did not qualify students for jobs, college, or postsecondary programs.
- The legislation shifts the focus to ensuring all students have an opportunity to graduate with a standard high school diploma**.** Students can stay in school until age 22 to complete credits, use grade forgiveness to improve GPAs and retake state tests or get a waiver if they cannot pass it.
- New opportunities for students: Development of workforce credential programs, including options specifically for students with Autism and those on modified curricula. Students may now leave school with industry certifications, badges, or other credentials linking them to employment.
- Diploma options: Florida already offers five diploma pathways. One option allows students with disabilities to substitute some academic classes with Career & Technical Education (CTE) courses**,** earning industry certifications as part of their diploma.

- Impact: students will no longer leave with "just a piece of paper." All will have a pathway to a diploma/credential/certification, improving opportunities for employment and further education.
- ESE dept Transition to Adulthood Planning series every second Tuesday of the month on Teams helps navigate life after high school, covering transition services, post-secondary options, deferment programs and agency resources. Meeting link is at: https://fl01803656.schoolwires.net/esls Recordings are posted on YouTube @TAPBroward
- Only three per cent of students participate in their IEP meetings. Invite them from the age of 12 and help them self advocate or even just say Hello and introduce themselves as a start.

Questions/follow-up:

- Suggestion to send out info to parents re Certificates of Completion; there is a lot of panic that it is a bad devpt and explanatory outreach would help.
- Concerns about the extent to which school staff will know and pass on the info. ESE Specialists will undergo training Sept 11.
- Parents do often do not attend IEP meetings; need greater partnership and attendance
- Suggestions to post more info in the schools themselves, consider students w/disabilities' needs at Open House, make ESE Specialists visible, resume ESE dept newsletter, trin staff in how to support parents and direct them to relevant district staff for help where necessary.
- BCPS can provide interpreters for parents whose first language is not English, for IEP meetings, parent conferences etc. Suggestion that schools inform parents of that entitlement. Parent trainings available in Spanish. BCPS website has English, Spanish, Haitian Creole.
- Lack of consistent communication from BCPS to advertise events, town halls, news, across social media platforms and email.

**APPROVAL OF May 2025 MINUTES:** Prop: Steve Moyer. Second: Danilo Gutierrez. Passed unanimously,

**SPOTLIGHT ON THE EVERGREEN REPORT:**

**TOPIC: Transportation issues for students w/disabilities, and training for ESE bus attendants**

- JL acknowledged the complexities of BCPS transportation and the effort that goes into moving students across the district, but highlighted concerns about multiple issues affecting students w/disabilities including routes not being allocated by the start of the school year, parents being told to wait 2-3 weeks for transportation despite it being mandated in the IEP, students missing school and parents missing work as a result, unacceptably long journey times, etc.
- The Evergreen report of 2014, an independent review of ESE services in BCPS, made recommendations for improvements to ESE that 11 years later are unmet. JL reported that the Transportation and ESE depts had been helping resolve individual cases, but attempts to engage the Transportation dept to discuss causes and challenges, understand perspectives and to progress dialogue about potential solutions had been unsuccessful, despite repeated appeals to senior mgmt. level. Been asking bus attendant training questions since April.
- JL also reported concerns about the ESE bus attendant job description, which refers to ESE training - but no such curriculum actually exists. The job description also contains language that parents have found disturbing because it suggests a lack of understanding of behavior strategies.
- Discussion of parent experiences. Concerns included staff failing to put harnesses on students, journey times of nearly two hours, staff attitude, no bus assigned for first day of school despite submitting the info in April/May. Need to better utilize technology to resolve persistent problems.
- Evergreen report identified similar/same issues 11 years ago: longer bus rides/routes for students

w/disabilities compared to non-disabled peers, inconsistent procedures for assigning transportation, need for refining the accountability structure, breakdowns in student service delivery, need to "create an environment of understanding for the special needs population."

- Diane Eagan, executive director of ESE: apologized on behalf of BCPS, acknowledged parent struggles. ESE and Transportation depts liaising to address issues and challenges.
- Motion proposed Jacqui Luscombe, seconded Steve Moyer, passed unanimously w/amendments by Sabrina Flores shown in bold: "*We recommend that BCPS conduct a comprehensive review of ESE bus transportation services to evaluate the district's* ***present*** *performance* ~~***in 2025***~~ *against the recommendations made by the Evergreen Report of 2014. Those recommendations were: i) The District should develop processes and accountability strategies related to IEP transportation components, especially the staffing of ESE bus attendants and one-on-one bus attendants. ii) Examine BCPS program placement determination in light of the impact of decisions on the length of ESE student bus rides, develop procedures to remedy the issues, and ensure that all transportation-related procedures are uniformly followed in the district. iii) Expand the array of training offered to ESE paraprofessionals and create targeted ESE training for transportation staff.*"

**CHAIR'S REPORT continued.**

- Will need to reconvene policy & bylaws committee to continue its work after School Board decision-making on the future of Advisories and Policy 1070 is complete.
- Reported that the School Board rejected the Supt's proposal to merge ESE Advisory, Gifted Advisory, ESOL and Multi-Lingual Advisories into one body.

**CAMERAS IN ESE CLASSROOMS**: **progress update**

- JL reported that Policy 4900 was passed by the School Board on July 29th by a 9-0 vote, creating a BCPS-operated program to place an audio-visual camera in self-contained ESE classroom as an added safety measure, subject to state-required parent consent process.
- Diane Eagan: ESE dept has been working with other depts to now progress this, including placing info and consent forms in Focus. Info sent to parents of all 41k students w/disabilities, rather than targeted at just the 8k with students in self-contained classrooms
- Opt-ins received to date: 4,951. Opt-outs received: 712. (Numbers may include parents whose submissions are irrelevant as their children are not in a self-contained classroom)
- Seven classrooms have so far obtained 100 per cent consent. Awaiting installation/activation.
- Principals and area directors have had training. Program being promoted to parents through district and school-level emails; schools have been encouraged to make individual outreach too.

Questions/follow-up:

- Concerns re inconsistencies in communication; some schools making more outreach than others
- If one parent refuses consent, the other parents will receive a letter informing them that their classroom cannot have a camera
- Concerns re number of consent forms still outstanding and number of refusals
- If consent has been received in some classrooms, why the delay in installation/activation?
- JL asked for someone from the tech side to attend next ESE Advisory

**Meeting closed 9pm**