



ESE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING AUGUST 22, 2024

Piper High School 6.15pm

MINUTES

Call to order 6.19pm

Welcome & introductions

Roll Call of School Board member appointees to ESE Advisory:

Present:

- Danilo Gutierrez for (Sarah Leonardi)
- Nakisha Succarichi (for Nora Rupert)
- Stephanie Salisbury (for Lori Alhadeff)
- Jenn Valliere (for Debbi Hixon)

District report:

Diane Eagan, ESE Executive Director, BCPS

- ESE dept vision: To increase academic proficiency and inclusionary practices for students w/disabilities (SWDs) through engaging and meaningful support to schools through the ESE dept.
- ESE dept mission: To provide ongoing tiered support to schools that targets academic proficiency and inclusionary practices for SWDs
- Superintendent's mission stmt: 'Believe. Empower, Achieve. One Broward.'
- BCPS became an 'A' graded district. SWDs' academic growth was same rate as typical peers. ESE dept is working on "action plans" to continue supporting achievement.
- ESE Boot Camp in Aug: Professional devtpt for service providers to "level-set and really improve our practice across the board."
- OT, PT and SLPs are fully staffed
- 103 specialist nurses assigned to support medically fragile students.
- Routed 5,816 SWDs on school buses; ESE dept transportation liaison works w/transport dept
- Conducted annual policy & procedures review with all OT and SLP providers to share expectations

Stephanie Acosta Castro, ESE Compliance Director:

- ESE Policy & Procedures: Florida Dept of Educn (FLDOE) release a template to districts every three years. Has to go through approval processes and be submitted back to state. FLDOE opened the process for revisions in May, set a due date of June 21, FLDOE pre-approved BCPS's submission July 3 and document went to School Board yesterday for final approval. Now awaiting Supt signature and final approval from FLDOE. ESE Specialists were informed when they met in Aug of what was going to the Board.
- FOCUS: new information support software.
 - o Q: Is BCPS holding annual IEP meetings outside of the annual date?

“The answer is yes and no. Can we convene an annual IEP (meeting) outside of the annual dates? Absolutely. But if we go into a brand new system and click the event ‘Interim IEP’ we’re going to get a blank document because we haven’t created one yet in that system, so to create one in that system we have to transfer the information then change the end date to match the date of the IEP. So if I had an IEP meeting in May and now need an interim. I cannot use the event ‘interim’ but I can have a meeting and have that same IEP end in May so that my annual IEP date still reconvenes because I don’t necessarily want to re-do all the goals and all those areas.”

- Two new reports posted in Focus on 2023/24 accommodations and services lines. This is based on the info pulled out of EDPlan when BCPS shut down access in June to ensure a history of record of what info was available to schools had they pulled that info in Aug
- Working on a parent training – more info in Sept
- Been running IEP meetings in Focus since June 17: around 600 completed
- Created training schedule thru Dec; facilitated trainings on site and on-demand sessions available daily on Teams. Around 150 staff so far.
- Order of where to go for help: teacher, ESE Specialist, school administration, then regional supt. If IEP not being implemented, call ESE dept (754 321 3400), who will connect with curriculum supervisor, who collaborates with school to fix concern. Still problem: due process offer local conflict resolution. ESE Chair suggested “Where to go for help” flyer be emailed districtwide & put on school and ESE dept webpages
- Transition to Adulthood Planning. Different transition topic monthly. Guardianship etc
- Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS)

Deaf & Hard of Hearing (DHH) audio-visual emergency notification project update: Manuel Castaneda, Executive Director of Information Technology, BCPS.

- ESE Chair provided a project summary: started in 2019 when DHH students/teachers at Peters Elem raised concern about not having audio alarms in emergencies. Project faltered through five superintendents. Now finally installed at DHH program schools: Peters Elem, Tropical Elem, Seminole Middle, S/Plantation High.
- Mr Castaneda: New state of art visual notification system which should be a national model for how you involve and communicate DHH populations. “This is the definition of advocacy. The fact you pushed us.”
- Andrea Ciotti, Director of ESE Specialised Instruction said Phase 2 now involves working with DHH educators re what specific devices to wear to enhance audio in their classrooms
- ESE Chair noted the outstanding work of Lynn Moscoso in IT Security, Michael Torres and Kim Luke who helped bring project to fruition.

FOCUS discussion:

- ESE Chair outlined concerns about Focus SSS module that is now used for ESE case management.
- Problem isn’t fear of change but lack of functionality and the system not being built out to provide equivalent or improved service. No pilot program. No running two systems side by side for the first year as was promised. Creating a new ESE platform was not part of the procurement process; Focus was never evaluated for its ESE case mgmt. potential during the procurement process. ESE case mgmt needs are v different to other areas of Focus; need highly specialized process flow. “ESE Specialists are unable to serve our students the way they should and that is the concern....These aren’t bumps in road; validate these people’s concerns, these are the experts in ESE compliance, these are the people who’ve used a process flow in a computer system for all these years that was built up and tailored specially and it was just kicked down for politicking reasons...it wasn’t a decision taken because of the benefit of the system. For the rest of Focus it was, but **not** the ese part.
- Need a gap analysis to ID what EDPlan vs Focus functionalities, what can be developed and what can’t, with timeline and plan for addressing it.

- Mathew Bradford, Task-Assigned Chief Information Officer & Director of Information Technology: “The gap analysis and functionality, that’s something we still have to look at and I agree with you...we can’t just use it ‘as is’ and say ESE has to conform but...We’re going to work tirelessly to get everything addressed if we can possibly address it...” Also: We need you to be patient with us.”
- Feedback from attendees:
 - o BCPS needed to consult prior to implementation with end users. Training and support available but functionalities absent/difficult, such as inability to run reports, having to manually transfer data.
 - o Why no gap analysis. “We can’t wait for compliance...we can’t be patient and understanding waiting for the system to be developed to comply. Students need compliance now.”
 - o Inability to close out IEP at an IEP meeting and finalise: this was a real experience. Breach of IDEA.
 - o ESE Specialists have large programs, staff are learning on the go trying to set up caseloads and classrooms and working with complex students.
 - o Most traumatic rollout ever seen in BCPS, not just parents but esp. at school level; frustration affecting services, supports and compliance
 - o Parent portal issues: pages and pages of archived documents out of order, can’t find current IEP
 - o Student spent majority of first week in registrar’s office at new school because of non-access to documentation. Parent: “We were stressed to the max.”
 - o Trying to create an interim is now a blank screen, Parent Participation Forms no longer have space for names.
- Responses from staff:
 - o Mrs Eagan: Unclear on definition of “gap analysis”. Have looked at every line of every form and working with vendor to improve. Providing layers of support.
 - o Mr Bradford: “We understand the priority...this is something that keeps us up at night, it really is.”

Motion:

“Whereas Broward ESE Advisory recognizes the critical importance of ESE case documentation management for providing timely and effective services to students; and

Whereas there have been significant concerns raised regarding a decline in the capabilities of such systems between the last and current academic years; and

Whereas these declines have resulted in non-compliance with federal law, and challenges for ESE specialists and other staff, parents, and students - including in the ability to make necessary adjustments to IEPs and hold interim meetings, limited access to previous years’ IEPs, security risks associated with sharing IEPs as PDF attachments, and increased workload for ESE staff;

We recommend that Broward County School Board directs the Superintendent and district staff to:

- 1. Conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of the changes in ESE documentation management capabilities available to ESE specialists and other staff, and parents, between the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years.*
- 2. Develop and release a comprehensive plan of action, including timelines, to address the identified issues and restore the necessary capabilities for effective ESE documentation management to ensure full compliance with federal law.*
- 3. Disclose all tickets of concern submitted by staff regarding ESE documentation management systems since August 1, 2024.”*

Proposed Kelly Walker, seconded, passed unanimously per amendments.

Parent portal tutorial: Dr Daryl Diamond, Director, Planning, Implementation, Training, and Continuous Improvement (PITAC), IT dept

- Parent email has to match what's on file with school, to access EDPlan
- Having issues? Ask school or email focuscommunications@browardschools.com
- Training will be put on Focus page on school website

Cameras in ESE classrooms update: The state ran a three-year pilot program in Broward allowing cameras in ESE self-enclosed classrooms at parent request. Pilot ended, wasn't renewed. ESE Advisory made a formal recommendation last year for BCPS to continue the program itself. School Board has agreed. Program needs School Board policy to back it. Policy being drafted. ESE Chair asked if draft could be provided ASAP to us so we can be inputting and helping speed to process, per the Supt's pledge to "expedite" policymaking.

Security update: Metal detectors, school drop-off points: Jim La Rosa, Director of Safety, Security & Emergency Preparedness (SSEP) & Ernie Lozano, Task-Assigned Chief of SSEP

- Re ESE dropoff areas/routines being moved: every school physically different. Buses, cars, traffic patterns are unique and determine the dropoff area for each school; some may have had to change to meet operational needs.
- Re metal detectors: ran a pilot over the summer at ESY at Flanagan and Taravella, so were able to refine procedures and take into account unique needs. Important for all students to have same experience and come through same way. School Board has crafted amendment to draft metal detector policy to take into account that where there are unique needs, there can be alternative screenings but no students get a waiver, no exceptions.
- La Rosa: "We emphasise to staff that each student is greeted with a smile in the morning." Lozano: detectors are alerting to around 12 per cent of all students due to items. This is just one layer of a broader security plan.

Open forum:

- School Choice: website crashed two days so registrars couldn't register students, parents didn't have access to necessary documentation. Mr Castaneda: apologized. Said there was an issue with migrating an app to Focus and IT dept didn't have the resources to handle it.
- Cellphones: can use in class for instructional purposes at teacher discretion. Necessary accommodations specific to SWDs need to be accommodated. Concerns this may not be happening in all cases that merit it.
- 504 Plans: School Board agreed a change to Guidance Counselors job description to redirect them to more mental health duties and they no longer are required to take on a school's 504 Liaison role, though around 100 still are. Other staff being assigned. Mrs Eagan: "We don't have a concern at the district level that 504s won't be carried out" but duties are being shifted.
- ESE program schools or 'clusters' – concerns about who makes decision to assign students to which program schools, as some now don't attend their closest one. No policy exists on this, nor protocol and procedure. How is stakeholder input collected, parent communication, who determines where student goes? Mrs Eagan: complex issue, lots of factors, decision is based on "enrollment and where we can service students to make sure we're meeting their IEP. It's an admin decision; it's not written somewhere ...it's based on the needs of students." ESE chair suggested discussion could come back to future meeting re future written protocols.
- School Choice for parent wishing to move from cluster to new cluster: can it be done? If seats are available and the new school has the program to meet the student's need...yes.

Close 8.46pm