



DRAFT MINUTES OF ESE ADVISORY GENERAL MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 19th, 2025

Lauderdale Manors Early Learning Center, 6.15pm - 8.45pm.

Call to Order Chair Jacqui Luscombe (JL) called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees.

Roll Call:

Four of the nine School Board members' appointees present:

- Jen Valliere (for Debbi Hixon, countywide Seat 9)
- Nakisha Sucarichi (for Nora Rupert, District 7)
- Danilo Gutierrez (for Sarah Leonardi, District 3. Not present for Roll Call but arrived later)
- Anabelle Rivera (for Dr Allen Zeman, countywide seat 8. Not present for Roll Call but arrived later)

Apologies for absence received from:

- Sheilynn Carrasco (for Dr. Jeff Holness, District 5)
- Stephanie Salisbury (for Lori Alhadeff, District 4)

Awaiting appointments from School Board members:

- Maura McCarthy Bulman (District 1)
- Rebecca Thompson (District 2)
- Brenda Fam (District 6)

All five Advisory executive board members present:

- Jacqui Luscombe, Bach Todaro, Christina Gaskill, Jenn Valliere, Lucia Candiotti

Quorum was not met from the voting membership, meaning no formal votes/business could be passed.

Presentation:

Harnessing your inner superhero: Rewriting challenges to create chapters of greatness

Logan Priest, an 11th grader, talked about the importance of every child being seen for their abilities rather than disabilities, rising above challenges, and how his own journey with disabilities led to successes, incl award-winning accomplishments in the Arts.

New business:

- **Chair's report: Jacqui Luscombe**
 - Took part in district Best Practices in Inclusive Education assessment, with subcommittee chairs Melissa Ramos, Bach Todaro, Ellen Kay, and member/appointee Anabelle Rivera.
 - Cameras in ESE Classrooms program update: Supt may now wait to see if state legislation is passed before enacting the district policy as planned. Meeting Supt tmrw to discuss this and other priority issues
 - IEP progress reports were not published on Focus parent portal. Explanation was provided to Board members but not parents or Advisory.

- ESE policy & bylaws subcommittee review came up with proposed changes that would make it easier to achieve quorum at meetings, but we don't have quorum to discuss & pass those proposals. Non-appointments by School Board members not helping.
 - Hearing concerns from parents about 1:1 nurses for medically fragile students being removed/barred by BCPS. Also concerns about inadequate/inconsistent nursing provision in schools and problems re management of Type 1 Diabetes.
 - Concerns re retaliation vs parents for bringing complaints & lack of procedure for redress.
- **Subcommittee reports:**
- **Melissa Ramos, Autism (ACE):** Last meeting featured presentation/discussion on behavior management. Next meeting April 17th, 10am Glades Middle School.
 - **Ellen Kay, Meaningful Inclusion:** Last meeting featured presentation on co-teaching models. Next meeting Feb 27th, featuring a presentation on self-advocacy by two college students who are neurodiverse. Met with district ESE staff to provide them a presentation of the Lives in the Balance behavior management model, which ESE Advisory recommended BCPS to consider adopting last October. Hopeful for a positive decision by ESE dept.
 - **Bach Todaro, Down syndrome:** Last meeting featured a workshop about the IEP process, which was shared on Facebook live. Next meeting, March 20th, will focus on matriculation. Gold Coast Down Syndrome Assocn dance event Feb 21 for all people w/disabilities to promote inclusion and friendship. Also working on a one-day training for parents to help support their children's mental health. World Down syndrome day March 21st
- **District report: Stephanie Acosta Castro, Director of ESE Compliance/Andrea Ciotti, Director of Specialized ESE Instruction**
- Chief of the Bureau of Exceptional Student Education at Florida Dept of Education has resigned. Awaiting news of replacement.
 - Recap of district-level Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE) self-assessment, which was facilitated by Florida Inclusion Network. BCPS now has 41.8k students with IEPs and 504 plans; 1k more than at the last BPIE in 2022. Last year 247 schools completed BPIE assessments; this year 77 schools will do them. Occurs once every three years.
 - District BPIE assessment rated 30 indicators. Chose four priority indicators for 2025-28:
 - Indicator 3: District provides SWD with the same school choice options as students without disabilities to ensure all SWD receive educational services in their neighborhood school or school of choice.
 - Indicator 4: District data reflect that SWD, age 3–5, receive special ed and related services in the regular early childhood program with peers without disabilities.
 - Indicator 20: District has data that reflect an increasing number of students with low-incidence disabilities and/or receiving instruction through the access points are educated in general education classes, with supplementary aids, services, and curricular modifications as stipulated in student IEPs.
 - Indicator 28: District uses a variety of processes and tools to involve family members of students with and without disabilities in district wide decision-making and planning processes, including initiatives related to inclusive practices.

Sabrina Sheib, ESE Curriculum Director:

- ESE dept looking at where additional 'clusters' may be opened for next year; looking at schools that have no ESE classes and considering how they might. Ultimate goal over time would be to provide ESE program classrooms on every campus, so students do not have to go beyond their school boundary and there is a stronger continuum of services.

Questions from the floor:

- Q: Are schools monitored to ensure against segregation of ESE classrooms on campuses? A: This is not a BPIE indicator but staff are "constantly looking at where classrooms are and what makes the most sense as far as being near grade levels"
- Q: Are schools monitored to ensure there are peer mentor programs? A: All schools have an Inclusion Champion. "Depends on the school culture and climate what they're doing" but goal is for all to have some kind of peer programs, whether during or after school.
- Q: How do you ensure that SWDs have equal access to electives, theater participation, etc? A: This is the time of year that schools are creating their block schedules for next year and identifying students' needs and interests in order to create them. Guidance counselors and, in high school, transition specialists help guide this.
- Q: Are high school parents provided details of their school's transition specialist at the start of the school year? A: Staff can guide students to them, but ESE dept will follow up with Transition Coordinator Stacy Wolfe to check this. She provides monthly virtual Transition to Adulthood Planning meetings for parents; dept staff will supply flyer to share
- Q re provision of direct support in classrooms versus ensuring students are in the least restrictive environment, and inclusion in extracurricular activities, field trips etc. How is district ensuring that SWDs not only have access to activities but can participate meaningfully? A: Goal of ongoing inclusion work is for all schools to be "supportive and aware and sensitive to students with unique needs."
- Q: Is BPIE indicator about ensuring least restrictive environment saying that the district would be looking at changing a pre-K program for students who are medically fragile? A: Every decision is based on the individual needs of the child and what's appropriate, weighing where there are opportunities for students to be in a gen ed setting with peers who are non-disabled, versus ensuring they're in an environmt that best meets needs.
- Q: If a student needs to be in an ESE program class ("cluster") and their zoned school does not have one, is there policy to determine which cluster a students is assigned to; some are not being assigned to their nearest cluster but further away. A: It's determined on an individual basis. "It typically has to do with their address and the availability of a transportation route...we're working and partnering with transportation because what we want to do is say let's re-look at transportation in a different way so we can kind of get out of that...What we're trying to do now is see how do we look at where are student home schools and how do we make sure there's availability there, so that doesn't become a bar - the transportation." ESE dept has representation on BCPS School Choice cttee. JL stressed need for communication with parents if BCPS is going to send their child to a school beyond their nearest cluster. Need written protocol for how decisions are made.

- **Customer service in Broward schools.** From bullying and discrimination to non-compliance with IEPs/504s, what is the process for addressing parent concerns & what should be the outcomes and expectations? **Discussion with Dr Ted Toomer, Central Region Supt & the ESE dept team.**

- JL said there are frustrations for parents seeking resolution to school issues, from non-compliance with IEPs to cellphone accommodations for Diabetes, to 1:1 nurses being removed. Few know where to seek help beyond the school. No visible process for accountability, communication, transparency and apology.
- **Dr Toomer:** “One of the things that Dr Hepburn (the Supt) has really emphasized in his culture is how do we make sure that we are treating people well? It’s really about customer service, how we are getting back to parents...we won’t always get it right but we want to get it right more often than not and if something is happening that can be fixed, we want to fix it..We don’t want disgruntled people leaving...”
- Try to keep the resolution closest to the problem: speak first with teacher, ESE Specialist, principal then move on up to the Regional Supt office (North, South or Central - contact details are at www.browardschools.com/Page/76651) if there is no resolution.
- Regional office liaise with ESE dept to address ESE-specific issues. Regional directors (principal supervisors) also contact the principals to assess what has occurred; sometimes this is done by face to face meetings, other times by conference calls, to establish why a problem could not be, or was not, resolved before it reached that level.
- JL: Still hearing too often of situations in which schools call parents saying they need to take their child home because staff cannot manage their behavioral challenges; this is a back-door suspension and should not be occurring. What is being done to combat this and inform staff that this should not happen, and providing info to staff of where to seek district behavioral support instead; can a memo be sent to all principals to emphasise this? A: The approach is to address it with the schools where it occurs rather than a districtwide memo.

Note: owing to an error by ESE dept staff, the audio recording was deactivated at this point, one hour and 43 mins into the meeting. There is therefore no recording or transcript to inform the Minutes. A summary of the final 50 minutes of the meeting is summarized below)

- Discussion about what happens when a complaint/issue cannot be resolved by the Regional Supt.
 - Chair and parents expressed concern that there is no visible process or written procedure for how complaints/appeals are handled, and by who. Parents get stuck in a loop of non-accountability.
 - Concern about parent who has faced retaliatory action by BCPS after notifying a bullying/discrimination complaint against a teacher. Teacher brought a retaliatory “bullying” complaint against the parent based solely on the parent having advocated for their child, and the parent was adjudicated a “bully” in their absence, minus any visible process, with no recourse and had sanctions imposed against them by BCPS.
 - Concern about nursing services for Type 1 Diabetes. parents being sanctioned/scolded by BCPS for “interfering” when they are involved by necessity due to nursing inconsistency/inadequate.
 - Concern about BCPS nursing staff reporting parents above to Child Protective Services
 - Concern about nursing staff stating they have blanket order from the Director of Coordinated Student Health Services to refuse cellphone accommodation for students Type 1 Diabetes.
- **Old business:**
- ESE Advisory policy & bylaws review: cannot be advanced without quorum
 - No BCPS response to requests for Focus/EDPlan gap analysis & timeline

Close.