

Broward ESE Advisory Council – General Meeting, November 19, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: 6:22pm

Roll Call:

Elected executive board present:

- Jacqui Luscombe (Chair)
- Ana Corujo (Vice-Chair)
- Jenn Valliere (at large)

Not present:

- Sabrina Flores (Recording Secretary) – apologies received
- Bach Todaro (Secretary) – apologies received
- Christina Gaskill, at large board member

School Board appointees present:

- Melissa Ramos (for Rebecca Thompson, District 2)
- Jenn Valliere (for Debra Hixon, Seat 9, at large)
- Anabelle Rivera (for Dr. Allen Zeman, Seat 8, at large)
- Michelle West (for Nora Rupert, District 7)
- Danilo Gutierrez (for Sarah Leonardi, District 3)
- Seth Hyman (for Adam Cervera, District 6)
- Maria Torrealba (for Maura McCarthy Bulman, District 1)

Not present:

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

District Report – Saemone Hollingsworth, Chief Student Services Officer / Diane Eagan, Executive Director of ESE.

- Manatee Bay Elementary School was recognized as a Unified Champion School.
- Special Olympics expansion - district Special Olympics programs expanded from approximately 20 programs to 98. Emphasis on peer engagement between students with and without disabilities.
- Student leadership and engagement - meetings held with student advisors regarding mental health support, school counseling services, inclusive school activities.
- District conducting surveys to assess inclusive practices at schools. Increased use of district social media platforms to highlight inclusive initiatives.
- Family and Community Engagement - Annual Family Fun Day held recently with approximately 1,000 families attended.
- Upcoming District Showcase - scheduled for December 9. Event designed to support school selection, transitions, and postsecondary planning.
- Recommended escalation process: Classroom Teacher → School-based ESE Specialist → School Administration → Regional Office → District ESE Department
- ESE dept's Parent Liaison is available for confidential, individualized support. Conflict Resolution Office is available to assist families when issues remain unresolved.
- Parent education and outreach – ESE dept's Lunch & Learn sessions held monthly (recent topic: executive functioning). Sessions recorded and to be posted on updated ESE dept website.

Commented [SF1]: Please add any other board members that may have been missed.

Commented [SF2]: Do you have full last name?

Commented [SF3]: Please double check.

Chair's Report – Jacqui Luscombe, ESE Advisory Chair

- Thanks to Cega Behavioral Health for refreshments
- Chair outlined district proposal to eliminate block scheduling in middle and high schools. The plan was decided/discussed at a behind-closed-doors School Board session, and introduced with limited advance notice and minimal community engagement. Superintendent announced yesterday that the plan would not move forward at this time -

Discussion: Upcoming changes to the school day: advantages, disadvantages & impacts on BCPS's 'students first' mission

- Dr. Ernie Lozano, Chief Human Resources Officer / Guy Barmoha, Director of Secondary Learning:

Dr. Lozano provided extensive background regarding scheduling history and financial considerations:

- Scheduling History - Pre-2014: Seven-period day (teachers taught six periods) Post-2014: Eight-period block schedule (teachers teach five periods)
- Financial Impact - Block schedule costs approximately \$35 million annually. Enrollment decline of 38,000 students over 10 years. Loss of approximately 9,500 students in the most recent year (~\$90 million). Rising healthcare costs exceeding \$100 million over the past decade.
- Budget constraints - 50% of budget restricted to capital expend
- Scheduling models considered - Traditional seven-period day; rotational seven-period schedules; modified block schedules
- Conclusion - Proposal paused due to community feedback and stress. Future consideration remains possible.
- Mr. Barmoha explained how ESE services are delivered in non-block schools. Services typically provided during electives or learning strategies classes. Acknowledged reduced flexibility without study hall.

Public comment re Study Hall

- Critical importance of Study Hall - Essential for ESE service delivery, especially for including Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Autism programs. Used for therapy services, test makeups, and executive functioning support, push-ins, counseling, speech etc. Students w/disabilities can't be pulled from core classes, so Study Hall is imperative
- Impact on student well-being - Reports of emotional distress among students and teachers. Concerns about burnout, particularly among AP, honors, and dual-enrollment students.
- Accessibility concerns – School Advisory Council meetings for deciding Study Hall options were held without interpreters, preventing full participation by Deaf staff and parents. Strong concerns raised regarding equity and ADA compliance.
- Communication failures - Concerns regarding scripted presentations, abrupt cancellations, and lack of transparency. Calls for improved district communication and meaningful engagement.
- Chair asked for feedback to be taken back to leadership/Board, better communication w/stakeholders and an easier environment for hearing feedback without fear of retaliation or pushback.

Other discussion:

- Enrollment decline and School Choice - Discussion of vouchers, charter schools, homeschooling, and Step Up scholarships. Clarification that ESE enrollment remains relatively stable.
- Substitute teacher training and compensation - Concerns regarding inadequate training for substitutes serving ESE students. Low compensation cited as a barrier to recruitment and retention.

- Promotion criteria updates - Clarification that elementary promotion criteria now align with state statute. Holistic review of all four core subjects required. Multiple alternative assessments available. Mr Barmoha: agreed to post progression policy/ promotion criteria info on school websites, not just district.

Recommendation:

Chair reported that there are continual parent concerns re how BCPS addresses complaints/concerns. Lack of responsiveness, unclear/lacking processes, lack of documentation, poor communication and accountability, little/poor insight into outcomes and corrective action. Due to being one person short of quorum, no formal recommendation can be proposed; however, the following informal suggestion was put forward by the Chair and backed by consensus, to be passed to Supt & School Board:

“That BCPS, in collaboration with ESE Advisory, develops a districtwide resolution and tracking system for parent concerns and complaints relating to ESE services, supports, educational rights, discipline, compliance and procedural safeguards.

The system should include the following components:

- 1. Formal intake and logging: All parent concerns submitted to the ESE dept must be formally logged into a centralised system and assigned a unique case number.*
- 2. Written receipt: Parents must receive written confirmation that their concern has been received, to include the case number, name and contact information of the district staff member assigned to the case, and an outline of next steps.*
- 3. Designated case manager: Each concern must be assigned to a specific responsible staff member who ensures communication flows to the parent, and coordinates with relevant school/district personnel involved in the review/investigation.*
- 4. Ongoing written communication: Parents must receive periodic written updates documenting actions taken, findings, and any corrective steps implemented, particularly in cases involving procedural violations, disciplinary errors, or failures to follow IEP/504 requirements, related services, or other ESE obligations.*
- 5. Formal closeout: At the conclusion of the review/investigation, the district must provide a written close-out summary to the parent. This close-out should include:*
 - A summary of the concern*
 - A summary of steps taken to review/investigate*
 - What was found*
 - Corrective actions taken*
 - Steps the school or district will take to prevent recurrence*
 - An apology or acknowledgement of error*
- 6. Data reporting and trend analysis: Aggregate data (with student-specific details removed) should be periodically reviewed by district leadership and shared with ESE Advisory to identify patterns, recurring issues, or needed system-level changes.”*

ESE Asst Director Kelly Fisher said that a streamlined process does exist. ESE dept works w/regional offices to address concerns. Database (BCPS Central) where concerns are tracked and resolutions are logged and outcomes shared with parents. Chair cited examples of unresolved issues; if a system exists, it's not translating to the parent end. Gulf between BCPS delivery and what parents should be able to expect.

Feedback from floor:

- need tracking of communications between BCPS and parents

- inconsistency in handling and communication
- no written standards to establish process and expectations
- advocate frustrations with concerns not being logged in writing and outcomes recorded; for example, schools calling to tell parents to take their child home early, or IEP non-compliance, and issues only being addressed verbally
- need for a comprehensive digital platform; 237,000 students is a massive customer base and BCPS should be open to working on change with ESE Advisory
- need for professional development to strengthen IEP compliance

Autism committee (ACE): Chair Melissa Ramos reported on site visits to VE programs at:

- Apollo Middle: very engaged principal and ESE Specialist, good impressions
- Seminole Middle: includes DHH cluster, uses visual monitors for emergency communications, electives looked inclusive, good flow, students w/interpreters, monthly socials for students, family outreach
- Encouraged further growth of VE program. Also, for BCPS to keep considering a BCPS Autism school.

Close