

**ESE Advisory Council – General Meeting, October 15, 2025**  
**Indian Ridge Middle School, 6.15pm**

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: 6:21pm

Roll Call:

**Elected executive board present:**

- Jacqui Luscombe (Chair)
- Ana Corujo (Vice-Chair)
- Bach Todaro (Corresponding Secretary)
- Sabrina Flores (Recording Secretary) arrived at a later time.

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

**Not present:**

- 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)
- Sara Tribaudino (for Lori Alhadeff, District 4)
- Michelle West (for Nora Rupert, District 7)
- Maria Torrealba (for Maura McCarthy Bulman, District 1)

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**Not present:**

- Danilo Gutierrez (for Sarah Leonardi, District 3)
- Sheilynn Carrasco (for Dr. Jeff Holness, District 5)
- Seth Hyman (for Adam Cervera, District 6)

**District Report - Diane Eagan, Executive Director of ESE.**

- Upcoming events:
  - District Showcase – Purpose: Introduce families to all school options prior to school choice deadlines.
  - Family Fun Day – November 16, 2025 - Described as an inclusive, family-friendly event highlighting collaboration and community involvement.
  - Down Syndrome Walk – October 18, 2025 - BCPS will participate officially; fundraising proceeds benefit local programs.
- Enrollment and Redefining Schools: - BCPS experiencing significant enrollment decline: Roughly 10,000 fewer students this academic year (2025–26); decline not unique to Broward—seen statewide and nationally; contributing factors: declining birth rates (local and national); cost of living in Broward pushing families to relocate;

school choice policies in Florida providing vouchers and expanding private and charter school options.

- Impact on facilities - Many buildings now operating below capacity, though once full. Public perception of “underused schools” has prompted the Reimagining Broward initiative to evaluate usage and programming. Upcoming town hall meetings:
  - October 27<sup>th</sup>, Coral Spring High School
  - November 6<sup>th</sup>, Dillard High School
  - November 13<sup>th</sup>, Miramar High School

#### **Chair’s Report** - Jacqui Luscombe, ESE Advisory Chair

- Proposal was made by some School Board members to reduce monthly Advisory chair meetings with the School Board to quarterly. Jacqui and other Advisory chairs successfully opposed the reduction, arguing that less frequent reporting would limit transparency and weaken public voice in district decisions.
  - The School Board voted 7–2 to keep monthly meetings. Dr. Allen Zeman and Sarah Leonardi voted in favor of the reduction; others opposed.
- Cell phone use policy: Students may now use cell phones during lunch periods at high schools (effective immediately).
- Children’s Services Council: Seeking community reviewers for new RFPs (after-school programs). Information will be posted to the ESE Advisory Facebook page.

#### **Subcommittee updates**

- Autism Subcommittee (ACE) – Chair Melissa Ramos
  - Reported strong parental concern in schools under the “redefining” list (especially those potentially closing or merging). Parents expressed a lack of trust in BCPS communications surrounding transitions. Next Autism Committee Meeting: November 13, 10:00 AM. Agenda: Presentation on the VE Program, parent advocacy, and resource sharing.
- Down Syndrome Subcommittee – Chair Bach Todaro
  - Promoted 30th Annual Down Syndrome Walk (October 18, Sunrise). Shared that the event receives strong participation from local law enforcement and the broader community. Next meeting scheduled for November 11.

#### **Proposal for an Autism School and District-Managed Charter**

- Parent-led initiative seeks establishment of a specialized Autism School in Broward, modeled on the South Florida Autism Charter School (SFACS) in Miami-Dade.

Proposal envisions a District-Managed Charter (DMC) partnership — a hybrid structure in which BCPS oversees administrative operations while specialized educators and therapists deliver programming. SFACS currently serves over 300 students and has a waiting list; 96 Broward students travel daily to Miami-Dade for similar services.

- No BCPS response for over five months following initial dialogue between BCPS and SFACS, despite repeated inquiries from ESE Advisory Chair and Vice Chair. During this time, SFACS prepared to expand further in Miami-Dade and received state-level funding offers to establish two new schools — opportunities Broward risked losing. Collaboration could preserve a school campus and bring state funding back into the county.
- BCPS plans to bring multiple options for Autism program expansion to the School Board in November. Advisory members emphasized need for: transparent communication; inclusion of ESE Advisory in decision-making; community engagement before any decision finalization.

**Procedural Safeguards and IDEA Rights** - Stephanie Acosta Castro, Director of Support & Compliance (ESE Division)

- A comprehensive, 50+ slide presentation explaining parental rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and [Florida's Procedural Safeguards](#).

**Open discussion and questions**

- Jacqui reiterated the Advisory's mission to ensure transparency and advocacy for ESE families.
- ESE Advisory questioned why Policy 4900 form continues to not be fully accessible for families through BCPS.
  - Sabrina Flores proposed a motion requesting BCPS to make Policy 4900 form publicly accessible and available on the BCPS website, every school website, ESE Advisory website, and ESE Advisory Facebook page.
  - Quorum was confirmed.
  - Ana Corujo seconded the motion.
  - The motion passed unanimously.

**Close**