



FRANK BLACK MIDDLE SCHOOL
"Excellence in the Arts, Academics and Athletics"



SDMC Meeting Minutes, p. 1

Date: September 17, 2026

Time: 4:30 PM

Location: Conference Room, Black Middle School

Meeting Started at 4:31 pm by Kemuel De Castro. He asked Committee members to introduce themselves along with their titles. He started first (Principal, Black Middle School), and moved counter clockwise to the following individuals: Annabel Perez, Administrative Assistant, Black Middle School; Anastasia Warren, 7th grade Counselor; Melanie Duncan, 6th grade ELA teacher; Damon Vandrey, History Teacher; Saleem Fernandez, Parent, Community and Business Representative; Travis Shaw; Parent; Tamela McGregor, 6th grade Counselor and Title I Coordinator (recording minutes), and Lauren Ayres; Assistant Principal, 6th grade.

After Introductions, Mr. De Castro moved to celebrations. Mr. Fernandez started with mentioning that Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is stronger than ever. Mr. DeCastro declared, "...compared to other years. We're going from Good to Great." Mr. Vandrey followed with "[PTO] has always been amazing been showing up." Followed by Ms. Duncan who stated, "especially this summer...the way the Dads showed up." Members nodded as they shared how the Dads came over the summer to make renovations and beautify the campus. Mr. De Castro also mentioned that staff attendance is at 97% to end celebrations commentary.

Mr. De Castro moved to the next item on the Agenda: **Review/Approval of Previous Meeting Notes**

First, Mr. DeCastro summarized that IRT Results discussed at May 21, 2026 along with campus goal of 88%; campus surpassed with 91%. Items discussed in last SDMC meeting concerning Campus Goals for 2026-2027 will be outlined in detail on next agenda item: Emergent Bilingual Students and Special Education Supports in Campus Goals. Campus Improvements listed in May 21st meeting have been surpassed with completion thanks to the Dads who completed three of the four projects: replacing lighting fixtures/light bulbs in building, painting and cosmetic updates throughout the building, and locker removals, which were completed in the main building. Members applauded the Dads for their work this summer to beautify and "improve the aesthetics" as Mr. De Castro stated, of the campus.

Approval of Meeting Notes presented to members by Tamela McGregor. Seconded by Annabel Perez. Members voted unanimously that Meeting Minutes were approved as written.

Mr. De Castro moved to next item on Agenda: **Campus Updates and Current Priorities**

Mr. De Castro first mentioned that IRT had a recent visit to the campus: "results very positive... we'll exceed our goal again," as he shared that the recent score was 12.7. "The same high quality instruction....but really feeling the stress, strain without laptops....moving carts from various departments." He then asked group to reference the Campus Goals Handout which outlined six goals for the 2026-2027 school year. IRT was mentioned in the second goal, which stated that the campus would score 14.5 or higher. Mr. De Castro read each goal out loud to the group. Before reading point two and three, he shared that those points were "Focusing on emerging bilinguals." Points Five was concerning Special Education, which has increased with 59 students. Mr. De Castro highlighted that the "SPED Success program has all of the SLL and SLC student come to BMS." He followed up with a celebration of the new staff members that have joined the campus to support the SPED Success program by exclaiming, "They staff are doing amazing job... also in the mornings with traffic flow."

Mr. De Castro shared that the "Panther's Potential" Mentorship Program mentioned in the May 21st meeting will begin in October as well as referenced the Pay it Forward Laptop Initiative handout, which summarized the current need of 300 laptops and the priority of ELA, Math, and GT classes having this resource in the class. The handout also summarized parent feedback collected by the PTO Budget allocation Survey as well as possible solutions to alleviate the need.



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Mr. Fernandez asked to pause to ask a question: “What is happening with laptops? What happens when they are down or not there?” Mr. De Castro commented, “Teachers make copies.” Further discussion concerning the laptops from various members followed, with input asked of teacher members of SDMC: Concerning what happens without the laptops in classrooms, Ms. Duncan shared “more load, work... takes longer to get the data.” Mr. Fernandez gave a followup question: “Single most positive thing about laptops?” Mr. Vandrey stated, “Data for me.. being able to see exactly where students are.” Mr. De Castro commented, “It boils down to efficiency,” whereas Ms. Duncan shared, “It’s harder to be more challenged when the laptops are not available, especially for GT.”

Mr. Fernandez asked, “Whose the priority of receiving laptops?” Mr. De Castro stated, “STAAR grade levels, but testing across the board. PE...Choir. They have BOY, MOY, EOY assessments. That gets [laptops] pulled from the core classes.It’s a top priority.” De Castro reviewed numbers: Cost of laptops: \$170,000---70 laptops have been ordered; 35 are on the way.” Mr. Shaw inquired, “so \$1,000 a piece [for laptops]?” Members nodded.

Mr. De Castro asked teacher members their perspective about students taking laptops home versus leaving in the classroom. Ms. Duncan replied, “There’s pros and cons, of course. They’ll last longer in the classroom.” Mr. Vandrey commented, “I don’t have a laptop cart, but I notice they break less (leaving in the class).

Mr. Shaw asked, “Do [students] have programs that can be accessed through a browser that’s not HISD based? It was shared that there are a few.

Mr. De Castro moved away from laptop discussion for a moment to continue reviewing campus goals and progress. “Aesthetically, auditorium, walkway...ideal situation is that everything is fixed. Increasing participation in our community from people of color.”

Mr. De Castro reviewed enrollment: Currently, 1201. Projected 1238; Last year 1235

“You know what that means? Looming budget cuts...leveling. Increase class sizes,” stated Mr. De Castro. Mr. Vandrey asked, “How will that affect us compared to last year?” Mr. De Castro shared, “Different formula...less money than last year.” Mr. De Castro stated the enrollment per grade level: 8th grade 435; 6th grade—365. He didn’t have the enrollment for 7th grade, which Ms. McGregor pulled: 394.

Mr. De Castro reviewed Campus Goals again: First Two: high quality instruction; Due to 70% of student population is Hispanic, Point Three and Four; Special education, Point 5; Last Bullet—Staff attendance

“We are progressing, especially with our first two (goals) we are on track.

Mr De Castro then moved to next item on agenda: **SDMC Discussion / Committee Updates**. “Discussion, and updates, questions...Not necessary decision to make or to vote on,” he announced.

At first, no one interjected, so Mr. De Castro prompted the members with a question: How do you feel about this year?

Ms. Duncan started off by saying, “Optimistic about the year. Keep students growing...find a way to get around the laptops.. Mr. Shaw presented a question about laptops.” Is it going to do a whole lot?”



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Mr. Fernandez chimed in, “Pitch has to be better. Parents are ignorant to the need of the laptops. If it was pitched better, an opportunity to get a lot more success. Help the parents understand the message because the message is wrong.” Mr. De Castro commented, “We will work on that and send to out and have teacher representative at PTO meetings,” and pointed to Ms. Duncan.. Mr. Fernandez presented thought, “Initiative for students that have laptops” His idea was if students have their own laptops that can be used at school. Could its usage be encouraged to alleviate the need.

Mr. Shaw followed with “Parents need to be educated on the need of the laptops...almost a day in a life in a teacher without a laptop. Conveying that the education...I’ve talked to them. They don’t appreciate what we’re talking about.” Mr. Fernandez asked, “When will you be attending, presenting this” directing his question to Ms. Duncan, “...just feel parents need to be educated about it.” Mr. De Castro chimed in, “A forum about this...we are going to work on it”. Mr. Fernandez-suggested bringing someone in pro and against laptops when creating the presentation to get both sides. Mr. De Castro nodded and starting writing down notes.

Ms. Duncan shared experience from Waller ISD where parents purchased the laptops and it was a Title I classroom. Mr. DeCastro stuck his finger up and stated that “ I contacted Ayala (IT Personnel) about parents purchasing laptops. User interface from NetSync cannot be used.” Some members shook their heads.

Ms. Ayres inserted, “[Parent purchased laptops] could be used for like an Art class.” Mr. Shaw asked followup question, “Would we be forced to purchase the warranty?”

A “Yes” was chorally stated by several staff members. Mr. Fernandez asked, “Would the student be able to have the laptop when they graduate if purchased?” A few members staff members shook their head. Ms. Ayers explained that essentially the laptop would become property of the school” could not even transfer with the student to high school, much less when they graduate.

Mr. De Castro ended conversation by stating” Better one pager for parents and schedule the forum and explain the role of devices in the classroom.” Members nodded their heads in agreement.

“Anything else—Any other questions...next meeting Ms. Perez?” stated Mr. De Castro.

“Next meeting November 12, 2026,” declared Ms. Perez.

Ms. Ayres denoted, “Questions about Gala--\$30 for teacher ticket?” Mr. Fernandez commented, “How many teachers do you think will attend? Its not just sponsoring. Its space.” Ms. Duncan said, “From 6th grade, 3 or 4.” “10-15 total,” suggested by Warren. As a result, Mr. Fernandez shared, “As we get closer, we will figure out how many we can actually can give away.” Ms. Ayers replied, I really enjoyed it when someone (parent) invited me as a guest.” Mr. Fernandez responded, “We’ll report back to the committee. That’s great feedback,” but provided a followup question, “How would we go about it- to giving teachers the opportunity to go?” Ms. Warren stated, “In the past, there was a link shared and teachers signed up.”

Ms. De Castro asked, “What does the ticket cover?” Mr. Fernandez noted, “The seat and the food.” In response, Mr. De Castro turned to Ms. Ayres and stated, “Let’s include this in the newsletter for staff.” Mr. Fernandez added “[it’s] 90’s theme.”

Mr. Shaw asked , “When would be the budget cuts be felt?” Mr. De Castro stated, “They would happen this semester. People will be sent to other campuses..two to three weeks. Oct 31st.”

Mr. De Castro asked group if there were anymore questions. Members nodded their head no. If not, “Meeting adjourned.” Meeting ended at 5:16 pm