

**APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE
EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
100 North Andrews Avenue, 7th Floor Conference Room
Thursday, August 21, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

Members	Attendance	Cumulative Attendance	
		Present	Absent
Dr. Elizabeth Hays, Chair	P	4	0
Phaedra Xanthos (arr. 8:00)	P	3	1
Laura Clark (arr. 6:45)	P	2	2
Klaron Grigsby	A	1	3
Lu Deaner	P	4	1
Elaine Schulze	P	3	1
Niara Sudarkasa	A	1	3
Maureen Witting	P	2	2
Connie Christensen	A	2	2
Gilbert Borrero	A	2	2
Edna Elijah	P	1	0
Gloria Barr Jackson	A	0	1
Ed Parke	P	1	0

Total Members Present: 8
Current Membership: 12; Quorum: 8

Others Present

Julie Richards, Interim Staff Liaison
Charles Webster, Broward County Public Schools Liaison
Brigitte Chiappetta, Prototype, Inc.

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. by Chair Hays.

A. Opening – Dr. Hays

- **Attendance and Sign-in**

It was determined that a quorum was not yet present at the opening of the meeting.

At the request of Dr. Hays, the following item was taken out of order on the agenda.

- **Announcements**

Dr. Hays informed the Board that Viola McCoy, previous Chair of the EAB, had passed away. She noted that the *Sun-Sentinel* and *Herald* newspapers had provided comprehensive obituaries for Ms. McCoy, and informed associates of the previous Chair of the time of her memorial service.

Dr. Hays requested a moment of silence in memory of Ms. McCoy.

- **Introduce New Members: Edna Elijah; Gloria Barr Jackson; Ed Parke**

Dr. Hays asked that the Board's new members, two of whom were in attendance, introduce themselves to their fellow members.

Edna Elijah, President of Lauderdale Manors Homeowners Association, is a lifetime resident of Fort Lauderdale, and hoped to work with the Board to improve the area's schools and make the city a better place to live. Ms. Elijah is a former employee of the school system.

Ed Parke was born in Jamaica but has lived in Fort Lauderdale for 29 years. His children attended the city's schools. He is a founding member of the Caribbean-American Democratic Club. He felt strongly that the school system needed improvement.

Dr. Hays requested that the other members of the Board, and staff, introduce themselves briefly for the new members' benefit.

- **Guest Introductions: Mary Fertig; Leslie Carhart**

Dr. Hays introduced Mary Fertig as one of the Board's founding members, currently in attendance to give a presentation. Leslie Carhart, also a founding member, would assist her in technical aspects of this presentation.

B. Current Business

1. Discussion Item – CCC Project Update

Ms. Fertig gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Board regarding Citizens Concerned about our Children.

Following her presentation, it was noted that the Diversity Committee, which was appointed to monitor disparities in Broward County schools, continues to meet on a monthly basis, and still visits schools. They now visit local adult community schools in addition to primary and secondary schools.

Ms. Fertig recommended that the Board look into having a member or members sit in on, or keep in contact with, the Diversity Committee.

Ms. Deaner pointed out that some infringements to the settlement in which the CCC had been a party had occurred as recently as within the last year. Ms. Fertig stated that the Diversity Committee had taken some time off from their regular monitoring in order to develop better instruments for their school inspections.

Dr. Hays questioned whether the School Board was meeting the conditions established by the settlement and making adequate progress. Ms. Fertig responded that she felt "tremendous progress" had been made, particularly in some areas, such as course offerings, access to school libraries, and availability of textbooks. She advised, however, that this progress was not across the board among schools, and while some schools had improved, others had not made similar strides.

She noted that the problems identified in Broward County schools were not going to be solved "overnight," but pointed out to the Board that they could address some of the targeted issues themselves, such as calling attention to specific problems in schools that needed work as well as those problems that had been corrected.

For instance, Ms. Fertig continued, during her time on the Board, members had testified annually at the Capital Budget Hearings to discuss the needs of Fort Lauderdale schools.

She felt that in order for the remaining issues to be addressed, consistent vigilance was required of Board members, particularly taking into account the size of Broward County's school system. As a result of this size, she did not feel School Board members could be aware of all the problems in the schools on their own without community involvement.

Dr. Hays stated that even eight years into the monitored system, a great deal remained yet to be achieved. In particular, she pointed out that a "tremendous amount" of segregation still existed in the city's schools.

Ms. Fertig raised the point that a nationwide shift had occurred in how segregation was identified: in the late 1960s and early 1970s, she noted, greater emphasis was placed on the racial composition of the classroom, while by the 1980s the focus was primarily on facilities and fair hiring practices. By the mid-1990s, she said, the population of Broward County had shifted sufficiently that the issue was no longer primarily one of black and white populations, but other diverse groups as well. The emphasis then became that every child in the school

system, not only the children of a particular school or area, should receive what he or she needed for a good education.

Ms. Elijah asked if the lawsuit had set a deadline by which goals should be achieved. Ms. Fertig stated that it had not, but she felt this was a positive, as a consistent monitoring program tracked progress from year to year, whereas if a deadline was broken there was nothing that could be done about it.

Ms. Fertig noted that while progress in specific schools seemed to be taking longer than was necessary, it was at least underway. She felt the creation of a monitoring system was one of the most important achievements of the settlement, as it involved people from the Broward County community rather than school and School Board personnel only.

Ms. Elijah offered that when she worked for the school system, the students' safety was a key issue; she felt that, as there are employees within the system who have this responsibility, care should be taken that the community does not assume too great a burden of responsibility in these areas.

Ms. Fertig agreed, adding that one of the CCC's greatest obstacles was the fear of retribution by school employees, who felt if they informed the group of a school's conditions, they would be punished by losing their jobs. Ms. Carhart concurred, suggesting that some personnel in the schools were not getting the support or funding necessary to do their jobs adequately.

Ms. Fertig continued that when some conditions were made public, the School Board's response was to ask why the principals in question had not addressed the problems. Her response, she said, was to ask why someone with greater responsibility did not ensure the principal could correct the conditions.

It was also noted that PTAs could not assume responsibility, as many of the schools with facilities issues did not have these organizations. Ms. Witting added that in some cases, the schools did not have anyone who could put them in touch with corporate liaisons because there were not parents who could facilitate these connections. She felt what was needed was a state or federal program to make funding among the schools more equitably divided.

Ms. Fertig stated that according to the State Constitution, every student in every school should have access to equal resources, such as textbooks, computers, and library books. She pointed out that these basic items did not fall into the category of personnel failing to perform their jobs. She also maintained that correcting these inequities required the vigilance of parents and teachers as well as elected officials and salaried employees.

It was noted that the state ranks 50th in the nation in per capita student funding, while it has the country's sixth largest school system.

Dr. Hays felt that the discussion of tonight's presentation could continue, and suggested that it be included in the following month's agenda after Board members had had time to consider it further. She recommended that members bring questions to the next meeting to continue the discussion.

Ms. Fertig gave the Board a handout showing the schools' demographic breakdown over the previous year, grade histories, and enrollment levels for all Fort Lauderdale schools. She pointed out that the city's tax base, historically, contributed 17-19% to schools (currently just under 17%), and these funds were finally being put back into the community's schools. She stated that the Board had been a "tremendous advocate" for this accomplishment.

Ms. Elijah stated that other community groups could often effect change to a school when its personnel could not. She shared the example of an unrepaired roof in her school's media center, which, she noted, the principal could not get repaired. When the issue was raised at a meeting of her Homeowners' Association, she continued, these members wrote letters to the School Board, Superintendent, and other officials to finally resolve the problem.

Dr. Hays reiterated that Board members should bring concerns and questions regarding the inequity issue to the next meeting.

C. Old/Ongoing Business

1. Sunland Park – Update

Dr. Hays said she had attempted to contact the new principal at Sunland Park, but her calls had not been returned. She recalled that a list had been given to the Board of changes and improvements to be made to the school over the summer, but she did not know what had been accomplished from the list. She noted that she would also like to invite the new principal to a Board meeting and discuss any way in which the Board could assist her in any of the plans she had made for the school.

Mr. Webster stated that he had met with the principal and would help put her and Dr. Hays in touch with one another.

2. EAB Goals

Dr. Hays stated that she had put in a call to Principal Luciani at Arthur Ashe Elementary, but has not heard from him yet.

3. Chair Reports

Dr. Hays suggested that the Board invite a speaker to the September or October meeting to discuss proposed State Constitutional Amendments 5, 7, and 9, which are scheduled to appear on the ballot in November. Ms. Deaner recommended that such a meeting be open to the public, as some of the issues involved might not be clearly understood by all voters. Mr. Webster agreed with this recommendation.

Dr. Hays asked that the Board agree by consensus on a public meeting in September, as she would not be present at that time. Ms. Xanthos added that she would not be present either. Ms. Clark and Ms. Deaner offered to preside over a public meeting, after partnering with Dr. Hays for guidance.

Notice of the public meeting will appear in the record, and it was decided that the Public Information Office would be notified as well.

Dr. Hays reminded the Board that Bennett Elementary was holding a ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new cafeteria on Monday, September 8, 2008, at 10:00 a.m.

4. Other Reports/Updates/Discussion

a. Education Forum – Sub-Committee Updates/Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Dr. Hays noted that she had left messages with the secretaries of Maureen Dinnen, Ben Williams, and Robin Bartleman, inviting them to attend tonight's meeting. She had hoped to hear updates on the Education Forum and Steering Committee at this time, she said.

b. Student Member to the EAB

There was no information to report to the Board at this time.

c. City Commission/Manager Follow-Up

There was no information to report to the Board at this time.

d. Reports & Updates

Staff Liaison – Julie Richards – Interim

Ms. Richards did not have a report for the Board at this time.

Broward County School District – C. Webster

Mr. Webster felt that some confusion had occurred with regard to scheduling time for reports.

He informed the Board that a Town Hall meeting was scheduled for Plantation High School on September 11, 2008, to discuss the new anti-bullying policy. The schedule for these Town Hall meetings at this and other schools will be listed in the record.

Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations – B. Shelley

As Ms. Shelley was not present, there was no Council report at this time.

D. New/Future Business

1. Fort Lauderdale Centennial Celebration

Dr. Hays advised the Board that a Committee had been formed to oversee the Centennial Celebration, although she had not yet made contact with its members. The Centennial will occur on March 27, 2011. She reminded the Board that they had previously discussed contests and activities they could hold for the event, and felt it was necessary to keep this event on the agenda and possibly appoint a subcommittee of two or three interested members to work on the event within the local schools. The subcommittee would also oversee funding for these activities.

• Approve Minutes (May, June)

As a quorum was now present, Dr. Hays requested that the Board revisit approval of the May 2008 and June 2008 meeting minutes.

Ms. Schulze moved to approve the May 2008 minutes, and Ms. Elijah seconded the motion. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Hays and Board members cited the following corrections to be made to the June 2008 minutes:

- p.2, under the heading **Current Business** – acronym should be “SACS meeting”
- pp.4-5, regarding Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Association website – remove the word “City” each time it is used in reference to the Association
- p.4, second paragraph, change “Smart School” to “Facilities Department”

Ms. Schulze moved to approve the June 2008 minutes with pending corrections. Ms. Witting seconded this motion, which passed unanimously.

E. Next Meeting and Closing

The following Town Hall meetings are scheduled as forums to discuss proposed Constitutional Amendments 5, 7, and 9:

- September 11, 2008, 6:30 p.m.: Plantation High School
- September 15, 2008, 6:30 p.m.: Hollywood Hills High School
- October 2, 2008, 6:30 p.m.: Monarch High School
- October 15, 2008, 6:30 p.m.: Piper High School

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]

