

**APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE
EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
100 North Andrews Avenue, 8th Floor Cafeteria/Lounge
Thursday, January 15, 2009 – 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

Cumulative Attendance

Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Dr. Elizabeth Hays, Chair	P	7	1
Phaedra Xanthos, Co-Chair	A	5	3
Laura Clark	P	6	2
Lu Deaner	P	8	1
Elaine Schulze	A	6	2
Connie Christensen	A	3	5
Edna Elijah	A	3	2
Gloria Barr Jackson (arr. 6:43)	P	3	2
Jacqueline Ackerina	P	3	0
Maureen Persi	P	1	0

Total Members Present: 6

Current Membership: 10

Quorum: 8

Staff

Julie Richards, Interim Staff Liaison

Charles Webster, Broward County Public Schools

Brigitte Chiappetta, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

A. Opening – Chair Hays

- **Attendance and Sign-in**

Chair Hays called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m. Attendance was taken and it was determined a quorum was not present.

- **Approval of Minutes (October and November 2008) and Agenda (January 2009)**

As a quorum was not present, the minutes and agenda could not be approved at this time.

Chair Hays stated that under the Chairperson's Report, she would like to include a proposal regarding the number of Board members. She advised that she will elaborate on this issue when she presents her report.

She added that the Board was experiencing difficulty meeting its current goal of 15 members, and requested that the members present speak to persons they knew who had some involvement in the school system in Fort Lauderdale and might have an interest in joining the Board. She felt they need greater community input, and expressed concern that a quorum could not be reached.

- **Introduce New Member(s): Maureen Persi**

Chair Hays asked that the Board members and Staff introduce themselves for Ms. Persi, the newest Board member.

Ms. Jackson joined the meeting at this time (6:43 p.m.).

Chair Hays encouraged the members to visit the “Boundless Playground,” which opened the previous weekend at the previous Southside School location. It is the first playground of its kind in Broward County, she noted.

Ms. Jackson informed the Board that she must tender her letter of resignation, as she has a scheduling conflict. She added that she had advised Commissioner Moore of her resignation as well.

Chair Hays disclosed that Ed Parke has resigned from the Board as well, as he has been appointed to another Board. She also stated that Ms. Elijah has been ill and could not attend tonight’s meeting. She continued that she was hopeful the Board would see greater representation from District 3, as the two resignations came from that District.

New Board member Maureen Persi introduced herself to the Board. She was born and raised in New Jersey, where she was an elementary teacher and principal. She moved to Broward County in 2004. She resides in District 1 and was appointed to the Board by Commissioner Teel.

Chair Hays welcomed Ms. Persi to the Board.

Ms. Jackson departed the meeting at this time (6:50 p.m.).

- **Guest Introductions**

There were no guests present at the meeting.

- **Announcements**

Ms. Deaner noted that she had referred to Southside School as a “community center,” but it should be known as the Southside School Cultural Arts Center.

The project hopes to have a strong involvement with the arts, and to encourage and interest students from Fort Lauderdale schools as well.

B. Current Business

• **Community Hope Center**

Chair Hays stated that guests from the Community Hope Center had been slated to attend tonight's meeting, although they were not present. The Center sponsors a mentoring/tutorial program in conjunction with the City, as well as with at least one local church.

C. Old/Ongoing Business

1. Sunland Park

Chair Hays recognized Ms. Clark, who will report further on Sunland Park Elementary at a later time in the meeting.

Chair Hays informed the Board that a SAC meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2009, at 5:30 p.m. Thaddeus Hamilton, who spoke at the November 2008 Board meeting, heads the SAC committee at the school. She encouraged members to attend if possible.

She recalled that Sunland Park Elementary is a "superintendent school," or a school that has received a grade of "F" on its overall school score. It must improve dramatically within the next two years. Chair Hays explained that the Board has adopted this school and is seeking ways in which they can be of assistance in its improvement. One such method of assistance discussed at previous meetings is the provision of incentives. Chair Hays encouraged the Board to "think creatively" about this and other ways to help this school.

She provided a list of volunteer coordinators for different schools, including Sunland Park, in case any Board members wished to volunteer at that school or at others.

2. Arthur Ashe

Ms. Ackerina, who had previously reported on Arthur Ashe Middle School, stated she had nothing to report at this time.

Chair Hays added that she had attempted to contact the Magnet School coordinator at Arthur Ashe before the holiday break, and had left messages for this individual. She requested help from Mr. Webster if at all possible. Her goal is to have the Magnet coordinator give a presentation on the school's "differentiated

learning” program, as many people do not fully understand how the program works.

Ms. Ackerina felt there was a communication gap involved, and that the Magnet coordinator would be happy to address the Board about the program. Chair Hays hoped to schedule a presentation at the February or March 2009 meeting. Ms. Ackerina offered her assistance in setting this up.

Chair Hays noted that there has not been contact between the Board and Lauderdale Manors Elementary, although she has learned that the school has a volunteer coordinator. She recalled that this school was also intended to have been adopted by the Board, although the effort has been “on hiatus” due to difficulties. She was not sure if the Board has sufficient membership to adopt Lauderdale Manors Elementary as well in 2009, unless there was a volunteer to make this school a personal project.

She recalled that Ms. Elijah had expressed interest in contacting Lauderdale Manors, but was unsure whether or not she had accomplished this task.

Chair Hays asked Ms. Richards if Ms. Christensen’s Board membership was still considered active due to absences. Ms. Richards offered to check on her status. She had also spoken with Ms. Elijah, but could not say if she would be able to continue serving on the Board.

3. Discussion Item – CCC Project – Further Discussion

Chair Hays recalled that some months ago, the Board had seen a presentation on a lawsuit that had been filed against the Broward County School Board due to inequities in the County’s schools. A Diversity Committee was developed to monitor the School Board’s progress in addressing these inequities.

Ms. Deaner reminded the Board that there is currently an opening on the Diversity Committee, should any Board members be interested.

4. Statistics – 20 Day Counts

Chair Hays stated that she has not yet been able to acquire 20-day counts from 2008. She noted, however, that there is known to be a decrease in the number of students in Broward County, although it is not known how this affects the student population of Fort Lauderdale specifically.

5. Chair Report

Chair Hays informed the Board that she had spoken before the City Commission's December 2008 conference, during which a discussion had been held regarding quorums for City advisory boards.

Because the EAB is expected to have 15 members at any given time, the quorum for a board of this size is eight, although Chair Hays noted that the Board's Charter did not specify a target number for membership. It has been difficult in recent months to assemble the necessary eight members, as the Board's size has not reached 15 and there are fewer members from which to draw, she explained.

It was asked at the City Commission's conference how non-quasi-judicial Boards, such as the EAB, approved minutes or made motions without a quorum. Chair Hays advised that she had recommended to the City Commission that the quorum be adjusted to reflect 50% plus one of a board's current membership. For example, with the Board's current membership of 10, a quorum would be six members.

She asked that the Board express a consensus in favor of or against this proposal, so she can send this information along to the City Commission before its next scheduled meeting.

Ms. Ackerina asked if Chair Hays was the only Board member who could respond to the City Commission. Chair Hays replied that any Board member could email the City Commission, or could attend its upcoming meeting. She encouraged interested members to attend, although she advised that she did not know where the advisory board issue fell on the agenda. She also pointed out that any Board member could speak to the issue, not just the Chair.

She clarified that she hoped to inform the City Commission via email of the Board's consensus or lack thereof regarding an appropriate number to make up a quorum. She reiterated that her suggestion had been that a quorum should equal 50% plus one of a board's membership, whatever the membership might be at that time. For example, should the EAB membership be 15, a quorum would be eight; should the membership be 20, a quorum would be 11.

It was unanimous among the members present that 50% plus one would be an appropriate quorum. Chair Hays stated she would email this information to the City Commission, and again encouraged any interested members to attend the upcoming meeting and speak on the issue if they so desired.

She stated that she had nothing to report regarding the "News and Views," which Mr. Webster sent Ms. Richards to be forwarded to the Board members.

Chair Hays moved on to discuss the Consortium of Education Advisory Boards (CEAB). Throughout the County, she explained, the various cities each had education advisory boards that made recommendations regarding education to their respective city governments. The ways in which this is accomplished vary from city to city: for example, city commissioners might occupy seats on some advisory boards, while other boards make formal recommendations to their city commissions at regular meetings. Some such boards have been in place for quite some time – for example, the EAB has been in existence for 15 years, and is one of the older boards in the County.

Chair Hays continued that these boards meet periodically to discuss projects and accomplishments, as well as to share information and ideas. She, Ms. Deaner, Ms. Ackerina, and Mr. Webster had attended the most recent meeting that same afternoon. Chair Hays shared some materials from that meeting.

One handout dealt specifically with the fiscal issues facing the State of Florida, she noted. Another discussion had recommended that a board report regularly before its city commission. Chair Hays noted that the EAB has not done this in some time, and instead provided the City Commission with a copy of its minutes. “Town hall meetings” in each city were also recommended, which could address not only school issues but State, budgetary, and city items.

She referred to the “additional meetings” handout contained in the CEAB packet. These began the week of January 19, 2009, and would be chaired by Jeff Atwater, President of the Florida State Senate. State Senator Atwater also heads the Select Committee on Florida’s Economy, which plans to hold three public workshops, also the week of January 19, 2009, to hear input from the general public. These workshops will be held in Tallahassee, Boynton Beach, and Miami.

Chair Hays noted that there has been little or no publicity for these meetings. They hope to hear public input on a wide range of economic issues, she advised, noting the tax code in particular.

She added that the State’s education budget had been “slashed” again earlier in the week, and encouraged any interested Board members to attend one of these workshops, as the state of the economy clearly affected education as well.

Chair Hays continued that another CEAB recommendation was that the EAB hold town hall meetings of its own regarding the economic crisis. They also suggested going to Tallahassee during “Broward Days” to provide a Board presence.

Another topic of discussion was lack of sustainable funding, which Chair Hays pointed out had previously been called a lack of “adequate” funding. This was

intended to address the fact that budget cuts to education no longer provide for sustenance of schools, she explained.

The CEAB would also supply its member boards with email addresses for “important people,” as there was a sense of “talking to the choir” when speaking to member boards in South Florida; it was believed that there must be outreach to the rest of the State as well. It was suggested that an actual letter might prove more effective than email, as might letters to the editors of local newspapers.

Another suggestion was to send representatives of the boards to Tallahassee, perhaps chartering buses for this purpose, to have a presence near the State legislature. Chair Hays pointed out that the legislators representing South Florida might understand the problems facing education, but those from other parts of the State might see the issue less clearly.

She expressed concern that Florida was “in trouble” regarding the state of education.

Mr. Webster mentioned the State’s “exclusions and exemptions” from the State tax code, which included tax-free “skyboxes” at a local stadium, although its regular-admission tickets were taxed accordingly. He felt this was indicative of some of the issues regarding State taxes to which Chair Hays had referred, including a lack of public awareness of these issues.

Chair Hays asserted that the suggestion of eliminating high-profile activities, such as sports programs, might draw the necessary amount of public attention and parental involvement. “Drastic” measures such as limiting these programs, she suggested, might heighten public awareness of the budget issues facing schools.

She again encouraged Board members to communicate to the individuals on the “important people” email list, recommending personalized emails in favor of mass mailings. She asked that Ms. Richards send the list to all Board members, as well as to the City Commissioners.

6. Other Reports/Updates

a. Student Member to the EAB

Chair Hays stated that there is nothing to report at this time.

b. City Commission Follow-Up

Ms. Richards had nothing to report at this time.

c. Lu Deaner

Chair Hays recalled that some time ago, Ms. Deaner and former Board member Ed Parke had compiled a statement for the Board to approve, regarding the importance of FCAT scores in determining a school's success. This is a recommendation that the Board hopes to bring before the City Commission. Chair Hays distributed copies of the statement at this time.

Chair Hays recommended that, since the current City Commission would only be in office a short time longer before elections were held, the Board wait until the new City Commission has been seated before sending their recommendation.

As a quorum was not present to approve the statement by vote, Chair Hays requested that this item be added to the February 2009 meeting agenda. Assuming a vote could be held to approve or disapprove the statement at that time, it could then be presented to the newly seated Commission at their first meeting in March 2009.

There was no disagreement with this suggestion, and the item was added to the February 2009 meeting agenda.

Ms. Deaner asked if a question could be submitted to prospective City Commission members at an upcoming forum, asking their positions regarding the state of education in Fort Lauderdale's schools. It was noted that Betty Shelley, representative of the Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations, had solicited questions from Board members for the forum, and might be able to submit this question on the Board's behalf. It was decided that Ms. Deaner would contact Ms. Shelley about the possibility of adding the question, although it was not clear that the forum's format would allow for it.

Chair Hays concluded that the statement would be discussed and hopefully voted upon at the next meeting, and encouraged Board members to bring any further thoughts or questions about the statement to the February 2009 meeting.

Ms. Clark felt the statement was "wonderful," but noted that the reference to "problem solving" was unclear. Ms. Deaner explained that this term is meant to describe "a way of thinking" rather than the solving of an equation. Ms. Clark recommended that the phrase reflect this intent more clearly, such as "real-life problem solving."

Chair Hays asked Ms. Deaner to resend the document to Ms. Richards once this change was made. Further suggestions could be sent to Ms. Richards as well, and passed on to Ms. Deaner through the Liaison's office, in accordance with the Sunshine Law.

d. Laura Clark

Ms. Clark had contacted both Principal Maddie Benson of Sunland Park Elementary and Major Anthony Williams of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department to help set up a reading program by men and women in uniform. Major Williams has recruited his staff to read to children at Sunland Park on a weekly basis. The program began in December 2008, and a different member of staff is scheduled for each Friday through May 29, 2009.

She has also attempted to contact Anthony Peavy of the Fort Lauderdale Fire Department for the same purpose, although they have not yet made contact. Ms. Clark noted that she had forwarded Mr. Peavy's phone number to Corinne Cunningham, volunteer coordinator at Sunland Park.

Chair Hays asked Ms. Clark to send Ms. Richards a copy of the schedule so it may be distributed to the rest of the Board. She thanked Ms. Clark for taking charge of this project so effectively, and asked her to keep the Board apprised of the Fire Department's involvement as well.

e. Staff Liaison – Julie Richards, Interim

Ms. Richards had nothing to report at this time.

Chair Hays reminded the Board that all communication between Board members should go through Ms. Richards's office to maintain compliance with the Sunshine Law.

f. Broward County School District – Charles Webster

Mr. Webster returned to the subject of budget cuts, noting that one reason for a lack of public awareness could be that people do not react until they feel the impact of budget constraints. As the District has handled its budget concerns as effectively as possible, little of the shortfall has seemed to affect the public. Mr. Webster praised the District's CFO, Ben Leone, for handling this issue as smoothly as possible.

He added that the District has not "threatened" the public with the potential consequences of budget cuts, as the Superintendent does not wish to react in this manner. Mr. Webster felt the public was not sufficiently informed of what the budget cuts could mean for education.

He moved on to discuss the "Silence Hurts" Program, which deals with potential threats of violence within schools. There is now a telephone line set up through which security concerns may be reported; texting such messages is also acceptable. Mr. Webster noted that there seems to be the same level of concern for activities taking place outside of school as for those inside the school, and

members of this program have intervened, at times, at a student's home rather than at his or her school.

Mr. Webster provided handouts for the Board from the African-American Success Foundation, of which he is currently Chair. Chair Hays recommended sharing this information with students being mentored or tutored. She also suggested that there are comparable organizations for Hispanic students as well as for African-American students.

Mr. Webster added that the Foundation gives out research grants at the graduate level, and the literature provided some information on these grants.

g. Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations – Betty Shelley

Ms. Shelley was not present at the meeting.

Chair Hays noted that the Teen Alliance, headed by John Quinton, who had been a guest at the November 2008 Board meeting, might be able to help provide the Board with a teen liaison. Chair Hays, however, had not been able to get in touch with Mr. Quinton or the organization recently.

She added that there is a similar group, the Central Broward Coalition (CBC), which is dedicated to reducing alcohol and drug use in the City's youth. It is a Federally funded project that has only had one major meeting thus far, in November 2008. Their next meeting is scheduled for January 21, 2009, at 8:30 a.m. at the Mizell Center. Chair Hays had not been able to confirm this date; should she be able to confirm it in the next few days, she stated, she would ask Ms. Richards to send the information to the Board members.

Members of the organization are affiliated with the Boys' and Girls' Club, as well as with "various County groups." The only two requirements for joining the CBC are caring about children and being willing to work, she said.

D. New/Future Business

• **Fort Lauderdale Centennial Celebration**

Chair Hays reminded the Board that the City's Centennial is coming up in 2011, and the City Commission has appointed a Centennial Celebration Committee that is charged with planning and coordinating activities related to that event. She read the committee's Charter to the Board, noting that they are a planning committee only and do not act in an advisory capacity to the City Commission.

The Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations has also formed a Centennial Committee, Chair Hays continued, primarily to involve the neighborhoods to a

greater degree than the Centennial Celebration Committee has done so far. The Council's Centennial Committee has met once, and has discussed the following items:

- Requesting a seat on the Centennial Celebration Committee on behalf of the Council;
- Selling Centennial-themed buttons for fundraising purposes;
- Ask various neighborhoods for input to compile a decade-by-decade highlight list from each – for example, major events, or the building of new facilities;
- Seek a way to integrate the City's schools into any project pursued by the Council.

Chair Hays stated that she had presented some ideas to the Centennial Celebration Committee at their last meeting that could involve the EAB and the City's schools. These suggestions had included sending out applications to every Fort Lauderdale school in September 2010 for a contest. She recommended dividing the contest among age groups, such as K-2, 3-5, middle schools, and high schools. Each group could have a contest in the following categories: visual arts, poetry, performance, music, or essay, among others. She noted that it would be interesting to hear how students in the City perceived both the past and the future.

Chair Hays reiterated that she had proposed this plan to the Centennial Celebration Committee, with the suggestion that they act as a "clearinghouse" for events put on by various organizations and groups within the City, helping organize events under the umbrella of the Centennial Celebration.

She added that the Centennial Celebration Committee meets at 3:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday of every month. She planned to attend their meetings when possible. She hoped this would be another way to focus the City on education through Centennial-themed events.

Ms. Deaner suggested that the Board could take responsibility for education-related events, which would take some of the burden of planning off the other Centennial organizations.

Ms. Deaner informed the Board that the first forum to feature the candidates for City Commission and Mayor will be held on Thursday, January 29, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers. Each candidate will have a chance to speak. After the primary election, another forum will be held on Thursday, February 26, 2009, also at 7:00 p.m. in the Chambers. Ms. Deaner anticipated that there will be the opportunity to ask more questions at the second forum, as fewer candidates will be involved. The moderator is Chris Pollock of the Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Clark added that in her neighborhood, a District 1 forum would be held on Thursday, January 22, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. The Mayoral candidates and District 1 candidates were slated to attend.

Chair Hays encouraged all Board members to “get informed” about the candidates in their Districts and City-wide. She remarked that the City’s direction could be greatly impacted by the selection of new or different representatives.

E. Next Meeting and Closing

Chair Hays announced that the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, February 19, 2009. She did not know at this time who would be scheduled to speak at the February meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

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