

**APPROVED  
MINUTES OF THE  
EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida  
100 North Andrews Avenue, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Cafeteria/Lounge  
Thursday, February 19, 2009 – 6:30 p.m.**

**Cumulative Attendance**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Dr. Elizabeth Hays, Chair	A	7	2
Phaedra Xanthos, Co-Chair	A	5	4
Laura Clark	A	6	3
Lu Deaner	P	9	1
Elaine Schulze	A	6	3
Edna Elijah	P	4	2
Jacqueline Ackerina	P	4	0
Maureen Persi	P	2	0
Derek Kelmanson	P	1	0

Total Members Present: 5

Current Membership: 9

**Staff**

Julie Richards, Interim Staff Liaison

Charles Webster, Broward County Public Schools

Brigitte Chiappetta, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

**A. Opening**

- **Attendance and Sign-in**

The meeting came to order at 6:35 p.m. Ms. Deaner advised the Board that Dr. Hays is very ill and has been hospitalized; she and Ms. Ackerina have visited Dr. Hays and requested that Board members keep her in their prayers. Ms. Deaner stated that Dr. Hays' family has requested that cards be sent to her home.

She added that Ms. Richards has attempted to contact Phaedra Xanthos, Co-Chair, multiple times, but has been unable to reach her. Due to these circumstances, Ms. Deaner felt the Board may want to decide on the direction it would like to take regarding the absence of its Chair and Co-Chair. Ms. Xanthos is currently acting as Co-Chair until further notice.

Ms. Ackerina volunteered to assist in any way possible.

Mr. Webster noted that Co-Chairs' responsibilities include helping to set the Board's agenda, schedule guests, and carry out the normal business that the Board undertakes each month.

- **Approval of Minutes (October; November; January) and Agenda (February)**

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

- **Introduce New Member(s): Derek Kelmanson**

Mr. Kelmanson is employed by Charter Schools USA, a Fort Lauderdale company that manages approximately 19 charter schools in the State of Florida. He is Operations Manager, and deals with the company's governing board as well. He described his background as more business-oriented than educational.

The other Board members and Staff in attendance introduced themselves as well.

## **B. Current Business**

Ms. Deaner explained that the Board advises the City Commission on matters regarding the 32 schools in Fort Lauderdale. She briefly described the Board's history for Mr. Kelmanson, including the formation of Citizens Concerned About our Children (CCC).

She advised that the Board has adopted three Fort Lauderdale schools that were identified, due to their test scores, as being in need of help: Sunland Park Elementary, Arthur Ashe Middle School, and formerly Lauderdale Manors, although mentoring or other programs at that school have yet to be formally introduced.

Mr. Webster clarified that the Diversity Committee was formed to monitor compliance with the CCC settlement agreement. Ms. Deaner recalled that it had been mentioned at a recent meeting that a Board member might want to seek a place on the Diversity Committee as well.

She added that there has also been consideration of a student member to the Board, although this has not yet occurred.

Ms. Elijah requested clarification as to why none of these actions had taken place. Ms. Deaner explained that the group has recently become smaller, and it has been difficult for its members to accomplish the goals they had set for themselves.

Ms. Persi suggested that those members who have not attended meetings regularly be contacted by mail regarding these absences. Ms. Elijah asked if the group's target membership level is 15 members. Ms. Deaner stated that this is the case, but it has been difficult to fill all vacant positions. She felt that after the upcoming City Commission elections, there might be an opportunity to approach the new Commissioners regarding the Board's membership.

Ms. Richards pointed out that the City Clerk's office had been asked to look into the membership issue following a previous meeting, and should have a response for the Board by the time of the March 2009 meeting regarding how many members there should be.

Ms. Deaner also noted that outreach was being done to attempt to assemble the full target membership of 15 for the Board.

Ms. Ackerina requested that Ms. Richards send the members an email when a decision is made by the City Commission or the City Clerk's office.

It was noted that while Dr. Hays has been listed as Chair and Ms. Xanthos as Co-Chair on the agendas, Ms. Deaner recalled having been appointed Co-Chair in the past with another member. Mr. Webster pointed out that Dr. Hays had originally been elected to her position as Co-Chair with another member as well, but had later assumed the responsibilities of Chair on her own.

Ms. Elijah requested clarification that any Board member, not the Chair or Co-Chair only, could, for example, address the City Commission. This was confirmed.

Ms. Deaner explained that the concept of Co-Chairs had originated when a Chair stepped down and the person who succeeded him had not wanted to assume all the Chair's responsibilities alone. This had led to Ms. Deaner's nomination to serve as Co-Chair.

Mr. Webster noted that ordinarily, individual Board members advise their appointing City Commissioners; if a formal report is made to the full City Commission, this is normally done by the Chair or Co-Chairs.

Ms. Richards stated that the more usual practice for Advisory Boards is to have a Chair and Vice Chair rather than Co-Chairs. Ms. Elijah felt that this form of organization was less confusing than having two Co-Chairs.

Ms. Richards offered to review the handbook provided by the City Clerk's office to clarify this information regarding organization.

Ms. Deaner felt the more important issue at the moment was whether the Board considers itself “important,” and whether the members want to continue to work toward its goals. She pointed out that with this meeting’s absences alone, a large portion of the group’s attendance consisted of its newest members.

She suggested that the Board refer to a previously compiled history of its origins and goals in order to get ideas on what projects it might want to address moving forward, in addition to assisting the three schools listed earlier.

She identified one difficulty facing the Board as the desire not to appear as “do-gooders” while still helping schools, although she noted that some schools or administrations might not want the Board’s help right away.

Ms. Deaner cited the creation of the magnet program at Arthur Ashe, as well as a Municipal Leadership in Education project, as examples of the Board’s past successes. The latter group, she explained, consisted of groups of parents, educators, and even students throughout the community, discussing education issues.

Ms. Ackerina volunteered to work with Ms. Richards in the role of acting Chair until the March 2009 meeting. She offered to meet with Dr. Hays’ daughter to find out if there was additional information she could use to this end, and to speak with Dr. Hays herself if her health allowed. The Board could then go over those items already on the agenda and add more items for the following month’s agenda. She hoped to help keep the Board organized and under some leadership so they would continue to go forward with their work.

Ms. Richards affirmed that the City Commission wants the Board to remain intact as well.

Ms. Ackerina referred to a copy of the January 2009 agenda, which contains a fuller listing of the Board’s projects and goals. While there would not be responses or updates for each project, Ms. Richards recommended that they carry those topics over to the March 2009 meeting as ongoing business.

### **C. Old/Ongoing Business**

#### **1. Sunland Park**

There were no Board members present who had had any direct contact with Sunland Park Elementary. Ms. Deaner advised that Dr. Hays has been the contact person for that school.

#### **2. Arthur Ashe**

Ms. Ackerina informed the Board that she had spoken to Principal Andrew Luciani, who was unable to attend tonight's meeting for a presentation; however, he had asked to be placed on the agenda in March, at which he and another representative of the school plan to give a presentation on the Magnet program. They are scheduled to appear at the March 19, 2009 meeting.

### **3. EAB Goals**

Ms. Ackerina felt the Board should not take on any additional goals at this time, as there were more immediate concerns to be addressed. Ms. Deaner recommended that adding new members would help with the process of developing goals as well, as they would have new ideas to contribute. She felt the Board members present could suggest potential members to their City Commissioners for consideration.

She clarified that each City Commissioner may appoint up to four individuals from his or her District, as may the Mayor. Ms. Ackerina added that those potential appointees do not have to live in the same Districts as the City Commissioners who appoint them, although appointees must either work or live within the School District. It was also noted that some City Commissioners already have up to three vacancies to fill by appointment.

### **4. CCC Project**

The Board agreed to table this item for further discussion in March.

### **5. 20 Day Counts**

No members had further information regarding 20 day counts at this time. Ms. Ackerina offered to reach out to the contact person who normally provides the Board with these numbers.

Ms. Deaner described these figures as determinants of how well individual schools are faring in terms of enrollment, diversity, and potential demographic trends. Mr. Webster advised that the School Board also uses these counts as a tool to determine accurate funding for the schools. The term "20 day count" refers to the count taken after the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the school year, he explained.

### **6. Chair Report**

No Chair Report could be made at this time.

### **7. Broward County School District – Charles Webster**

Mr. Webster advised that on Thursday, February 26, 2009, the Broward County Council of PTAs will hold a rally at the K. C. Wright Building regarding funding issues.

He continued that Broward Days are scheduled from March 9-11, with an educational contingent to be present in Tallahassee on March 12. On March 18, the PTA plans to hold a state rally in Tallahassee as well to demonstrate their concerns to the legislature.

He noted that it is not yet known what the economic stimulus package might mean in terms of dollars for education. A recent conference call with Florida's Educational Commissioner had raised the possibility that schools are facing a possible 15% decrease in next year's budget, as opposed to the previously expected 5% decrease.

Ms. Ackerina informed the Board that she had attended a recent Town Hall Meeting with Governor Crist at the Galt Mile Community Center. The Governor had stated that he expected roughly \$12.2 billion from the economic stimulus package would be coming to Florida; of that amount, \$3.5 billion is allocated for education. He had referred attendees to [www.myflorida.com](http://www.myflorida.com), followed by the "Cover Florida" tab. This refers not only to education but health care, employment, and other figures as well.

She added that Governor Crist also cited an 8.1% unemployment rate in the state of Florida, which is above the national average; however, he has been optimistic regarding the stimulus package and is a proponent of this effort.

#### **8. Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations – Betty Shelley**

Although Ms. Shelley was not present at the meeting, Ms. Deaner reminded the Board of the Council's second Candidates' Forum, which will be held on Thursday, February 26, 2009, at 7:00 in the City Commission Chambers.

#### **9. Other Reports/Updates/Discussions**

Ms. Deaner reminded the Board that they had planned to make a recommendation to the City Commission regarding FCAT scores; she had drafted a statement to this effect, which Ms. Richards had distributed to the members at an earlier date. Ms. Deaner had made a recommended revision to the statement since that time.

The draft reads as follows:

"The Education Advisory Board (EAB) recommends that the City Commission support a reevaluation of the use of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test

(FCAT) in its Fort Lauderdale schools in view of the following considerations: time spent in preparing for the test has diminished the opportunities for other disciplines, like the arts and physical education, in which success can spill over into a stronger sense of self and further academic performance. More importantly, the goals of real-life problem-solving and creative thinking have been impacted. While the EAB supports accountability, it views the FCAT as only one measure of a school's success, and suggests that it be used mainly as a diagnostic tool to further student achievement."

Ms. Ackerina recalled that the Board had opted to wait for the new City Commission to be seated before submitting the statement.

There was no further old business at this time.

**D. New/Future Business**

Ms. Ackerina asked if any Board members had new information regarding the upcoming Fort Lauderdale Centennial Celebration in 2011. Ms. Deaner suggested that this might be one of the Board's goals, and they could decide what role they wished to play in the upcoming Centennial. Ms. Ackerina agreed that this should be followed through at a later date.

Ms. Richards reported that she had received a call from former Board member Connie Christensen, who is interested in rejoining the Board and plans to reapply for membership.

Ms. Elijah asked Mr. Webster if steps were being taken to secure schools against incidents involving guns. Mr. Webster advised that School Board member Phyllis Hope holds an annual District-wide Safety and Security Summit; this year's Summit will be on May 7, 2009, at Western High School from 6:00-8:00 p.m. She plans to invite members of the City's Special Investigations Unit, among other agencies, to discuss what they are doing on a District-wide basis. Parents of children of all ages are encouraged to attend.

He also reminded the Board of the Silence Hurts program, which encourages students to call anonymously, or text message, to report any such incidents or threats. This program is available for parents as well, he added.

He noted that a meeting similar to the Safety and Security Summit will be held in the city of Sunrise at Sawgrass Elementary School on March 4, 2009, although few details are available at present.

Mr. Webster also pointed out that all schools now use the STAR Program, which specifies a single point of entry for all personnel entering the school grounds. A

driver's license or other ID is presented for Level 1 background screening before an individual is allowed access to the school.

A particular problem with weapons, however, he pointed out, is that once a student has gained entry to the campus, a weapon may be tossed to him or her over the fence. This is difficult to prevent given the size of most campuses.

Ms. Elijah also expressed concern with the recent prevalence of gang activity, and noted some of the measures to prevent these incidents that the School Board has already taken, including partnering with the Police Department and sponsoring workshops for students. She asked if there was more being done.

Mr. Webster referred to the Multi-Agency Gang Task Force, in which the School Board participates. Several organizations, including local and Federal law enforcement agencies, take a multi-agency approach to dealing with gang-related activity. He cited a recent Gang Reduction Task Force held in Sunrise, in which the Attorney General participated. Various counties are taking part in the Gang Reduction Task Force, he affirmed, and the problem is being taken very seriously.

It was noted that a particular difficulty facing the various agencies is the sharing of data, which the Task Force is currently working to overcome. They are developing initiatives that will help get gangs off the streets, as well as to gain information regarding the signs, colors, and other symbols related to gang activity.

Ms. Elijah recommended that more information on these programs be shared throughout the City to spread the word.

Ms. Persi asked why an event of this nature would be planned at such a late point in the school year. Mr. Webster responded that traditionally, this is the time at which Ms. Hope has held her summit; there are additional concerns related to FCAT timing and other classroom considerations. He added that a high school is chosen as the site for the summit due to facilities that can host a large group of attendees.

Ms. Persi recommended that in future planning, the event might be better staged toward the beginning of the year, pointing out that students are more likely to be distracted by the coming end of the school year. Mr. Webster agreed that this was an important point, noting that when the first summit was held, there had been a high incidence of students being harmed over summer vacation, and the meeting was an attempt to encourage safety during that time. He suggested that she state this concern at the summit, and that perhaps it should be held twice a year.

Ms. Deaner asked if the basic cause of gangs was addressed at the summit – for example, they serve as a group that gives a sense of belonging to some students. Mr. Webster reiterated that several different groups attend the meeting to give their perspectives, each of which can provide different information from their viewpoints.

Ms. Deaner felt that schools operating in “heavily impoverished” areas might have practices that could be adopted by other schools in similar conditions. Mr. Webster agreed, noting that schools in New York City and Chicago could have valuable information to contribute.

Ms. Richards requested the date of the summit again, stating that she would email the information to the Board members closer to the date. She added that if Mr. Webster or any Board members wished to share information related to education with each other, they could email it to her and she would forward it from her office in accordance with the Sunshine Law.

Ms. Deaner proposed that an infusion of funding might help return more resource officers to the District’s elementary schools. She felt this should be a requirement in elementary schools so the students could perceive, at an early age, that a police officer was their friend. Mr. Webster agreed, noting that they hoped to lose no more officers in that position, as it was a decision made by the Police Department and not the School Board.

Ms. Ackerina thanked all Board members and Staff for their faithful attendance and hard work. She hoped they could make Dr. Hays proud in her absence. She also expressed concern with Ms. Xanthos and hoped someone could reach her to ensure that she was well, as no one knew if a personal situation might be preventing her attendance.

Ms. Richards noted that it is required that a letter be sent to anyone who has a particular number of absences; she had, however, made several attempts to contact Ms. Xanthos, at home and at work.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

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

