

**APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE
EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
100 North Andrews Avenue, 1st Floor Chamber
Thursday, June 18, 2009 – 6:30 p.m.**

Members	Attendance	Cumulative Attendance	
		Present	Absent
Jacqueline Ackerina, Chair	P	2	0
Laura Clark, Vice Chair	P	2	0
Lu Deaner	P	2	0
Edna Elijah	A	1	1
William Borawski	P	2	0
Mary Foster	A	0	2
Katie Leach	A	1	1
Lillian Small	A	1	1
Shezette Blue-Small	P	1	1
Linda Cooke	A	1	1
Dr. Magdalene Lewis	A	0	1
Maureen Persi, Ed.D. (left at 8:00pm)	P	1	0
John Sykes	A	0	1

Appointed members to the Board: 13
 Needed to constitute a quorum: 7

Staff

Julie Richards, Interim Staff Liaison
 Betty Shelley, Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations
 Brigitte Chiappetta, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

None at this time.

A. Opening

- **Attendance and Sign-In**

Chair Ackerina called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. Roll was called and it was determined a quorum was not present; therefore, approval of the May minutes and June agenda was deferred.

- **Approval of Minutes (May 2009) and Agenda (June 2009)**

Deferred due to lack of quorum.

- **Introduce New Members**

Dr. Maureen Persi was introduced as a new member of the Board.

Dr. Persi stated she has been living in Florida for approximately 20 years and has been a resident for the past 6 years. She is now retired, having been a New Jersey elementary school principal for 35 years. She expressed her desire to be involved with education and the children and feels the EAB would be a good vehicle to accomplish that goal.

Mr. William Borawski introduced himself as a new Board member. He is a retired school teacher certified in special education, learning disabilities, dyslexia, and emotional disturbance, as well as certification as an elementary school principal and director of special services/special education. Mr. Borawski felt the EAB would be a way to tap into his personal resources in contributing to the children of Broward County.

New member, Shezette Blue-Small, stated she currently works for the School Board as a Curriculum Specialist for Language Arts.

Chair Ackerina declared no guests were scheduled to speak and she had no special announcements to make.

Dr. Persi noted for the record that she had attended the end of the year party for staff sponsored by the Broward County Educational Foundation at the Seminole Hard Rock Café, recounting that it had been a wonderful venue to say thank you to the teachers.

B. Communications to City Commission

None.

C. Current Business

1. EAB Purpose and Objectives

Chair Ackerina pointed out that at the prior meeting the following three questions had been posed to the group, further asking that everyone look at the questions and provide their suggestions and comments. As several members had not been in attendance at that meeting, Chair Ackerina asked that those members who had attended speak first.

Questions posed:

- What they feel the EAB goals should be, and what they feel the group should do (providing at least two goal suggestions)
- Ideas about the student member – should the Board have one and what that student’s responsibilities would be, how will he or she be chosen, and would any member like to take on this effort
- What the Board’s goals should be regarding the adoption of schools, possibly including volunteering and/or providing items from the schools’ wish lists

As to the first question, Vice Chair Clark responded that, being a teacher in the schools, she saw a high need for volunteers (especially in Title 1 schools) to provide students with human contact, one-on-one, either with reading, tutoring, or just being there to listen. She suggested as one of the Board’s goals that they try to get volunteers, including the retired community or police, into the schools. Her second suggestion was to find a way to reward students for certain achievements, as well as to find companies willing to donate rewards such as certificates for reading, good citizenship, or outstanding behavior, not exclusive to academics.

Mr. Borawski agreed, indicating he had worked with emotionally disturbed kids and had rewarded them for behavior, friendship, doing good deeds, and going “above and beyond the call of duty.” He felt telling the kids “you’re doing a good job” and providing positive reinforcement is important. Mr. Borawski added he wanted the Board to have a goal of carrying over or sponsoring some type of a program advocating tolerance, such as citizenship classes, “something where a kid could actually be supported in being diversified, being different,” and teaching the children skills to enjoy each other, discourage bullying, and being a person who may be “different from somebody else.”

Chair Ackerina acknowledged Vice Chair Clark’s comments and agreed that volunteers are essential, further reporting that an increase in volunteers by a minimum of 10% will be needed as outlined by the schools’ improvement plan and educational plans for the upcoming year. She suggested recruiting companies that allow their employees to volunteer during the work day without

penalty. Chair Ackerina also stated that for Virginia Shuman Young for a staff development event at the beginning of the year she spoke with local businesses, one of which was Kilwins, who made a generous donation and soon thereafter became a school partner. She felt that small subcommittees should be formed to follow up, adding that a student receiving an award or recognition from the Fort Lauderdale Education Advisory Board would be exciting for the parents as well as the students.

Ms. Deaner cautioned that their first goal in adopting the schools should be to avoid being spread too thin. She discussed the day's newspaper article indicating that Sunland Park would lose ten teachers due to budget cutbacks. She felt they needed to continue their focus on Sunland and possibly Lauderdale Manors, excluding Arthur Ashe at this time as that school has a new principal. She acknowledged that Sunland needs mentors or aids; however, such a request should come from the school principal. In the past, the EAB has mentored in the schools, although their numbers are insufficient, and mentors will have to be recruited from outside the EAB. In the past active leadership has been lacking from the Board. Ms. Deaner encouraged each member to be part of a specific committee, whether it be for obtaining vouchers or creating outside partnerships.

With regard to the recognition/reward incentive, Ms. Deaner believed the principals should choose individual students who have "done something special" and then the Board would recognize that student at a City Commission meeting. Ms. Deaner felt not enough had been done with trying to get gift vouchers from local businesses.

Ms. Shelley concurred with everyone's comments. Since the City Commission has asked that important items discussed by the Boards be brought to their attention, Ms. Shelley proposed the City Commission be advised that the Board is looking for school volunteers. She remarked that several of the adopted schools are in "different areas where they have to [somehow] try to find places in those particular areas who are more interested and have more to gain by those children in those schools doing well." Ms. Shelley claimed she had been distressed to read about the cutbacks at Sunland. It was her suggestion that they meet with the principals from Sunland and Lauderdale Manors to see what the Board can do to help them, encouraging the Board to continue to "push forward."

Ms. Blue-Small agreed, adding that the Board needs to recognize school staff also as the teachers do not get enough recognition and enough support. She stated the teachers work hard with a diverse and unique group of kids. Ms. Blue-Small talked about asking a local tire shop what they could do for the community

pointing out that parents living in the neighborhood purchase their tires there when they need new tires. She recommended tapping into all the venues along Sunrise Park in the Sunrise Boulevard area, getting the community involved and making them aware of the local elementary school and their desperate need for support. She contended that local businesses are not aware of the school nearby and how much support it needs from the community. While reading the previous meeting minutes, Ms. Blue-Small saw a reference to the end of the year bash for staff and how they were unable to have the party. She conveyed her desire to make sure they can have such a function this year where the teachers can “enjoy and relax and let their hair down from their tough job.” She also agreed that the party at the Hard Rock had been great.

Ms. Deaner added that instead of waiting for the end of the year it would be a nice idea to have a meeting with the teachers at the beginning of the school year, perhaps in October, to exchange ideas and thoughts and establish a good rapport.

Dr. Persi thought Ms. Deaner’s idea was a good one, suggesting a coffee or tea after school, something to say “thank you for all your hard work” but perhaps earlier in the year, in September when school begins.

Dr. Persi asked Chair Ackerina if a new school is adopted by the EAB every year or if they will continue with the three schools already adopted. Chair Ackerina replied that since she has been on the Board the same three schools have been adopted, however, she did not know if much had been done in terms of the adoption. Presentations by representatives of the schools had been made in November with information given to the Board, but to her knowledge nothing has actually solidified or progressed since then.

Dr. Persi felt that since two of those schools have new principals (Arthur Ashe and Sunland) they would need more support by the Board to show their members are willing to “step up to the plate” and help out any way they can. She recommended pushing forward to come up with concrete ideas. Another issue Dr. Persi had concerns with was Fort Lauderdale being the sixth largest school district in the nation and “they’ve lost 16,000 children through whatever reason.” She didn’t understand why the schools are losing teachers, yet going forward with a capital building project, and not addressing redistricting.

Chair Ackerina responded that there are two budgets: operating and capital, where funds are not mixed. The capital budget plans have their own funding, and are also tied into monies coming from other areas such as grants, state plans, etc. Both budgets are in “serious crisis” because they no longer have

reserves as the reserves have been used to fund the previous two years. Every school was asked to cut a certain percentage from their budget. In some schools, that decision was made by a committee and in others the principal made those choices. There was a surplus of approximately 900 teachers, of which there were only 235 jobs available. Another surplus meeting was held, due to pending retirements and teachers leaving for other reasons, as well as non-approval/extensions in the drop program, forcing another 200 teachers to retire, which then allowed for placement of additional surplus teachers into those positions. The number is now 359 teachers that as of June 30th of this year will be let go. Chair Ackerina stated that as positions open up the 359 teachers will be the next to be placed. No new teachers will be hired unless it is in a critical shortage area where none of the teachers now on layoff have a place to go (such as teachers with special certifications). It is anticipated there will be more layoffs in September and the number of teachers will continue to decrease.

Dr. Persi continued to express her frustration with continuing building projects when teachers are being laid off for financial reasons. She realized the funds are separate, but asked if there really are areas in Broward County where there is still a need for additional building (possibly due to increased enrollment), yet the schools are continuing to cut the overall numbers of teachers.

Chair Ackerina indicated that Mr. Webster had addressed that issue via email, but she was not sure if the entire Board had received a copy of his response. She asked that Ms. Richards forward a copy of that email to all members.

It was proposed by Dr. Persi that the Board be divided into groups, assigning each group a school as their main focus.

2. Student Member to EAB

The second question posed to the Board members was with regard to student membership and whether the Board should have one, what their responsibilities should be, how those student(s) should be chosen, and which member would like to take on that project.

Vice Chair Clark felt they should each be assigned a different project, with each person being given one area of focus. With regard to student members, there are three high schools, and it had been suggested there should be one student representative from each high school. Vice Chair Clark did not know if that would be beneficial for the students, alternatively suggesting that they rotate - having one representative from each high school at each meeting providing an update about their school and letting the Board know what the students in their schools

need, with the plus of providing those students with community service hours. She suggested the principal of each school appoint their respective student representative.

Mr. Borawski was in favor of having all representatives at each meeting as it would be too complicated to alternate the students, as well as that important information could be missed if they only return every three months. He felt if the students are interested and want to participate in government, they can sit through the meetings. He encouraged actively engaging the students to participate and assigning them responsibilities. Mr. Borawski also recommended the school representative be appointed from their student government and work closely with their school principal enabling them to work together to disseminate information to the rest of the students.

Chair Ackerina thought it would be best to have one student at a time. She concurred it would be ideal to have three students appointed, however, not feasible. She suggested the three schools have an essay writing contest or other indication of a student's desire to participate with the EAB. The Board members would then read the essays and make their choices. She explained her idea that one student attend the meetings to talk about their school as well as upcoming events, and that person should also communicate with the other two high schools obtaining and exchanging information. Involving the students with the Board's committees and events would also be advantageous.

Ms. Deaner disagreed, stating that having one representative from each school at each meeting is too much in terms of efficiency and quorum requirements and the Board would be "too heavily loaded with the youth at that point." She also suggested the student be a junior in high school as once they're a senior, part of them is "away already at college or a new job" and they may not be as interested in their local community. She stressed the students should also have their own transportation. Ms. Deaner felt if they had one dedicated student as a member of the Board it would be sufficient, with their job being basically communication back and forth from the Board to the schools. Ms. Deaner also liked the idea of a simple essay showing interest on behalf of the student, but she did not agree they should necessarily have to be a member of their student government.

Ms. Shelley agreed that having three students is too many, but was not sure how much communication there would be between the three high schools. The essay, she said, would be a good idea, but she also felt they were "making something hard for us to handle." Ms. Shelley liked the idea of the principals participating in the selection process.

Ms. Blue-Small felt the key would be to have a Board member working closely with each student representative, whether it is three students or one, to make sure information is being disbursed between the high schools, and that the student is “in tune to what’s going on.” She agreed it is important to have a student member as quite often decisions are made for students without them being included in the decision-making process. Obtaining their perspective is important.

It was recommended by Dr. Persi that the Board reach out to all three schools, breaking the school year up into thirds, and allowing the representative to attend EAB meetings for three months, in lieu of requiring that student’s attendance for the entire school year. Dr. Persi agreed there was probably more “rivalry between the schools than there is camaraderie.”

3. School Adoptions

The third question pertained to the adoption of schools, including volunteerism. Chair Ackerina noted this topic had been generally discussed previously with regard to the Board’s goals; however, the specifics had not been addressed. Three schools have been adopted by the EAB, all of which had then made presentations to the Board. One provided an in-depth wish list, one asked for more volunteers, and another essentially gave no information to the Board. Two of the schools have new principals. As to the wish list from Lauderdale Manors, Chair Ackerina wanted to ensure all of the Board members had received a copy of the list so each need could be addressed. Chair Ackerina said she would like to invite the principals back to see what their needs are currently.

Chair Ackerina asked if the Board members were looking at working with the three schools already adopted or planning to expand adoption of additional schools, and what the members feel - aside from their goals - are essential in terms of an adoption process. “What are we looking at when we say ‘adopting a school?’”

Vice Chair Clark thought they should continue with the three Title I schools already chosen because they could use more assistance from the Board and probably need volunteers more than the other schools. Mr. Borawski concurred, even suggesting perhaps only adopting two schools to avoid spreading themselves too thin.

It was Chair Ackerina’s opinion that they should stay with the three schools selected, although one of the schools adopted may need the Board more than another.

Ms. Deaner reiterated that she did not like the notion of “us coming bearing fruit unless we’re asked to bring fruit,” as she “would only like to give help that is wanted.” She wondered how many items on the wish list have been addressed and, further, she did not see the point of the principals visiting the EAB again if the issues brought up at their first presentation have not yet been resolved. She asked that they go back over the list to see what has been done and, if nothing yet, to “do something before we ask them to come back.”

Chair Ackerina noted there are two new principals at Sunland and Arthur Ashe who have not yet given the Board their “wish list,” adding that those two principals have expressed a desire to attend a meeting.

Ms. Deaner pointed out, and Ms. Shelley agreed, that school adoption has been an ongoing goal of the Board for several years and she did not want to keep requesting school representatives visit the EAB and submit lists without the Board having actually answered or resolved any of those concerns.

Ms. Blue-Small mentioned the EAB should take the list they have now and start small, and if they’re successful with the first items, they go from there. “Take a project and see it through to the end.” Dr. Persi agreed.

Vice Chair Clark talked about the Police Department volunteer program at Sunland Elementary. She said she had not followed up, assuming that the volunteer coordinator at the school would keep the program going, but she would be checking back in again to see how, or if, it was ongoing. Chair Ackerina commended Vice Chair Clark for implementing the program and agreed extending it to BSO and court officers would be beneficial.

Chair Ackerina summarized their goal discussion as follows:

- ✓ Volunteers
- ✓ Student rewards
- ✓ Sponsor programs such as citizenship or tolerance, anti-bullying campaigns
- ✓ School adoption
- ✓ Obtaining mentors and volunteers
- ✓ Demonstrating support to the two new principals and inviting them back to a Board meeting
- ✓ Committee assignment

Based on the goals set, (Chair Ackerina stated no decisions could be made due to the lack of quorum) Chair Ackerina asked for feedback from those members interested in a particular area. Dr. Persi asked to see the wish list provided by Lauderdale Manors, proposing the list be divided up between the Board members for each to then start working on the "wishes." Chair Ackerina suggested that once everyone has a copy of the wish list, Ms. Richards conveys each member's responses to the Board.

Ms. Deaner volunteered to host a coffee for staff of the adopted schools at the end of September.

Ms. Shelley asked that a copy Lauderdale Manor's wish list be included with the meeting minutes.

Mr. Borawski thought it would be good ideas to 1) have the Board members think of which specific school they would like to sponsor, creating three committees, and also, 2) sponsoring a "coffee time" the morning of the in-service in October with the Board members introducing themselves to the teachers and principal.

Chair Ackerina reiterated there are two questions regarding student members: 1) how many to have, and 2) ensuring the students know the necessary requirements. She requested that Ms. Richards send an email to the Board members also conveying each member's response to which of the three schools would be their preference. Dr. Persi volunteered for either one of the two elementary schools. Ms. Blue-Small requested Lauderdale Manors, but said she would gladly go to any of the schools.

Committee compliance with requirements the Sunshine law was briefly mentioned. Chair Ackerina indicated the committee members would work through Ms. Richards.

Ms. Deaner asked about the Board's timeline and, since they are not meeting in July and do not have a full membership of the Board at the current meeting, when the members should start working towards their goals.

Chair Ackerina directed that the members start their work "right away." She added, however, that it is summer and the principals may be on vacation. She also suggested they might wait until the committees are set up. Upon receipt of contact information, Ms. Richards will, in turn, provide the Board with the principals' names and contact numbers.

D. Old/Ongoing Business

1. **Lauderdale Manors Follow-Up**
2. **Sunland Park Follow-Up**
3. **Arthur Ashe Follow-Up**
4. **Establish Goals for School Adoptions**

5. **Chair Report - 20-day Count Update**

Chair Ackerina noted that because of the interest in “going green” as well as budget constraints she will be electronically sending the 20-day count update with the new FCAT scores listed.

In *Newsweek* on June 8th, there was a list called “The top of the class,” a countdown of the top 1,500 high schools in the country, and two Fort Lauderdale high schools were listed, Fort Lauderdale High (#438) and Stranahan (#444). Copies of the article will be forwarded to the Board members.

Mr. Kelmanson is no longer on the EAB. The new Board member, Mr. Sykes, was unable to attend due to illness.

6. Other Reports and Updates

- **Staff Liaison – Julie Richards**

Ms. Richards stated Mayor Seiler asked that the Board be provided with highlights of the May 19, 2009 School Board meeting “Schools & Staff in Action.”

There will be no July meeting of the EAB and no City Commission meeting in August.

- **Broward County Public Schools – Charles Webster**

Mr. Webster was not in attendance.

E. New/Future Business

Ms. Shelley reported that there will be a CVC meeting on July 25th at 8:00 p.m. at Snyder Park. The participants have been asked to assemble bird houses, bat houses, and picnic tables.

The Council of Civic Associations will meet the 2nd Tuesday in July on the 8th Floor at City Hall.

[Dr. Persi excused herself from the meeting at 8:00 p.m.]

- **Fort Lauderdale Centennial Celebration – March 27, 2011**

Ms. Cook was not at the meeting; therefore, no update was provided regarding the Centennial Celebration.

Ms. Deaner provided a copy of the pamphlet put together by the EAB approximately eight years ago, with the idea that they might consider updating the pamphlet for the Centennial. She requested that Ms. Richards contact Leslie Carhart to see if she had any more copies of the original pamphlet, "Preparing Our Future Leaders, Education in the City of Fort Lauderdale."

F. Next Meeting and Closing

- Follow-up Items: TBD
- Agenda Items: TBD
- Location and Date: City Hall, August 20, 2009

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 L. Edmondson, Prototype, Inc.]