

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEETING

KCW Administration Building

March 1, 2007

SUMMARY

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order, at 6:37 p.m. by **Dr. Pam Brown**, Chair, without a quorum. **Dr. Brown** declared it a workshop until such time that a quorum was present. A quorum was reached at 6:50 p.m.

Members Present:

Jawhar Badran
Pam Brown
Cedric Douglas
Lina Gioello
Gary Hensley

Bapthol Joseph
Jeanne Jusevic
Marguerite Luster
Ernestine Price
Sherry Reece

Simone Ruiz-Narcis
Ron Simon-Menéndez
Alyce Zahniser
Rose Espinola

Members Absent:

Brian Dassler
Ellyn Drotzer
Randy Fleischer
Roland Foulkes
Julian Gazzano

George Pedlar
Dane Ramson
Bernie Schultz
Barbara Stuart
Barbara Williamson

Artheus Young
Brittany Stevenson,
Student Advisor
Shelby Berson,
Student Rep.

Diversity Staff:

Dr. Elizabeth Watts, Director; Jean Darius, Coordinator; Mercedes Hardisson; Terri Jones; Genevieve Ponce; Nancy Weintraub

INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair asked for all present to introduce themselves and welcomed new Committee member **Cedric Douglas**, appointed by **School Board Chair Beverly Gallagher**, District 2.

CHAIR'S REPORT

A letter was sent from **the Chair**, on behalf of the Diversity Committee, to all of the individuals involved in the CCC lawsuit, who attended the February meeting. A sample letter was included in the **Members'** packets.

The Chair stated that **Mr. Foulkes**, who was absent from this meeting, recommended that these individuals be invited back each year. A Motion written by him will be introduced under New Business.

Dr. Brown forwarded the Introduction to the 05-06 Site Visit Report to **Diversity & Cultural Staff** and expressed her hope to have the Report to the Diversity Committee "very, very soon."

Dr. Brown was not able to the last School Board meeting. She will present her report to the **School Board Members** at their next meeting.

Prior to **Mr. Darius'** introduction of the new **Director of Diversity & Cultural Outreach**, **the Chair** acknowledged **Mr. Darius** and thanked him for his efforts and professionalism in the role of Interim Director.

The Chair announced that **Interim Superintendent James Notter** was invited to speak with the **Diversity Committee Members** and was given a time certain of 7:00 p.m.

INTERIM DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Darius introduced **Dr. Elizabeth Watts, Director of Diversity & Cultural Outreach**, and announced that her official start date is Friday, March 2nd.

Dr. Watts addressed the **Committee** and stated she is very happy to be here. Prior to coming to Diversity, she was the Multicultural Curriculum Development/Training Specialist in the Multicultural & ESOL Program Services Education Department. She was the, "administrator over the District Multicultural Program" and was there for eight years. She has worked with the **Diversity & Cultural Outreach Department** on many projects and stated she is very proud of the work the **Diversity Committee** does. She commends the **Members** for their commitment to the children of Broward County and stated that she looks forward to working with them.

Mr. Darius announced that **Ms. Ponce** received a promotion and will be leaving the **Diversity & Cultural Outreach Department**, effective Monday, March 5th.

Mr. Darius referred to the Motions and Requests Matrix. All requests have been addressed, except for one. We are waiting for information from the Research & Development Department.

Committee and Subcommittee meetings for April, May, and June will be advertised tomorrow. Chairs should look at the information before leaving to ensure that it is correct. Subcommittees are encouraged to set their meeting and workshop dates in advance because it is too costly for the Department to advertise separately from the District's notices.

Mr. Fleischer, who was not present, asked **Mr. Darius** to remind the members of the **Hiring Practices Subcommittee** that the next meeting will be from 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. on the day of the April Diversity Committee meeting.

The Women's History Match Game has started and will continue through March. The Match Game can be downloaded from the **Diversity & Cultural Outreach Department's** website. **Committee Members** are invited to play the game. **Mr. Darius** reminded the **Members** that the contest is open only to District employees.

APRIL MEETING

Ms. Jusevic was concerned about a quorum for the April meeting because it is scheduled during Spring Break. **The Chair** stated that several Members had already indicated they would be out of town at that time. She suggested moving it to the following week or the

week after that, depending on availability of the Board Room. The **Committee Members** indicated consensus.

(*Note: A quorum was reached at 6:50 p.m.)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

BOUNDARIES, Jeanne Jusevic, Chair

No Report

HIRING PRACTICES, Randy Fleischer, Chair

No Report

SITE VISITATION, Bapthol Joseph, Chair

Mr. Joseph stated the Subcommittee did not have a meeting in February. The workgroup did work on the 05-06 Site Visit Report, and the Subcommittee is much closer to presenting it to the **Diversity Committee**. The Subcommittee will meet Friday, March 2, at 10:00 a.m. in the Conference Room on the 10th Floor. He invited all Members to attend. **Mr. Joseph** said that the **Site Visit Subcommittee**, “really makes things happen for the schools. That’s where we see what is going on and help the school move forward.” He said it is very worthwhile for Members to attend these meetings.

Dr. Brown said the site visits and the Subcommittee are, “the most important work we do.” There are three site visits scheduled the end of March for middle schools. The dates are: Monday, March 19th; Wednesday, March 21st; and Friday, March 23rd.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, Jeanne Jusevic, Chair

Meetings are 5:30 p.m., prior to the Diversity Committee meeting, in the Board Room. The Subcommittee will look at high school reform and why the District is requiring all students to pass the FCAT and have core requirements instead of looking at Vocational Education as an alternative track. The Subcommittee will also look at why juniors and seniors in Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors courses are doing FCAT prep work in those courses. In addition, Members would like to look at the disparity between schools regarding academic rigor in Honors courses.

Ms. Price said she would like to join **Ms. Jusevic** and **Ms. Espinola** on this Subcommittee.

STUDENT ATHLETICS & ACTIVITIES

No report

STUDENT SUSPENSIONS

No report

TECHNOLOGY, Ron Simon-Menendez, Chair

No report

DISTRICT COMMITTEES:

There were no District reports.

DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE, Bapthol Joseph

NOVA POLICY REVIEW, Randy Fleischer

POLICY 5000, Jeanne Jusevic

POLICY REVIEW, Julian Gazzano

TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE, Ron Simon-Menendez

INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT JAMES NOTTER

Mr. Notter arrived and was recognized by **the Chair**. **Mr. Notter** was joined by **Mr. Tony Ash**, Assistant Director for Administration, South Area Superintendent's Office.

Mr. Notter thanked the **Committee** for the opportunity to have an open dialogue with them. He stated he has been in Broward County Public Schools for 22 years and in public education for 33 years. **Mr. Notter** said he has, "probably served in every division in the school district." He is a die-hard advocate for quality education for all children. When he accepted the position of **Interim Superintendent**, there were five key areas of particular concern.

- First, **Student Achievement**. He said the organization "would be non-existent if we didn't have our children, and all children deserve a quality education."
- Second, **Inclusivity with the Community**. Business, religious, parent, juvenile justice system, and so on. It is all-inclusive.
- Third, **Teachers**. Next to parents/guardians are the teachers. Teachers are "critical for us as we move student achievement forward." Teachers need to know that they are valued and are an essential piece in the educational process.
- Fourth, **Labor Relations with Employees at All Levels**. There are nine labor unions in the District, plus Meet and Confer groups, which is basically made up of administrators.
- Fifth, **Communications**. Open, truthful communications. You will always hear the "rest of the story" from him. You will be able to debate and dialogue with him so an agreement can be reached on how we can best educate all children. How can we make the graduation rate significantly higher than it currently is for all children? How can we prepare our children for upwardly mobile careers?

Mr. Notter believes the future will be much more highly competitive than it currently is because of technology. Technology has "shrunk" this world. How can we prepare our students so that they are ready to compete in that business environment? We must prepare them to be self-sufficient and able to compete in a world of technology.

Mr. Notter talked about the FCAT Contract, which was stopped as soon as **Mr. Notter** learned of it. He said public education is not a punitive thing, and defined *Punitive* as, "Well, you've now aged out so it's now time for you to leave the public school system. And we're going to have this contract that you really can't abide by. So, ultimately you're going to leave." **Mr. Notter** said, "That has never been, nor will it ever be, the intent of this

public school system.” The intent of the system is to find ways to get every student to walk across the stage with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to ultimately be successful in life.

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON STUDENT GRADE, BEHAVIOR, AND ATTENDANCE CONTRACTS

Mr. Notter introduced **Mr. Ash**. **Mr. Ash** stated that the Committee consists of principals, district level administrators, Guidance, Research, Attendance, Student Social Work, and staff from the Area Superintendent’s Office. The Committee’s report will be presented to **Mr. Notter** on March 9th.

The Committee looked at the whole issue of contracts. **Mr. Ash** informed the **Diversity Committee** that “the consequence of being on a contract resulting in being withdrawn from school has been eliminated.” A critical question the Committee asked is what they should be doing for students prior to the point of putting them on contract. What should be done in terms of meeting students’ needs? The Ad Hoc Committee is coming up with an approach that “fundamentally, and, hopefully, systematically” gets schools to focus upon and address the needs of students as they go through the process, but which does not end in withdrawing from school.

The approach offers an opportunity to engage in conversations with parents. The Ad Hoc Committee knows that one model, one approach, does not fit all. They will look at the individual student and the student’s needs.

Another thing the Committee was charged to do is look at the students who have been withdrawn and begin the process of “re-engagement”. How do they reach out and begin to bring some of those students back into the educational system?

Mr. Ash asked for input from the **Diversity Committee**.

The Chair thanked **Mr. Notter** and **Mr. Ash** for attending the meeting and “being so open.” She, then, opened the meeting for discussion and questions.

Mr. Joseph said the community knew about the “contracts” long before it broke in the news. He referred to **Mr. Ash’s** statement that the contract has been eliminated and asked when and where. **Mr. Ash** stated the memo was sent out immediately upon learning of this practice, in December, and said that the contracts were not to be utilized. **Mr. Joseph** said he knows of schools that were still using the contracts, even after the memo was sent.

Mr. Notter said he expects to have the names of the school(s) before he leaves because “that is direct insubordination.”

Mr. Joseph asked what the steps were that led to the contract. **Mr. Ash** said the steps he saw began with the student having difficulty with behavior or attendance. The original intent of the contract was never to withdraw students from school. The intent was to “begin the process of giving the kids a wake-up call, to get the kids to realize they have a serious problem with academics, attendance, behavior.”

Mr. Joseph asked how long the contracts had been in use before the newspapers printed the information. **Mr. Ash** said he did not have that information. **Mr. Notter** said, when the

contracts were collected, they were not uniform. Contracts did not look the same. He said the important thing to remember is that, when this administration learned of it, they immediately put a stop to it and immediately formed the Ad Hoc Committee to look into it. He commended the community for bringing this practice to his attention.

Mr. Simon-Menendez said that one area of concern is the thought that “everybody is going to college.” Not everyone goes to college. We lose kids that way. He believes “the world is math.” Students have to read and comprehend in order to do math. He said relevance is the key for students who are not college bound. Vocational training needs to be revamped and broadened and made available in every school.

Ms. Jusevic said she wished the Ad Hoc Committee had gone to any at-risk youth program and talked to the students and seen the despair. She said the District is not servicing the ESOL population, ESE, and students who would succeed in vocational settings. Middle school students in these areas see high school as painful, with roadblock after roadblock. She suggested administrators go to the schools and talk to these students. **Ms. Jusevic** wondered if students who have been “exited out” might have been in this category and that they are now no longer in the system that caused them the pain, the frustration and the low self-esteem. She said talking to the students might help in identifying ways to reach out and help those who have been exited.

Ms. Gioello believes ESE students need to be taught life skills along with computer skills. She believes ESE students should not be forced to choose a major. That is an added burden. She suggested the District encourage the Legislature to change “major” to “area of interest.”

Mr. Badran said all children are entitled to the opportunity to receive a fair and equitable education. He asked how many students were placed on contracts and how many have been moved out of the system because of contracts. **Mr. Ash** responded that the number is fewer than the total number of contracts that were instituted. He believes this indicates that the original intent of the contracts was not to exit students, but rather to give them a “wake-up call.” **Mr. Badran** asked what plans are being considered to “re-engage” the students. **Mr. Ash** said they would communicate with each of the students; try to identify where they were academically prior to withdrawal; and then develop a plan to help them succeed. They will do this one child at a time. **Mr. Notter** pointed out that the District runs all the adult vocational programs and about 90% of all the apprenticeship programs in the county.

Mr. Badran asked why the decision was made to not have a representative from the **Diversity Committee** sit in on the Ad Hoc Committee. **Mr. Notter** answered that he wanted to find out administratively what was happening and wanted to collect the data before involving the community. He said he specifically picked **Mr. Ash** to head this Committee and wanted it “built on an administrative model.” There is a possibility that a task force will be selected in the future. He is open to bringing the information to the **Diversity Committee** and believes this falls in line with its oversight responsibilities. **Dr. Brown** said the **Diversity Committee** stands ready to help **Mr. Notter** in any way it can.

Ms. Price said there needs to be more sensitivity training for principals and administrators, coupled with awareness of the students’ histories and circumstances. A lot of students come to school with “so many bags, and a lot of those bags are not their fault.”

She believes a lot of those students are withdrawn for very subjective and personal reasons, sometimes by the parents or guardians themselves. She believes many administrators just don't care. **Mr. Ash** asked for a clarification from **Ms. Price** as to whether the school itself implemented the withdrawal in those cases, or were the parents convinced that there might be another option for the students. **Ms. Price** answered that many parents were encouraged to take this action and then, once the student is out of the school, the support from the district ceases. **Mr. Ash** said this issue has been discussed by the Ad Hoc Committee and will be addressed in the recommendations to **Mr. Notter**. **Ms. Price** added that ESOL kids are being ignored in many classes. She further stated that, "the school system wasn't designed to protect the teacher and the administrator. It was designed to enhance and make that child feel important and go on with life."

Ms. Luster mentioned that she was told her great granddaughter couldn't enter a mainstreamed Headstart class because it is a federal program. However, her main concern is teenage parents who are at the Centers. She said she would concentrate on students between 12-18 years of age. She said these girls are on contracts at the Centers, and they are expected to complete them in a certain period of time. **Ms. Luster** said one girl was told she must withdraw due to a behavior problem. She believes that 12-year-old girls should not share the same campus with 18 year olds. Many of the young girls have more than one child. **Ms. Luster** believes these girls could benefit from vocational education. Referring to the contracts the girls sign, she said parents have a right to see the contracts. **Mr. Ash** responded by saying that if the schools are putting new contracts out there, that is something they need to take a look at. **Mr. Notter** said that contracts he is aware of, with teen mothers, had to do with setting goals and requirements for completion of the course work. They did not have to do with being withdrawn from school. He will look into it. **Ms. Luster** closed her comments with the observation that there are many problems at the teen centers that should be looked at.

Ms. Espinola said she is a senior and went to elementary and middle schools in the western part of the county and is presently going to Fort Lauderdale High School. She said she has "seen the disparity and self-imposed segregation and institutionalized segregation in this school system." She offered the following as solutions:

- We need to look at elementary and middle schools.
- We need to learn how to integrate students.
- We need to look at the gifted courses and the advanced courses that are offered.
- Look at the rigor across the board, east versus west.
 - In the east, gifted courses are few in numbers, and most students are White.
 - In the east, most gifted classes were pullout. She said most kids weren't being challenged. When they get to high school, there is a huge gap. Kids can't read, can't pass the FCAT, and can't add negative and positive numbers. There is a big problem.
- Standardized testing can help with this. We need teachers, out east, who are much more dedicated to their jobs.
- We need to acknowledge that parents aren't required to take active roles in their student's education. While there may be some moral obligation, you really can't expect it from them. We need to look within the school system and at the teachers.
- We need to look at elementary and middle schools and make sure that we're keeping kids from all over the county on the same page; that we're keeping the classrooms integrated; and offering the same opportunities to kids of all economic backgrounds and all ethnic backgrounds.

- High schools are on two different tiers. At the present time, we need to look at uniformity of rigor across the county-Honors, Regular and AP courses. Make sure there is something for students who aren't ready for AP and who want something challenging. Honors classes in the west are more challenging than the Honors classes in the east. There is a great gap for those kids who aren't ready for the AP courses, but are too advanced for the Honors courses. These kids slide through and that makes it more difficult for disadvantaged students to get into college.
- Ensure social integration for advanced students at the high school level. These students get bored; ESE, ESOL, kids who have difficulty learning can learn and we need to keep them in school.
- Students might not learn the same way as us. **Ms. Espinola** stated "I tutor ESE students and I am not convinced that they learn as much the way I have to teach them and the way they have to pass it in class. They need vocational education classes, and we need to break down the barriers. These students can't pass the FCAT tests in order to get into the Voc-Tech programs."

Ms. Espinola said these are things that could be implemented soon. Looking into the future, she suggests:

- More magnet programs across the county that would help integrate the schools and programs that would incorporate voc-tech and advanced programs.
- Look at foreign models of education systems. For instance, "when money's attached to students and students can go where they want and specialized programs are being offered for all types of students, schools are competing for those students. Schools are keeping up their rigor. Schools are trying to entice the kind of students that need to be at their school because they want the money that's tied to the students and they want their respect...They don't want kids choosing every school but them."
- Finally we need to accept that not all parents are going to be active in their child's education. We need to train teachers to be more culturally sensitive. We need to train them to act as more than just a teacher, but also a guardian and a counselor. The counselors at school are there for academic advising. It's the teachers who are with students every day. It's the teachers who know the students background. They know if the student works, has lost a sibling, etc.

Ms. Espinola asked **Mr. Ash** if the contracts are always signed or are they, also, general blanket rules that administration sets up, like attendance rules. **Mr. Ash** responded that the contracts his Ad Hoc Committee has received from the schools all have a provision or place for parent, student, and administration to sign. All are signed.

Dr. Brown stated that **Ms. Espinola** is an excellent student representative and advocate for students across the county.

Ms. Price acknowledged **Ms. Espinola** and stated she has "enjoyed this young lady and she has contributed so much to this Committee." She wanted to say this to all the Members.

The Chair stated that this is an ongoing dialogue with **Mr. Notter**. This is not a "one-shot deal" for us. She thanked **Mr. Notter** and **Mr. Ash** and expressed a desire to continue to work together in the same manner because, in the end, we all care about the same things.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The Committee adopted the Agenda.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of February 1, 2007, were approved without change.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Simon-Menendez brought up the fact that the next meeting is scheduled during Spring Break. **MOTION by Mr. Simon-Menendez, 2nd by Ms. Jusevic:** "That the Diversity Committee move its meeting from April 5, 2007, to either April 12 or April 19, 2007, due to the regular meeting falling during Spring Break."

Passed 14-0

Mr. Simon-Menendez asked that the list of Committee members be "cleaned up." He said it includes names of members who have been removed. **Mr. Darius** said the list is current. Members have been re-appointed. **Mr. Simon-Menendez** stated that Hispanics are, "incredibly under-represented on this list. This is supposed to be a Diversity Committee and that group is not being represented." He pointed out that there are still some openings on the Committee.

MOTION by Mr. Foulkes, in absentia, and read by the Chair, 2nd by Ms. Ruiz-Narcis: "That the CCC Settlement Agreement introduction/overview/update for Diversity Committee and School Board as presented on 4th December 2003 and 1st February 2007 be included annually on the February Diversity Committee meeting agenda. (Because that is the first full meeting of the Diversity Committee's new and returning appointees and its newly elected officers.) And that each School Board Member and the Superintendent be invited/encouraged to attend that meeting."

Passed 13-0

INFORMATION REQUEST by Mr. Joseph, supported by the Committee, "How teacher(s) aides are distributed throughout the district."

Meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

**The next meeting is scheduled for April 12, 2007, at 6:30 p.m.,
in the Board Room of the KCW Administration Building.**

<p>These minutes are summarized and recorded at the March 1, 2007, Diversity Committee meeting. If any Committee member or other interested party would like more detailed information as to the contents of this summary, contact the Diversity & Cultural Outreach Department at 754-321-2090.</p>
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