

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEETING

KCW Administration Building

November 6, 2008

SUMMARY, AS AMENDED

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order, at 6:34 p.m. by **Roland Foulkes**, Chair, with a quorum.

Members Present:

Jawhar Badran	Lina Gioello	Sherry Reece
Cedric Douglas	Bapthol Joseph	Nancy Rogan
Randy Fleischer	Marguerite Luster	Regina Santiago
Roland Foulkes	George Pedlar	Barbara Williamson
Phoebee Francois	Ernestine Price	Suzanne Yach
Julian Gazzano	Michael Rajner	

Members Absent:

Dr. Veda Bailey	
Patrick Jabouin	Alyce Zahniser
William Knight	

Diversity & Cultural Outreach Staff:

Jean Darius, Coordinator; Latricia Lauture; Maryse Nelson; Dr. Mary Smith; Nancy Weintraub

District Staff:

James F. Notter, Superintendent; Dr. Joanne Harrison, Deputy Superintendent, Educational Programs/ Student Support; Dr. Katherine Blasik, Associate Superintendent, Research Development & Evaluation; Jack Ciminera, Specialist, Research & Evaluation

Guests:

Nezar Hamze; Jeanne Wechsler; Betty Ives

(Ms. Francois, Ms. Gioello and Ms. Williamson arrived at 6:40 p.m.)

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The Committee approved the Agenda.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Committee approved the minutes of September 4, 2008. The workshop summary of October 2, 2008, was approved with 15-1.

COORDINATOR'S REPORT, Jean Darius

Mr. Darius announced that **Dr. Watts** will be on medical leave until December, 2008.

According to policy, the current membership of the Diversity Committee will expire on November 18, the date of the School Board's Organizational Meeting. At that time, **School Board Members** will announce the names of their Diversity Committee appointments for the next year. Letters to that effect will be going out to the Committee members. **Mr. Darius** thanked the Members for their hard work and dedication.

Mr. Darius referred to the draft matrix: *Staff Response to Questions Raised During the Diversity Committee Workshop*, which was included in the Members' packets. He said it should not be "construed as a formal response" to the report that **Mr. Foulkes** would bring forward at the meeting. He called upon **Dr. Harrison** for comment.

Dr. Harrison thanked the Members for their commitment and noted the Committee's work relative to the CCC Report, especially noting the systematic approach the Committee took in analyzing the data and formulating their comments and feedback. She said the matrix includes answers to some of the questions the Committee asked during its review of the CCC Report. **Dr. Harrison** said the District is trying to be responsive to the Committee's needs.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Foulkes said his formal Chair's Report would be forwarded to the Members after he makes his final presentation to the School Board on November 18. He said he enjoyed serving this year and acknowledged the Members' commitment to an "improved educational experience for every individual student." He emphasized "student" to remind everyone that their concern should be for K-Adult students in Broward County Schools.

The **Chair** then welcomed **Mr. Notter** and invited him to address the Committee.

PRESENTATION BY JAMES F. NOTTER, SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Notter said he is a "passionate believer" in a system of checks and balances. He said the Committee, as School Board appointees, acts as the checks and balances for the District in some of the most critical areas related to students. To demonstrate the importance of community involvement, one of the Strategic Plan's seven goals is to "Increase Involvement of Parents, Business and Community."

Mr. Notter noted that the CCC Report indicates Full Compliance is 100%. He stated that he has no problem using that as a benchmark. The Report shows that 5 out of 9 Conditions and 35 out of 47 Indicators have been met. However, there is still room for improvement. **Mr. Notter** said that, while the Broad Foundation recognized the District for *closing* the achievement gap, it is not the same as *having closed* the achievement gap. Broward is one of the top five districts recognized by the Broad Foundation for accelerating that process.

Mr. Notter views the Committee's Report as a report card on the District's progress. He said the Report indicates to him that there has been progress, but more accelerated progress is needed in order to reach 100%. The Executive Leadership Team will look at ways to accomplish that.

Mr. Notter is extremely pleased with the direction technology is going in. The District "believes that technology is the great equalizer for the education of our children, very simply from the standpoint of

24/7 access. Technology is the way to continue to accelerate learning for our children.” He said it is clear the state does not value public education. “We are funded 50th in the nation, and you have a tax burden of only 47th in the nation. Something’s real wrong with that measurement tool.” Imagine what could be done if Florida were funded at 30th in the nation. He said Arkansas, Mississippi, and Georgia are above 11th in funding education. It is through the efforts of Broward County Public Schools’ staff and the teachers, along with the support of the community, that we are able to achieve when the state doesn’t recognize public education financially.

The District has introduced digital classrooms in all Title I schools. High-poverty schools must be treated equally and have access to the technology. It is “today in the future.” **Mr. Notter** used the “salad” analogy and stated the District has 160+ countries with students speaking over 60 languages.

Mr. Notter noted that the District is “struggling” with some of the Conditions. There is an on-going issue with textbooks. As we move more into technology, there is the question of traditional “cardboard-bound books” and online versions of textbooks, which the District requires of all vendors. Parents are complaining of the heavy books their children have to carry to and from school. Because of the textbooks being online, it is important to close the digital divide. There has to be greater access to computers at home, in libraries, and in schools. **Mr. Notter** said we need to move away from paper and bound books as a measurement and look more at technology. The nation is moving away from paper. He would like to work with the Committee on the textbook/technology issue.

Conditions 5, 6, and 7 (Athletic & Extra-curricular Activities, Media Center, and Disciplinary Actions) are areas that still need to be worked on. **Dr. Harrison** and **Dr. Smiley** are looking at the training component of the Discipline Matrix so that it “could be, and is, equitably applied” to all children. As a by-product of the economic downturn, **Mr. Notter** has seen an increase in disciplinary actions at schools. All types of families are feeling the effects.

As to Media Centers, technology is an issue here, too. While there are many books on the Media Center’s shelves, students can access all kinds of books via the Internet. **Mr. Notter** talked about his visit to Larkdale Elementary with the Commissioner of Education. Larkdale was designated a low-performing school, but it was hard to believe that designation when they saw the students working on Promethium Boards, working intently on their own projects that were “driven by computers.” The Commissioner could not believe Larkdale was a low-performing school with such high-performing students.

Mr. Notter said there is a two-fold process. “It’s a process where the CCC Agreement reaches 100%. But, don’t ever let go, as community members, of a check and balance that has good measurements that are meaningful to the education of children.” The Agreement should live on forever, but should be tweaked to measure current conditions. The process should continue so that the District doesn’t ever step backwards.

At this point, the **Chair** opened the floor for discussion.

Ms. Price asked if the District is working to have the libraries in the schools and the county extend their hours of operation. **Mr. Notter** answered that he believes they should be. He is very frustrated by the fact that the technology is there and paid for, but the hours to use them in the schools are very

limited. It doesn't make good business sense. As for libraries, there is a line-up to use their computers. He said the community must fight to keep library hours from being cut because of budgetary concerns. **Ms. Price** said county libraries have a 30-minute time limit on computers and that is not enough time for students to work on projects. She said that, this school term, she is very happy with the responsiveness of the Board, the Superintendent, and the staff. In response to a comment by **Ms. Price** regarding Larkdale, **Mr. Notter** commented that "all students are deserving of a quality teacher in the classroom, a quality administrator as the leader of the school." The **Chair** suggested Larkdale be considered for a site visit.

Mr. Joseph thanked the District for being responsive and timely, and he thanked **Mr. Notter** for the improvements in the CCC Report. He said that in the past, when people talked about minority, they usually referred to minority as Black. Today, White is a minority. He asked, "How is the School Board ready to address this issue on a parity and equity level?" **Mr. Notter** responded that the Board is ready to handle that issue now. He referred to the District's Strategic Plan as an example. The Board has expanded the traditional five categories used by the federal government and further broke that down to include gender. The District is doing a better job of putting information down on paper for the community to look at. When the **Diversity Committee** sees that a benchmark is going in the wrong direction, members should advise the District right away. In addition, if a member learns of a program that is doing very well in another state, that information, too, should be shared with the District.

Mr. Douglas said he does not see the progress **Mr. Notter** sees. He said the CCC Agreement refers to school newsletters. The newsletter of today is the school's web page. **Mr. Douglas** said not all schools are equal in their newsletters. Some schools don't have web pages. Others, like Boyd Anderson, pay "an outsider" to do its web page. Schools like Flanagan have a beautiful web page. The same applies to elementary schools. He said some people are not doing what they are supposed to do. "If you don't take care of the basics, all that other stuff you're talking about, it's just going to be in the wind." He raised the issue of microcomputer technicians being surplus and teachers are filling those slots. **Mr. Notter** said he does not disagree with anything **Mr. Douglas** said. In fact, the Board charged the District with ensuring that all schools have a functional website. The District is working towards that goal. There are 260 schools. The software has been purchased and ETS is moving ahead with this. **Mr. Notter** said the Committee will be provided with information about the roll-out that is currently taking place in the District so that the Committee could continue to "inspect what we expect."

Ms. Gioello said there is a problem with some of the online textbooks. Some of them are missing glossaries, or that part of the book has not been placed online. She suggested the District check to ensure that glossaries are included online or are on CDs. **Ms. Gioello** would like to see the Digital Learning Environment as a magnet program with very specific criteria for students.

Mr. Fleischer said he would like to see technology replace paper textbooks. He suggested getting students laptops that can "wind themselves". He said they are relatively inexpensive and would save the District money in the long run because you wouldn't have to replace textbooks as we do now. **Mr. Notter** said he would like to get more information on this. **Mr. Fleischer** raised the issue of ADA compliance and said it is a big issue in schools, especially in locker rooms and bathrooms. Many areas of the schools are not wheelchair accessible. His final comment was that the District needs to improve

students' understanding of diversity. Many schools are not diverse and students in those schools do not know much about each other. At the Interfaith Symposium at FAU, it was brought out that Broward County is ranked highest in the state for hate crimes. He suggested a course in comparative religion might be a good way to increase mutual understanding.

Mr. Pedlar said he is tremendously pleased that **Mr. Notter** is so enthusiastic about the accomplishments and the progress, to date. He said **Mr. Notter** was correct when he said the District is not there, yet, and he doesn't believe any of the Members thought we were. The idea of 100% compliance is the objective. **Mr. Pedlar** said the Committee "can work with you on that. Certainly, we want to be your foot soldiers."

Ms. Yach said Fort Lauderdale High School Community School's library could be opened at night for students. They already have security, lighting, office staff, and open restrooms. She suggested all libraries at community schools could be made available at night for students with a media specialist present. She would like to see a "seamless flow" between K-12 and the community schools. A suggestion would be to offer a high school course in critical thinking where students would earn half a credit.

Mr. Foulkes thanked **Mr. Notter** for always making himself available to meet with him and for allowing an opportunity to bring all his concerns forward. He would like this relationship with the Diversity Committee to continue into the future.

Ms. Williamson referred to the comment that Florida doesn't value education and said she was very glad to hear the **Superintendent** say that. While the **School Board** will have to make some cuts, she urged the District to not make cuts affecting VPK and early education programs.

This ended the presentation by **Mr. Notter**. Prior to beginning the presentation by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Diversity Committee's Response to the Superintendent's Report, **Mr. Foulkes** stated, "This is the first year in four academic years that this Committee has had a formal written response to the Superintendent's CCC Report. We were always required to do it, and I've asked why haven't previous chairs done it, and I've been given a whole variety of responses. But, when I became Chair, I met with the CCC attorneys, all four of them, as well as other members of the CCC, and they said, 'Don't forget. You are supposed to write a formal response to the Superintendent's Report. What you have been doing in the past is okay, but it doesn't follow the letter of the decree, basically. So, I set out, as Chair, to follow through on that.'" **Mr. Foulkes** said there was no model and no example for them to follow. He thanked the Committee members for their input in September and thanked those who attended the October workshop. He acknowledged and thanked the Subcommittee: **Mr. Badran**, Chair; **Ms. Price**; and **Ms. Luster**. The Report is expected to be finalized at the final Subcommittee meeting on November 13.

PRESENTATION ON THE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE'S RESPONSE TO THE SUPERINTENDENT'S CCC REPORT

Mr. Badran walked the Committee through the draft of the Report, then opened the floor for input, discussion, and comments. He noted that there is a page for the Committee members to sign off on.

The Report indicates some of the limitations and strengths the Subcommittee encountered while drafting the document. **Mr. Badran** stated that, because the Diversity Committee is comprised entirely of volunteers, it was impossible for members to visit all the schools in the District. Site visits are essentially a sampling of what is happening in the District. On the other hand, the Committee is fortunate to have some of the original members of the CCC serving as members on the Diversity Committee. **Mr. Badran** commented that a more productive relationship now exists between the Diversity Committee, the School Board, and Staff.

(**Mr. Pedlar** left at 7:35 p.m.)

Mr. Badran concluded his presentation by stating that the Committee has come a long way toward reaching its goal, but still has a long way to go. They still see and hear many things that must be addressed by the District in order to be in full compliance. **Mr. Badran** said, "I cannot reiterate enough how much we need everybody's participation and everybody's input. I hope and pray that we are able to set the bar high enough this year that whomever sits on the Diversity Committee next year will find it equally as challenging to surpass the bar that we have set."

Following **Mr. Badran's** presentation, **Mr. Foulkes** announced that there are two more meetings scheduled to "perfect" the Report "to the best of our ability" before it is presented to the School Board and the public. He opened the floor for comments.

Mr. Gazzano said that it was stated that there would be a vote taken at the meeting and asked what that vote would be on. **Mr. Foulkes** responded that, at the bottom of the draft Report, on Page 9, it reads "DIVERSITY COMMITTEE ASSESSMENT/VOTE, School District IN Compliance, School District NOT in Compliance". He said the **Committee** "has to say whether it is in compliance or not." The matter was in reference to a motion to table until the October 2007 meeting, made by **Ms. Gioello**, regarding a vote on the Superintendent's 2006-2007 Report as to whether or not the District was in compliance. This motion was never voted on by the Committee and was unfinished business from last year. **Mr. Foulkes** added that the Committee would come back to that issue later in the meeting.

Mr. Fleischer noted a discrepancy between the number of compliant Indicators quoted by him and the number shown in the document, i.e. **Mr. Fleischer** is quoted as "39 out of 47" and the document stated "35 out of 47". **Mr. Badran** answered that they "went by the numbers they were given" and added that the Subcommittee will look into it. **Mr. Fleischer** then asked if *compliance* is actually "100% compliance" or is it "substantial compliance". **Mr. Foulkes** said compliance is defined at the beginning of the Report.

Mr. Rajner was concerned about the amount of time allotted to the members for discussion at the Workshop. He said it did not allow sufficient opportunity for explanation or clarification and, therefore, could be misleading. Thus, he asked that his comment, found on page 19 of the draft Report, be stricken from the record. The referenced statement is: *10/02/2008/pg.8: "Mr. Rajner concurred with Mr. Joseph and commented that he doesn't believe the Committee has the researcher capability to determine if the District is compliance (sic). The Committee does have the ability to have input, observations, and recommendations to help make things better."* He suggested the Subcommittee might want to replace the bullets with numbers, to enable easier referencing. **Mr. Rajner** added that his quote on page 30, under Condition 9, of the draft Report should also be

deleted. That statement is: *10/02/2008/pg.7: “Mr. Rajner: Is it correct that this information is optional for staff, that it is not required that it be provided to the employer? He said that if the number provided is not accurate, it should be noted for clarification purposes, something to indicate that the data is incomplete. (There was a great deal of background noise on the tape, rendering this portion inaudible.)”*

Ms. Gioello asked that the quote attributed to her on page 20, under Condition 2, be corrected from “Digital Learning Programs” to Digital Learning Environments.

Mr. Badran advised the Committee that portions of the document were “cut and pasted.” He said that, if any Members have questions or concerns about comments attributed to them, they should bring those concerns to the attention of the Subcommittee and they will be addressed.

(A motion to extend the meeting until 9:00 p.m. was passed 13-2.)

(**Mr. Douglas** left at 8:30 p.m.)

Mr. Badran emphasized the importance of Members’ input into the writing of the Report and invited any and all members to attend the remaining two Ad Hoc Subcommittee meetings.

Mr. Joseph suggested Key Observations and other Responses/Questions be included as Appendices instead of placing them as part of the Report. He further suggested page 18, Strengths should not be part of the Report. He said the Committee does not “have to establish any credibility... We’re not new anymore.”

Ms. Francois noted that responses from staff to questions and concerns raised by the Committee did not appear to be included in the Report. **Mr. Badran** stated that those responses would be included in the final draft of the Report. The final draft will be forwarded to Committee members and will be presented to the School Board by **Mr. Foulkes**. **Mr. Foulkes** added that the minutes of the Subcommittee meetings would be included in the document, as well.

(**Ms. Reese** left at 8:45 p.m.)

The **Chair** thanked the Committee for its “input into this process.” He offered a special expression of appreciation to **Mr. Badran** for his efforts in support of the Diversity Committee and all students throughout the Broward County school district, including Muslim students and their teachers.

MOTION by Mr. Fleischer, 2nd by Mr. Rajner: “I move that the Diversity Committee recognize the positive contributions of Jawhar ‘Joe’ Badran and recommend his reappointment by School Board Member Dr. Parks.”

After many positive comments and expressions of support, the question was called.

Motion passed 14-0.

(A motion to extend the meeting for 10 minutes passed.)

Mr. Gazzano referenced last year's and this year's CCC Reports and clarified the issues surrounding both. He said last year there was a vote taken by the Committee to move ahead with a suggestion by **Ms. Pam Brown**, then Chair of the Diversity Committee, and **Mr. Notter** to have a joint report from the District and the Committee. The second issue was the tabled motion made by **Ms. Gioello** to vote on whether or not the District was in compliance last year. That motion was never reintroduced and voted upon. The third issue is the vote on this year's CCC Report from the District.

Mr. Joseph asked if it is definite that the School Board has to "meet" at 100% for it to be in compliance. **Ms. Yach** answered that, when she asked the question of **Dr. Blasik**, the response was that, mathematically speaking, you are either in compliance or you are not in compliance. "It is 100% either/or."

MOTION by Mr. Joseph, 2nd by Mr. Fleischer: "To accept the District Report and to find the District not in compliance."

(A motion to extend the meeting for 10 minutes passed 13-1.)

Ms. Gioello asked that the Motion on the floor be divided. The request was accepted.

MOTION by Mr. Joseph, 2nd by Ms. Gioello: "To accept the District CCC Report for 2007-2008 as presented."

Motion passed 14-0.

MOTION by Mr. Joseph, 2nd by Mr. Badran: "Find the District not in compliance with the CCC conditions."

Motion passed 13-1.

MOTION by Mr. Badran, 2nd by Mr. Joseph: The diversity committee (sic) accept the Superintendent's Annual CCC Status Report for 2006-2007."

Motion passed 14-0.

MOTION by Mr. Badran, 2nd by Ms. Price: "That the Diversity Committee move to find that the District was Not in Compliance with the CCC Settlement Agreement for the 2006-2007 school year."

To a question by **Ms. Yach** as to whether or not this overturns a prior vote and if a vote had ever been taken on this before, the **Chair** advised that this motion does not overturn a prior vote. **Mr. Rajner** said he will vote against the Motion because he was not a member of the Committee at the time and could not vote with confidence on this item.

Motion passed 13-1.

The issue of a joint document from the **Diversity Committee** and the **Superintendent** was discussed. **Mr. Joseph** referred to **Mr. Notter's** comment about having a checks and balance system and suggested that, demonstrated by the Committee's Report, this system already exists.

(A motion to extend the meeting for 10 minutes passed.)

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION by Mr. Fleischer, 2nd by Mr. Rajner: “That the School Board include in its Middle School curriculum an elective course in Comparative Religion in order to educate students regarding different religions and to improve their understanding of people of different faiths.”

After discussion, the Motion passed 11-3.

The **Chair** reported that an employee of the District, received “hate mail” sent to her via the District’s pony system. The contents stated: “There’s no place for (N.....s) in the White House or the Crystal Palace.” The incident was reported through proper channels, but the author of the note has not been identified. This same employee recently received an anonymous letter, sent to her via the U.S. Postal System. Part of the staff of the department where the employee works received diversity training through **Dr. Mary Smith**, Lead Trainer, Diversity & Cultural Outreach Department. The remaining members of that department will receive the same training. **Mr. Foulkes** said that, unfortunately, **Dr. Smith** was not advised of the reason for that particular training and had no idea this had occurred until after the training took place, when the employee advised her of what had transpired. The **Chair** said this is an inclusion issue. **Mr. Joseph** requested that the Diversity Committee receive updates on this issue.

SUBCOMMITTEES

There were no reports.

DISTRICT COMMITTEES:

POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE, Roland Foulkes

See attached.

SITE SELECTION, Roland Foulkes

See attached.

TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE, Roland Foulkes

See attached.

Meeting ended 9:33 p.m.

**The next meeting is scheduled for December 4, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.,
in the Board Room at the KC Wright Administration Building.**

These minutes are summarized and were recorded at the November 6, 2008 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.