



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**2nd DRAFT**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE**  
**EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD**  
Thursday, September 19, 2024, 6:00 p.m.  
101 NE 3rd Ave  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

June 2024 - May 2025

<b>Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Chair Janet Gualtieri	P	2	0
Pamela Aiken	A	1	1
Heather Brinkworth	P	2	0
Kristina Dever	P	1	1
John Gillen	P	2	0
Erin Gohl	A	1	1
Juliet Gray-Williams	P	2	0
Charles Laster	A	0	2
Denia Perloff	A	0	2
Deborah Rosenbaum	P	1	1

**Also Attending**

Susan Leon, Chief Education Officer  
Rufus James, Director FXE Airport  
Stephanie Robbins, Experience Aviation

**I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum**

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chair Janet Gualtieri. Roll was called and it was determined a quorum was present.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Gualtieri asked the Board to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. Approval of the June 20, 2024 Minutes**

**Motion** was made by Ms. Rosenbaum, seconded by Mr. Gillen, to approve the June 20, 2024, minutes as presented. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

**IV. Old Business**

Chair Gualtieri requested an update from Ms. Leon on the item. Ms. Leon stated she had previously researched whether there could be co-Vice Chairs, and the answer had been no. However, since that time, the individual who had also wanted to be Vice Chair was

no longer a member of the EAB, effectively resolving the issue. She confirmed that the Board could now move forward with choosing and electing a Vice Chair.

Ms. Rosenbaum volunteered to be Vice Chair.

**Motion** was made by Ms. Brinkworth, seconded by Mr. Gillen, to nominate Deborah Rosenbaum for Vice Chair. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

## **V. New Business**

Ms. Leon provided an update on redefining schools. She explained the City Manager and Mayor had met with the Superintendent earlier in the summer for a discussion. Following that meeting, Ms. Leon, the City Manager, Mayor, and Dr. Wanza, Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer, held a conference call to explore ideas for repurposing schools. Ms. Leon clarified that there had been no discussion of school closures during that discussion.

Suggestions included partnering the Museum of Science with North Fork Elementary and restructuring Thurgood Marshall Elementary to add programming. The City Manager advocated for expanding childcare and preschool due to the city's growing need for affordable daycare. They also discussed funding challenges for preschool, as the school district doesn't receive funding for children under three.

Other ideas included partnering the Broward Center for Performing Arts with Dillard, and establishing police and fire academies at Stranahan, as raised by the Police and Fire Chiefs. Aviation partnerships and adult education in areas like public works were also mentioned. Ms. Leon reiterated that the discussions were solution-focused and aimed at keeping schools open.

Ms. Leon explained that Tuesday night's discussion focused on schools with low enrollment and capacity issues, such as Bennett, North Fork, Northside, Thurgood Marshall, and Walker Elementary. Bennett had 294 students with 248 open seats, and North Fork had 294 available seats.

Suggestions included dual enrollment programs, early learning initiatives, facility upgrades, and partnerships with local resources. A workshop was scheduled for October 8, followed by an October 15 meeting to finalize recommendations for school closures and report back to the community.

Ms. Leon noted that Tuesday's meeting covered enrollment issues more thoroughly than the previous night and asked Mrs. Brinkworth to share her perspective.

Ms. Brinkworth stated that five schools—Bennett, Northside, Walker, Thurgood Marshall, and North Fork—were discussed, each with representatives from the community, primarily staff. Solutions were mentioned, but the main takeaway was Dr.

Wanza's emphasis on the October 8 workshop and the October 15 formal resolution that would outline the timeline for reconfiguring or closing schools. Ms. Brinkworth expressed concern that there seemed to be no time for community feedback before final decisions, leading to a sense that the process was being rushed.

She noted the lack of discussion regarding cost savings from selling property or closing schools, despite the mention of declining enrollment. Ms. Brinkworth highlighted the need for the school board to focus on what they're trying to achieve and raised concerns about the sale of properties like North Fork, which developers are interested in due to its location. She emphasized that selling these properties could mean the city would lose the chance to build schools in these communities again, impacting future generations.

Ms. Brinkworth also pointed out the importance of looking at enrollment trends over the past 10 years and understanding where students are going, particularly in cities where charter schools are pulling students away. She stressed the community's desire for neighborhood schools and expressed opposition to developers acquiring property intended for schools, as these locations are critical for the future of the city's educational needs.

Discussion ensued about various schools, potential closures, timeline, and role of the advisory board.

Mr. Gillen expressed concern about the future use of the property after a school closure.

Ms. Brinkworth emphasized the need to evaluate the cost savings from proposed school closures before forming an opinion. She noted that family literacy and early learning were important community priorities discussed during the Tuesday meeting. She suggested the EAB communicate to the Commission that they should oppose selling school properties in Fort Lauderdale to preserve future neighborhood schools. Ms. Brinkworth also urged the Commission to support community conversations on aligning school facilities with community needs and to ask the school board to adjust its timeline accordingly.

The Board discussed early childhood education and family literacy. While it may not be part of their core mission, several members emphasized that without addressing early learning, the district will struggle to achieve long-term proficiency goals. Questions were raised about the school board's definition of its core mission and whether funding limitations were driving their decisions.

There was also discussion about Gulfstream Early Learning Academy in Hollywood and the suggestion of organizing a field trip to better understand the model. The Board discussed the importance of holding the school board accountable to prevent a repeat of such situations.

The Board discussed concerns about the potential closure of schools and the loss of community resources. Ms. Brinkworth volunteered to draft a statement to present to the Commission, advising them to oppose selling any school properties in Fort Lauderdale. The Board expressed frustration over previous promises that were not fulfilled after school closures, emphasizing the need for the Commission to prevent such issues from recurring.

Ms. Brinkworth left the room to draft the statement.

The Board moved on to the scholarship discussion topic. Ms. Leon introduced Executive Airport (FXE) and Airport Manager Rufus James.

Mr. James shared his personal background, emphasizing the importance of education. He discussed his passion for aviation and his career journey, including his efforts to support aviation education in Fort Lauderdale. Mr. James highlighted the need to introduce more students, including those in middle and elementary schools, to aviation careers beyond just pilots and air traffic controllers.

He mentioned the ongoing avionics program at Atlantic Technical High School and the plans to establish a scholarship program, potentially raising funds during the annual air show. Mr. James also referenced a partnership with Barrington Irving's Flying Classroom, which provides technical training and life skills to students, ensuring they are well-prepared for aviation careers.

Ms. Stephanie Robbins from Experience Aviation expressed her gratitude on behalf of the team. She highlighted their commitment to providing opportunities for underserved communities and outlined the three entities under Barrington's leadership: Experience Aviation, the Flying Classroom (focused on unique educational opportunities and teacher development), and the Barrington Irving Technical Training School (focused on workforce development).

Ms. Robbins also mentioned their longstanding partnership with the City of Fort Lauderdale, including annual STEM events, and shared plans for an upcoming STEM fest in the spring. She concluded by showing short videos related to their work.

The Board discussed the potential scholarship program in collaboration with Experience Aviation. Ms. Robbins emphasized the importance of family engagement and supporting underserved communities through educational and workforce development opportunities. The scholarship would be specifically for aviation-minded students, as per FAA guidelines, with plans to start with two scholarships worth approximately \$2,500 each, targeting students at Broward College.

They also discussed involving students who have completed aviation programs in the selection process to ensure candidates share the same passion. The program aims

to expand with time, and there was discussion about potential partnerships with companies to enhance the educational and workforce opportunities available through the scholarship.

A question was raised regarding whether the scholarship would be limited to Fort Lauderdale residents. Ms. Robbins confirmed that the focus would start with Fort Lauderdale to ensure local accountability. She added that their aviation programs, like Barrington Irving's, are expanding nationwide, but Fort Lauderdale remains a key focus.

Ms. Robbins also shared a story about a North Lauderdale teacher, Ms. Williams, who played a pivotal role in Barrington's journey and remains involved in their initiatives. She emphasized that the programs are expanding across Broward and nationally, with organizations like the National Business Aviation Association recognizing the need for such programs.

The discussion included the importance of community and family engagement, as demonstrated by the annual STEM fest, which will take place in March 2025.

The Board discussed the scholarship criteria and a motion.

**Motion** was made by Ms. Rosenbaum, seconded by Ms. Brinkworth, to create two (2) scholarships provided by FXE and Experience Aviation, for Fort Lauderdale high school students, to be awarded in 2025. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Leon shared updates from Mr. Arana, who was unable to attend. The updates included information about the intersection near Fort Lauderdale High School. While a four-way stop was not deemed necessary, several improvements would be made, such as new crosswalks and markings, with work expected to be completed within three weeks. School zone flashers will be installed by Broward County within two years.

Ms. Brinkworth also relayed concerns about unsafe drop-off practices at the school and requested increased police presence to ensure student safety, especially during morning drop-offs

Ms. Leon clarified the meeting between the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and the Superintendent. The discussion involved the possibility of establishing a police and fire academy at Stranahan High School. While Ms. Leon noted that a fire academy is feasible, she mentioned that a police academy might be more challenging due to age requirements.

The Board discussed Ms. Brinkworth's draft recommendations.

*In light of Broward County Public School's commitment to educate all students to reach their highest potential, the City of Fort Lauderdale Education Advisory Board respectfully puts forth the following as a recommendation to the Commission:*

*With regard to the Broward County School Board's redefining school's initiative, we request that the Commission advocate for the following:*

- *City of Fort Lauderdale school sites should not be sold to developers. If a school campus is slated for closure, the land shall be retained by the School Board to preserve the opportunity for neighborhood schools in the future.*
- *Community outreach and engagement is critical and must occur with individual schools/neighborhoods prior to the announcement of a plan to redesign, repurpose, or close any specific schools in the city.*
- *Family literacy and early childhood learning centers are an identified need for the city and should be considered in any redesign plan for city schools.*

*Thank you for your consideration of this request*

**Motion** was made by Ms. Rosenbaum, seconded by Ms. Gualtieri, to send the recommendation to the City Commission as soon as possible. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

## **VI. Chief Education Officer Update**

Ms. Leon shared updates on a partnership project at Westwood Heights and Northport schools, where volunteers will read books tied to schoolyard gardening projects. The curriculum and books will be provided by Broward County Public Schools, with students receiving the books afterward. On October 26, National Day of Service, the Christian Life Center and Fort Lauderdale Gardening Club will build garden beds at the schools, with the help of a Master Gardener.

Ms. Leon also provided updates on the Summer Enrichment Program, noting a 75% improvement in student skills using the EDMentum program. Despite the program ending, some students may continue using it during a grace period.

Additionally, she is working to reestablish William Dandy Middle School's pre-med magnet partnership, which was disrupted by COVID-19, by connecting them with the City of Fort Lauderdale Wellness Center for guest speakers and other resources.

## **VII. Member Discussion**

There was a brief discussion about mentorship and work-study programs for high school students, with local businesses expressing interest. Ms. Leon mentioned an

upcoming meeting with Broward County Public Schools about their "Career Champions" program, which could be expanded in partnership with the city. She suggested connecting interested businesses or students with her for collaboration.

### **VIII. Closing**

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2024.

[Minutes prepared by T. Baclawski, Prototype, Inc.]