



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD
Thursday, November 21, 2024,
6:00 p.m. 101 NE 3rd Ave
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311**

June 2024 - May 2025

| Members | Attendance | Present | Absent |
|--|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Chair Janet Gualtieri | P | 5 | 0 |
| Pamela Aiken | A | 2 | 3 |
| Heather Brinkworth (arrived 6:18 p.m.) | P | 5 | 0 |
| Kristina Dever | P | 3 | 2 |
| John Gillen | A | 3 | 2 |
| Erin Gohl | P | 4 | 1 |
| Juliet Gray-Williams | P | 4 | 1 |
| Denia Perloff (departed 7:04 p.m.) | P | 3 | 2 |
| Deborah Rosenbaum | P | 4 | 1 |

Also Attending

Susan Leon, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Leonardi, BCPS Board Member
Dr. Valerie Wanza, BCPS
Armando Arana, BCPS
Eric Chisem, BCPS
John Sullivan, BCPS
Kelly Raven, District 3

I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 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 October 17, 2024 Minutes

Motion was made by Vice Chair Rosenbaum, seconded by Ms. Gohl, to approve the October 17, 2024 minutes as presented. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

IV. Old Business

None.

V. New Business

- **Redefining Schools Update**

BCPS Board Member Ms. Sarah Leonardi commended the Education Advisory Board for being very engaged and expressed appreciation for their work in public education.

Mr. Eric Chisem, Director of Strategic Partnerships for BCPS, provided an overview of the calendar development process and presented the three options being considered for the 2025-2026 school year. Each calendar option would begin on August 11, 2025; include October 20, 2025 as a day off; and Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring breaks would be the same on each calendar. Mr. Chisem highlighted the differences between each calendar and noted that historically, BCPS receives 35,000 to 50,000 survey responses from the community.

Mr. Chisem clarified that there are 180 days in the school year as determined by the number of hours mandated by the State; in the event hours are lost due to severe weather days, BCPS would adjust early release days before considering an extended schedule. Bell schedules and transportation were also discussed.

Ms. Gohl emphasized the importance of incorporating as much of the feedback from the community surveys as possible so stakeholders feel their voices are being heard by the School Board, and shared she was pleased to learn there would be a second survey this year. Chair Gualtieri and Ms. Dever stated they had heard similar feedback.

Ms. Leonardo highlighted that BCPS would be having multiple workshops and encouraged EAB members to attend the December 10, 2024 workshop; she added that this year has been the most extensive for collecting feedback through workshops and surveys. Mr. Chisem clarified that the messaging being developed will convey that input from the community were incorporated in the options being offered. Ms. Leonardi stated that the School Board will vote on the recommendations on December 17, 2024. Chair Gualtieri requested that the results be made available in time for the next EAB meeting on December 19, 2024 so they could be published.

Mr. Chisem stated that the School Board had identified the teachers and other candidates for the Caliber Awards on February 7, 2025.

Ms. Dever inquired whether the BCPS could share data collected from the recent survey on the cell phone policy. Ms. Leonardi stated that on November 6, 2024, the School Board provided direction to see the policy through the end of school year at which time the policy would be re-evaluated. Ms. Dever suggested that the State policy be followed instead of going 'bell to bell,' especially for middle and high school students. Ms. Leonardi acknowledged she had received similar feedback from Ms. Gohl.

Mr. Arana agreed to share the cell phone survey data digitally, disaggregated by elementary, middle school and high school respondents. Ms. Gohl recommended that the

results also be shared broadly with the community. Ms. Brinkworth stated it is important to provide tools and training around the policy, particularly at the middle school level. Ms. Perloff agreed and asked that a developmentally appropriate approach be considered.

Ms. Dever expressed concern with the concept of silent lunches at a time that students are being asked to re-engage and suggested that Broward Schools recommend strategies for schools to help them manage the policy. Additional discussion ensued on table assignments and other logistics around school lunches.

Dr. Valerie Wanza, BCPS Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer, stated that she is charged with the responsibility of redefining schools, and developing strategies to work with the community to ensure that BCPS are a first choice for families. She highlighted the re-occurring themes that came out of recent community research.

Dr. Wanza then provided an overview of programmatic concepts under consideration for potential facility closures and partial closures, and noted it would involve the relocation of 500-600 staff members; it was determined that schools would be best served by moving teachers and other education professionals into schools from operation buildings. Examples of ideas brought forward by some municipalities and other entities to expand facility programming were shared; this included science and health/wellness magnets; a sports academy; entrepreneur and hospitality, as well as management programs. Dr. Wanza also discussed boundary changes and noted there would be ongoing efforts to adapt to the programmatic needs of communities.

Vice Chair Rosenbaum strongly suggested that swimming programs be included in the sports academy concept. Discussion ensued on the importance of swimming as part of the Broward County curriculum, particularly at schools that already have a pool; funding options and aquatic sports such as water polo were also discussed.

Ms. Dever expressed concern over the potential sale of schools in the district. Dr. Wanza stated that feedback from eight recent community meetings indicated it is a high priority to keep all the property under BCPS; there was no interest in working with developers. She added that direction from the School Board was to look at programmatic options, work with the community and investigate alternate uses in partnership with entities such as the Broward Sheriff's Office and PAL programs; she provided additional examples and clarified that the five locations being considered for sale are not schools.

Ms. Gohl expressed appreciation for Ms. Leonardi and Dr. Wanza being champions of Fort Lauderdale schools and communities, and for the shift from conversations around school closures to programmatic changes.

Discussions continued on other program options. Ms. Leonardi stated that the space needed for trade programs would be prioritized. Dr. Wanza clarified that high quality early learning options are also being evaluated and they are considering Thurgood Marshall as part of the traditional K5.

Ms. Brinkworth stated that City of Fort Lauderdale desperately needs a campus that offers ABE and GED; workforce education; Parent and Child Together Time; Early Head Start, and Head Start programs in the heart of the City and cited an economic impact study that was based on 2,000 adult learners. Dr. Wanza stated that conversations with communities are necessary due to some concerns around bringing adults into elementary schools; she noted that executive branch pathways to support that programming would have to be built; dual language, innovative health programs, and gifted academies were also discussed. Dr. Wanza stated that they need to think about this regionally to develop contiguous feeder patterns, and consider opportunities in the western portion of the County as well.

Ms. Leon shared that the EAB just awarded two scholarships to future aviators and highlighted an aviation program at FXE Airport in partnership with the Barrington Irving Technical School. Discussion followed on the need to protect other aviation programs; Ms. Leonardi agreed.

Ms. Brinkworth highlighted that there is no culinary or fashion design offered in Fort Lauderdale.

Ms. Gohl recommended that guidance from the School Board be provided so parents can better understand choice options; window and process as she had observed a lot of confusion at a recent Fifth grade parent event. Dr. Wanza suggested a parent university be held and noted that an all-district expo to showcase the programs would be held on January 13, 2025.

Ms. Leonardi shared that BCPS was recently recognized as an A school district for the first time in over 10 years; there were no D or F schools and she highlighted the Fort Lauderdale schools that had shown good progress.

- **BCPS Government Affairs Update**

Mr. Arana provided a recap of key issues and briefed the Board on upcoming events. Highlights included a round table discussion on redefining schools between the offices of the Mayor and City Manager on October 30, 2024; the City employee volunteer initiative program would be rolled out in a few months.

There will be conversations with the Supervisor of Elections around the use of 93 of the 147 BCPS schools which served as precincts in the recent elections.

The BCPS Department of Legislative Affairs is working to identify priorities for the 2025 State advocacy session. The Rally the Tally program was renamed 'BCPS Capital Days' and all Broward high schools will be represented. The first orientation was held for the 47 students who will have the opportunity to be involved in advocacy for the legislative priorities on March 18-20, 2025.

December 2024 events will include a Special School Board meeting and workshop on December 10; the Hall of Fame Breakfast on December 13, and regular School Board meeting on December 17.

VI. Chief Education Officer Update

Ms. Leon noted that Mr. Chuck Lester had resigned from the Board.

The park bond update will be provided at the December 19, 2024 meeting.

The new volunteer program would fill the gap left by the discontinuation of the KAPOW program.

Members were reminded that the Board is in a position to move the concept of a City Scholarship forward by making a recommendation to the City Commission so staff can be directed accordingly.

Five of the nine students nominated in the Dillard school zone were recognized at the last Commission meeting the week prior. Fort Lauderdale students will be recognized at the January meeting.

The Teacher of the Year Awards will be held on February 4, 2025.

Ms. Leon noted that while the Board had previously discussed City employee volunteering on November 29, 2023, the issue had not been communicated to the Commission. Chair Gualteri requested that the issue be added to the next agenda as an action item.

VII. Member Discussion

There was no additional discussion.

VIII. Closing

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for December 19, 2024.