



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD
Thursday, August 21, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
101 NE 3rd Ave
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311**

June 2025 - May 2026

Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Chair Janet Gualtieri	P	1	
Pamela Aiken	A		1
Heather Brinkworth	A		1
Kristina Dever	P	1	
John Gillen	P	1	
Erin Gohl	P	1	
Juliet Gray-Williams	P	1	
Deborah Rosenbaum, Vice Chair	A		1
Kristin LaFleur	P	1	
Lacresha Cooper (arrived at 6:05 p.m.)	P	1	
Cary Tabora	A		1
Pamela Vance	P	1	
VACANT			

Also Attending

Susan Leon, Chief Education Officer
Nicole Day, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc

Call to Order and Determination of Quorum

Roll was called and it was determined a quorum was present. The meeting began at 6:03 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Approval of the May 15, 2025 Minutes

Motion made by John Gillen, seconded by Kristin LaFleur, to approve the May 15, 2025. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Old Business

- **Broward Education Foundation Scholarship Update**

Ms. Leon reported challenges with awarding scholarships and noted that she had several questions for the Board. The first concerned whether an exception could be made if only two qualified applicants exist and one is not a Fort Lauderdale resident. The Board agreed the Fort Lauderdale resident should receive the scholarship, but discussion followed on whether the Sunrise student should also be considered to ensure the funds are utilized.

While members, including Ms. Dever and Ms. Gohl, expressed support for awarding scholarships to qualified students even outside the City, others such as Chair Gualtieri and Mr. Gillen voiced concern about setting a precedent and fairness for future applicants. Overall, the Board emphasized prioritizing Fort Lauderdale students but remained open to limited exceptions when necessary to ensure scholarships are awarded.

Motion made by Ms. Gray-Williams, seconded by Ms. Dever, to accept the second applicants' credentials that are outside of boundary to receive the scholarship due to no other recipients. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

The second question Ms. Leon raised was whether, in cases where a school does not have two qualified applicants, could there be the option to award an additional scholarship to the school with the highest number of qualified applicants. For example, if School A has only one qualified applicant and School B has four, could the additional scholarship be shifted to School B?

Motion made by Ms. Gohl, seconded by Mr. Gillen, that if one school only has one candidate that the school with the most qualified candidates can add a third scholarship. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Leon asked whether scholarships should still be awarded if a school has two qualified applicants but neither is a Fort Lauderdale resident. Board members discussed whether this situation applied to alternative schools, magnet programs, or regular high schools. Some, including Ms. Gohl, stressed prioritizing Fort Lauderdale residents, while others, such as Ms. Dever, supported awarding to non-residents if no Fort Lauderdale students had applied despite efforts to recruit them. Ms. Leon proposed that if the applicants are from an alternative school, scholarships should be honored and awarded, but if from a regular high school, staff should first verify whether other qualified Fort Lauderdale candidates exist; only if none are found should non-residents be considered.

Motion made by Ms. Gohl, seconded by Ms. Dever, to allow scholarships in the current cycle to be awarded to qualified applicants when no Fort Lauderdale residents from that school have applied. In a roll call vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Ms. Leon noted that this was not a question but an update: beginning in October, the scholarship process will be completed earlier and not carry over into the summer. She explained that while award notifications have been sent, some students have not accepted, others have changed plans to attend out-of-state schools, and some awards remain in flux. Mr. Gillen asked if schools could lose scholarships under these circumstances and suggested creating a waitlist to avoid unused funds. Mr. Gualteri asked what happens to unspent funds, and Ms. Leon confirmed they can be rolled over to the next year. Members discussed how colleges handle awards, noting funds are deposited directly into student accounts, and Ms. Vance added that public schools typically issue updated award letters if changes occur. Questions were also raised about deadlines, with Ms. Leon stating she would confirm details in her upcoming meeting but emphasized that starting in October will allow the process to conclude earlier and more efficiently.

Chair Gualteri asked if the Board had reconsidered changing meeting dates from the last meeting. Ms. Leon reviewed the calendar and noted conflicts with other advisory boards using the same room, explaining that finding an alternative location would be difficult. Board members discussed their availability, but there was consensus to keep the meeting dates as currently scheduled. Ms. Leon also clarified attendance requirements: the meeting year begins June 1, and the Board must hold 10 meetings per calendar year. If a member misses three consecutive meetings, or more than three non-consecutive meetings, they are automatically removed. Ms. Leon will confirm whether cancellations versus a lack of quorum count toward these attendance rules.

New Business

Chair Gualtieri asked for an update on the City's matching funds. Ms. Leon explained that in 2019, the City of Fort Lauderdale initiated a park bond to upgrade school and community parks, but COVID delayed the work and increased costs. Now that projects have resumed, \$1.7 million remains allocated for Sunrise Middle School, and the City requested the school board to match those funds. At the recent board meeting, community members, students, and staff spoke in support, and the matching funds were approved, with only one dissenting vote from Mr. Savera, who is from out west. Ms. Gohl highlighted that the funds will support a sports program integrated into academics, with potential partnerships with local professional sports teams for mentoring opportunities. Ms. Leon added that the district will manage the funds and aims to complete the upgrades, which include gym renovations and locker rooms, within the next year. Board members expressed excitement about the initiative and its benefits to students.

Chief Education Office Update

- **Redefining Schools Update**

Ms. Leon reported that at a recent school board workshop, there was strong support from businesses and community partners for proposals related to school facilities, including the potential creation of a Police and Fire Training Center at the Pine Ridge Education Center site. The City of Fort Lauderdale, along with the Police and Fire Chiefs, has met with the superintendent and board members several times to explore leasing the property, though the proposal is still in early stages and has not yet been presented to the City Commission. Leon emphasized that commission resolutions and formal statements of support are influential, citing a prior City Commission resolution opposing the sale of district property. Board members discussed the possibility of integrating industry certifications, such as EMT training, into local schools, with Leon noting that the departments are eager to involve students and foster community engagement. Stranahan High was mentioned as a potential site, but Leon clarified that its historic designation and potential community pushback make it less feasible than Pine Ridge. She also shared that the superintendent has proposed consolidating under-enrolled schools into a larger modern facility in the Walker/North Fork area, while Junior Achievement has suggested replacing North Fork Elementary with a workforce development center. Overall, the workshop was described as positive and optimistic, though the proposals remain preliminary with no formal actions yet taken.

Member Discussion

None.

Guest Benjamin Palmer from Dream Defenders discussed his organization's focus on Black feminism, educational freedom, and political engagement, noting they have about 200 members in Miami and Broward. He asked about the Board's operations and whether information reaches the community effectively. Ms. Gray-Williams observed that community engagement has improved in recent years. Chair Gualtieri and Ms. Leon explained that formal questions can be submitted via email to be placed on a future agenda for discussion. Benjamin concluded, noting he had other commitments.

Dr. Cooper introduced herself as the Supervisor of College and Career Programs, emphasizing her commitment to advocating for students within the system to the best of her ability. A Florida native, she attended schools in Fort Lauderdale before earning her degree from FSU and returned to contribute to her community.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2025.

[Minutes prepared by J. Burnham, Prototype, Inc.]