



Broward County Public Schools
Parent/Community Involvement Task Force
(PCITF)
Meeting Minutes

McFATTER TECHNICAL COLLEGE

BISTRO

APRIL 20, 2015 / 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Members: Mary Fertig (Chair), Debbie Aleman, Natalie Beasley, Janet Bravo, Ana Corujo, Sheri Johnson, Esther Mizell, Lew Naylor, Laurie Rich Levinson

Guests: Andrea Cavanagh (Parent Engagement subcommittee), Scott Jarvis (Office of Service Quality), Faye Kravitz (Student Services), Wanda Robinson (Office of Parent Engagement)

- **Call to Order**

Ms. Fertig called the meeting to order.

- **Welcome & Introductions**

Each attendee introduced herself/himself.

- **Approval of Minutes**

The meeting minutes from March 18, 2015 were unanimously approved.

- **Presentation: Children & Mental Health Issues – Faye Kravitz, LCSW**

Ms. Kravitz, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), is the District Coordinator for Student Services. She announced a resolution for children's mental health awareness will be presented to the Board on May 5, 2015.

Her presentation, "Typical or Troubled," pertained to mental health and children. Important points included:

- Mental health still has a stigma attached. There is no shame for physical ailments, but for many people, there is still shame for mental health issues.
- Mental health professionals in the school can save lives.
- Her department is involved with the District's Promise program (Preventing Recidivism through Opportunities, Mentoring, Interventions, Support & Education), which helps students who are suspended and would have otherwise been arrested for a misdemeanor. In addition, the program serves students who have committed infractions related to bullying and harassment.

Ms. Rich Levinson added: The program decreases recidivism and prevents students from being arrested. It is an intervention to keep them in school.

- The presentation included statistics on suicide rates and various services available at schools and in the community.
- As a school district, we need to intervene early and at all times when there are requests related to mental health. We should not wait until a situation is at a crisis level or to the point when children are suicidal. Early intervention is a best practice strategy.

Ms. Mizell stated it is difficult to help minority children with mental health issues if they do not express the issue. Ms. Kravitz noted school staff should be trained to recognize the signs of social/emotional distress and offer interventions and support.

Ms. Bravo said some families may not want help. Ms. Kravitz replied such families cannot be forced unless lethality is involved (thoughts, intent, or plan to harm self or others).

Ms. Johnson stated families and community may have to play a greater role in addressing this issue; some schools are under-staffed and do not have enough social workers. Schools should open their doors to community partnerships. Ms. Kravitz added, while the District has community partnerships with mental health provider agencies, their resources and funding, too, have been scaled back in recent years.

Ms. Fertig indicated parents may find it difficult to talk about certain sensitive issues, and it would be helpful if they had a website to go to for answers and resources.

Mr. Jarvis suggested reaching out to different groups (advisory boards, etc.). Ms. Aleman added to include the PTA.

Mr. Naylor recommended finding the correct audience to impart the information. We can create a document to direct people to where to get help on this issue.

Ms. Kravitz announced “mental health/psychological first aid” is coming to our District. She encouraged parents to be persistent and advocate for their children.

Because the presentation from tonight’s meeting is copyright-protected, Mr. Sussman (Licensed Mental Health Counselor & Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist) volunteered to collaborate with Ms. Kravitz to develop their own materials on suicide prevention for children and mental health services, to post on the District’s website and distribute.

Those who have questions, suggestions or wish to have further conversations and/or trainings about children's mental health issues may email Ms. Kravitz: faye.kravitz@browardschools.com. Advisory representatives: please distribute to your groups.

➤ **Parent Engagement Conference – April 11, 2015**

Feedback from Principals:

Prior to tonight’s meeting, Christine Semisch, Director, Office of School Performance & Accountability, sent feedback from principals who attended the conference to Mary Fertig and Todd Sussman. At the meeting, Mr. Sussman shared the feedback as follows:

- I really enjoyed the keynote speaker, and she shared some great ideas for parent engagement. She listened first to the principal concerns and then addressed them. Some interesting ideas to learn more about:
 - Family Learning Walks - visits to school and walking through classes
 - Home visits
 - Academic Parent Teacher Teams
 - Student led conferences (I want these to be part of our Academy) -- we used to do these

I am glad that I was able to be a part of this event.

- Only one procedural item was mentioned to me by a parent I did not know...she said that she wished that the event had started at 8:30 a.m. as stated in the advertisement. She got there earlier than 8:30 and had to wait until after nine until things got started.
- Good information, though if it was a "date firm" event from the onset of the school year, probably would have been better attended. Perhaps too, might be combined with September PTA parent training to make it a total one day event?

Also, with its proximity so close to FSA, not sure if the timing was right. Personally, we had a Saturday Camp at the same time and some wanting to attend had to come very late.

Thank you for feedback opportunity!

- I thought the speaker sparked some interesting conversations and inspired me to have a "marketing meeting" with my leadership team. I liked the conversations about ways to engage parents in the school.
- I thought the principal session was good. I will be purchasing the books referenced in the PowerPoint.

Task Force members and guests also shared their feedback:

Planning:

- Ms. Fertig: Put the event on the District calendar, early. The registration crew did a great job. 266 people attended.

Technology workshop:

- Ms. Aleman: The technology workshop run by the kids was excellent. Ms. Fertig added: They should present at a board meeting.
- Ms. Bravo: Next time, have Tech 101 (how to get on Twitter) and Tech 102 (how to use Twitter once you are there) workshops.
- Ms. Fertig: A hands-on tech workshop is needed for parents -- how to use Pinnacle and Virtual Counselor.
- Ms. Johnson: The District app may not address what is going on at the school. Mr. Jarvis replied: The app needs to be explained to parents. If you change the set-up, you can access different schools and their specific events.

Survey:

- Ms. Beasley: Send a post-survey out to registrants -- one for non-profits; one for attendees. Keep it less than 10 questions. Ms. Beasley offered to develop the survey.

- Ms. Fertig: In the survey, ask what workshops they want for the next conference.
- Ms. Bravo: In the survey, ask if the workshops were too long or too short – to help mold the next conference. Was Saturday a good day? Did it start too early?
- Mr. Naylor: Use Survey Monkey.
- Mr. Jarvis offered to send the surveys out from his department (Office of Service Quality).

Keynote speaker (Dione Christy, PhD):

- Ms. Bravo said she loved everything the speaker had to say, and she also wondered how home visits will be perceived by teachers and principals. She said the speaker was phenomenal and was spot on with her recommendations.
- Ms. Fertig stated home visits (from teachers) seem to be coming into vogue again.
- Ms. Robinson indicated Superintendent Robert Runcie asked her department (Office of Parent Engagement) to add the keynote speaker's ideas to their to-do list.

- **New Business**

Ms. Corujo discussed ways to create a Facebook presence for the Task Force to impart information for people who may not go to a website. Target date: Fall 2015.

Mr. Sussman offered to send the District's Social Media Use Guidelines to all members and guests as a foundation, to align to District practices. (*Update:* Emailed to all on April 22, 2015.)

- **Next Meeting**

Monday, June 8, 2015...at McFatter's Bistro, 6:00 p.m.

On the agenda:

- Select event dates for the 2015-2016 calendar
- Discuss the next Parent Engagement Conference
- Discuss social media and communications
- Update from the Forums Subcommittee
- Update on Task Force recommendations

- **Adjournment**

Ms. Fertig adjourned the meeting.