

School Community Relations Committee (SCRC) Meeting

Minutes

Date: February 27, 2026

Time: 8:30 AM

Location: Coral Gables- Police and Fire Building – 2151 Salzedo Street

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. ROLL CALL

- Winnie Chang
- Cecilia Slesnick- arrived late
- Sandy Dimitris- *absent -excused*
- Andres Gomez – *no longer in board- he stepped down*
- Joshua Goodman -arrived late
- Mary Palacio- attended via Zoom
- Sam Joseph
- Miguel Vias – arrived late

C. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – January 23, 2026

January 23, 2026 minutes were approved by all Board Members

- Correction was made regarding Ponce school; it's a B school not a C school

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Public Comments

E. NEW BUSINESS

E.1 Miami-Dade County Public Schools Update (Facilitated by Mari Tere Rojas, School Board Chair)

Marlene is in attendance via Zoom on behalf of Chair Rojas. Items below were proffered by Chair Rojas.

- B-3 Recognized the 100th anniversary of Silver Bluff Elementary School, celebrating a century of service and impact within the community.
- H-1 Honoring the legacy of the late Dr. Rosa Castro-Feinberg, former school board member and principled leader who dedicated her life to justice, dignity, and educational excellence for all.

- H2- Recognizing the wonderful Mr. Roberto Rabelo, a civics teacher at South Miami Middle School, as Miami-Dade County Public School 2027 Teacher of the Year in recognition of his exceptional commitment to student and civics education.
- H-3 Directing the superintendent of schools to implement a parental and student human trafficking awareness campaign in collaboration with Miami-Dade's State's Attorney's Office aligned with Miami-Dade County's National and International scheduled events and related ancillary activities in 2026 and provide a report to the board by March 11, 2026.
- H-4 Regarding the foundational factor in building proficiency in reading and mathematics related to regular student school attendance. This item directs the superintendent to:
 1. Conduct a thorough needs assessment of current student school attendance data. Implementation procedures and current district and school actions to ensure that students attend school on a regular basis.
 2. Assess school sites daily student attendance and further assess whether there is a correlation between attendance and the reading and math proficiency levels of schools.
 3. Review school board policy 5200, the attendance, and make recommendations for amendments specifically in the areas of parent and student responsibilities and the enforcement of attendance laws.
 4. Consider developing a clear, actionable, district-wide attendance improvement plan to be implemented at the beginning of the 26-27 school year.
 5. Consider including measurable student attendant goals and benchmarks to increase daily attendance within a defined time framework in the next Miami-Dade County Public Schools Strategic Plan.
 6. Provide a report to the Board at the June 10, 2026 Personnel Student School Community Support Committee meeting.
- H-5 Endorsing March 2 as Read Across America Day, to be celebrated in all Miami-Dade County Public Schools.
- H-12 State of Florida Auditor General Audit findings. This proposed action directs superintendent to submit to the board by June 3, and update of corrective actions finalized, including a review and a revision of applicable school board policies and procedures in response to the audit findings of the State of Florida Auditor General.

- Pursuant to H-5, (Read Across America) Chairperson Chang asked that when Chair Rojas has events planned within the city schools, alert SCRC so that this board can come out, support her efforts, and be part of whatever plans she may have.
- Regarding H-2 Congratulates Chair Rojas, all the leaders and of course Mr. Rabelo. Shared with Board members aspects of Mr. Rabelo's teaching platform are all about. Further mentioned she would like to invite him to one of the SCRC's meetings.

Board Member Goodmand provided comments: March 4 – budget workshop (important to know what resources are available) and March 13- Florida Legislative Session ends. It would be beneficial to obtain a briefing. Organizing support for Little Carver due to several budget cuts that have impacted school resources. Currently collecting donations to help the school with basic needs and campus upkeep.

Board Member Joseph provided comments: Pleased about Mr. Rabelo's nomination. It is crucial for children to be interested in Civics.

Mary Palacio commented: Children with disabilities need to be added to the Coral Gables High School.

E.2 Disability Board Recap

- April is Autism Acceptance month. On April 2 Autism Acceptance flag will be raised. Coral Gables has been the first city to raise an Autism flag. Flag was put together by Crystal Academy and Haley Moss who is an autistic attorney, advocate, speaker and very well known within the community. Ms. Moss will be presented with the Advocacy Award from UM.
- Autism flag has been sponsored by Commissioner Regalado.
- Commissioner Regalado and Mary Palacio attended the League of Cities meeting where this entity adopted the flag, the flag will be raised in municipalities.
- Due to the elections during April the Proclamation will be moved to the next commission meeting during March. Said Proclamation will name April as Autism Acceptance month. Board will determine who the Proclamation will be given to.
- Strong community leaders such as Raquel Elejabarrieta; former HR director for the City of Coral Gables.
- Adventure Day is scheduled to be on September 19; Fred Couceyro will be attending the next Disability board meeting. Fred will provide details concerning Salvadore Park and a possible mermaid event at the Venetian pool.
- Met with Angela Gonzalez, Ponce de Leon Middle School Principal. School looks great! They have self-contained classes. Recommended that Board members go to see the school. Productive meeting, several ideas were exchanged.

- Updated the Mayor on upcoming projects the board is planning.
 1. Create a Special Needs Resource page under the Education Community Service section within the Coral Gables/Government section and make the information accessible to those interested in learning which schools cater to children of special needs.
 2. A good opportunity to promote Coral Gables' schools.
- Mary seeks assistance from Marlene, Chair Rojas's chief of staff to ensure further meetings take place to see firsthand what progress is being done for children of special needs.
- Ponce de Leon Park improvements are being made such as enhanced lighting, speed bumps, flashing lights for pedestrians crossing the intersection.

Board member Joseph inquired if audible crosswalks will be installed particularly in high traffic areas.

- Audible crosswalks are being prioritized in Miracle Mile and Ponce de Leon Park will follow. Although this is a big expense to the city, they are committed to ensuring the audible crosswalks are installed.
- Additional updates will follow.

E.3 CG Teacher and Administrator Awards Planning Discussion (presented by Sam Joseph)

- Working on Rookie Teacher and Teacher of the Year nominees, Parks and Recreations has started working on the Literacy Festival.
- Teacher Appreciation week, is scheduled during May 4 thru May 8.
- Administrators/Principals Appreciation Day will be on May 1.
- Would like to receive a list of the principals so that they can be duly honored.
- Would like to have the information put together to present it to the Commission.

Board Chair Chang commented: It is important to show tokens of gratitude and appreciation which could be impactful to all, especially those who are on the receiving end. Consider bringing in those exceptional teachers to the Commission meeting so that all can show appreciation for their hard work.

Board Member Slesnick discussed additional gift ideas for the teachers.

E.4 Coral Gables Family Literacy Awards

- Four categories have been created.
- Creating a metric. Two honorees for award category.

Board Member Joseph commented: Wanted to recognize individuals who have been supporters of the festival since its initiation. Books with Kat. She has been a proud

active shining person who mirrors the morals of the city. She would be a wonderful honoree; her mom is very active at the festival.

Dr. Michael Woodward Jr. is a young African American author who has expressed his desire to be an active roll in the Literacy festival. He too would be an amazing honoree.

For over 15 years, the Rotary Club of Coral Gables has supported a meaningful reading program in partnership with performers and educators from the Lyric Theater in Overtown. Through engaging storytelling and interactive reading sessions, they inspire young students to develop a love of books and learning. The program encourages children to imagine their role in building a stronger, more vibrant city while fostering literacy, creativity and confidence.

Believes that Gianna should be honored separately, not only for Gianna's Project, the Little Libraries but for her entire career at the high school and for her participation as a board member of Interact. Her contributions to the City Beautiful are to be recognized.

Chairperson Chang provided comments:

- **Local Literacy Legend:** This honor recognized writers or literary figures whose work significantly impacts the city. They may come from a broader geographic area, but their influence, engagement, or cultural contribution benefits Coral Gables.
- The focus is on literacy impact and reputation, even if they are not physically working day-to-day in the city.
- **City Beautiful Literacy Laureate:** Names after Coral Gables' nickname, "The City Beautiful." This recognizes people who are directly with resident, students, or community programs.
- This emphasis is on direct service and local engagement.

Board Member Slesnick noted that the committee had previously discussed identifying a venue to host the presentation of the awards the evening before the main event. Possible locations mentioned included Books and Books, the Youth Center or even The Library. She suggested that holding the award presentation at a dedicated venue the night prior could help elevate the experience and make the recognition feel more special and meaningful for the candidates and honorees.

Liaison Granell mentioned that hosting a program a day prior to the actual event can be reevaluated for next year since staff will be needed and overtime hours would be impacted.

Chairperson Chang inquired if Parks and Recreation can attend a future SCRC meeting.

- **Youth Laurate:** - Gianna Figueroa
- **Local Literary Legend:** Nominee- Kat Maglione Dr. Michael Woodward Jr.

Alejandro Perez who participated via Zoom provided comments:

- He wanted to follow up; he will get names for Rookie Teacher of the Year and Principal Assistant Principal of each school, this will cover the schools they have worked with such as Coral Gables, David Fairchild, Tucker, Little Carver, Big Carver, Ponce de Leon, Coral Gables Prep, West Lab.
- Ponce 100 anniversary celebration, an amazing event. Board Chair Rojas was present, Mayor Lago was present, Ms. Gonzalez put on an overall grand celebratory event; it was a very well-attended event.

F. OLD BUSINESS

F.1 CG Mini “Little” Library Project Update (presented by Sam Joseph)

- Expressing his appreciation and gratitude to Board member Rojas, her staff, furthermore, the District has also been very gracious and supportive.
- Secured commitments for five different schools – (Ponce, Carver, Tucker, Coral Gables Prep and Auberndale) where The Little Library will have its presence, optimistic they will be in place prior to the Literacy Festival in May where there will be a ribbon cutting at all the schools mentioned. There will be a plaque honoring Gianna for her efforts and enthusiasm.
- Optimistically confident that before the end of 2026 The Little Library will be installed in a total of twelve different schools although the Little Libraries will be installed inside school properties but near the schools.
- Positive and welcoming feedback with this initiative.

F.2 K-12 Gables Area Public Schools Guide

- Aillette will review Guide to ensure accuracy.

Liaison Granell commented: She contacted the city’s communication department, and it was confirmed that it contains much of the desired information. If the Board agrees the Communications director can be invited to an SCRC meeting and together discuss potential modifications if appropriate.

F.3 CG and MDCPS Education Compact Update

- Making minor edits to Compact.
- Draft can be presented to SCRC Board during May for review.

G. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Board Member Slesnick commented:

- Two vacancies in SCRC- Andy and Sandy.
- Indicated that in her opinion whoever sits on the committee needs to be the parent of a school-aged child.
- The conversation continued regarding the potential individual who may be strong candidate to join the SCRC as Board Members.

ADJOURNMENT

Next meeting: March 13, 2026

Meeting adjourned at: 10:37 am