



City of Coral Gables
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
April 26, 2022

ITEM TITLE: ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS

MEETING DATE: February 2, 2022

SUMMARY OF MEETING:

QUORUM: In Person Quorum was reached.

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting commenced at 10:12am

**Presentation – Project Victory Program – Ms. Angie Torres, Administrative Director
Department of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Miami-Dade Public Schools
Transition Services & Programs (Exhibit 1)**

Ms. Palacio introduced Ms. Torres and Ms. Ercilla of Miami-Dade Public Schools.

Ms. Torres introduced herself as well as Ms. Magaly Ercilla. Ms. Ercilla proceeded with presentation of various programs available from Miami-Dade Public Schools (Exhibit 1).

Ms. Torres highlighted the key points regarding their transition services and programs:

- 1) Transition Services – These services are a coordinated set of activities designed to improve the academic and functional achievement of student with a disability to facilitate the movement from school to post-secondary settings.
- 2) M-DCPS has implemented these types of programs in collaboration with various organizations including Public Supermarkets, Public Defender’s Office, the City of Miami, Zoo Miami, City of Hialeah, Shake-a-leg Miami as well as others.
- 3) Ms. Ercilla advised programs are individualized depending on the ability, interest, and goal of student.
- 4) Ms. Ercilla spoke regarding transition programs available:
 - A) Project Bridges to Tomorrow – Post secondary program Career and Technical Education program for students which have met graduation and have chosen to continue until age 22. It has a focus in Technology/Industrial fields – such as computer software programming and computer design – students attend regular school half of the day and then go into the program to practice these skills.
 - B) Project Strive – Post secondary program Career and Technical Education program with a focus on Culinary Arts – focuses on helping students with skills needed to work in the hospitality industry. Student will be half of the day at regular high school and the rest of the day will come into the program where they will be learning reference this industry. Participants of this program are from various schools within the district.

- C) Project Victory – Largest and most popular program with over 15 sites throughout the district. Students who participate in this program have met graduation requirements and are now ready to train regarding employment. Students are referred to this program by their school site teacher, program specialist and counselor. The students must meet certain criteria such as good attendance, a certain level of independence as well as others. Students will be participating at this program for half of their day, and they will receive assistance regarding obtaining employment. Ms. Ercilla gave overview of what the program looks like and advised locations as well as structure where program is currently available.
- D) *School to Work Program – This is a one-year program attended by students who are 20 to 21 years old and are ready to leave program moving on into the workforce. Best Buddies assist these participants in employment placement.*
- E) Project Bridge – Building Recreational Independence & Developing Gateways to Employment – This program is in partnership with M-DCPS and Shake-A-Leg Miami providing students with disabilities with specialized instruction in the field of Marine Sciences, boating and recreation. Students report to work location for the full school day and must provide their own transportation (STS, Parents, Public bus, etc). Students may participate for more than one year (until age 22).
- F) Project Search –For this program the participating students report to the work location for the full school day and must provide their own means of transportation. Students participate in the program for one school year. Students conduct rotation within the location and are assisted by teacher as well as a Best Buddies job coach. Ms. Ercilla provided information regarding procedures how to apply for this program.

Ms. Palacio asked if there were any plans to open Project Search site at Nicholas Hospital once again. Ms. Torres advised due to pandemic certain restrictions have been put into place and for the remainder of this school year, this location will not be available. Ms. Torres stated they will continue to have communications with this partner. Ms. Torres spoke of how many of the participants at various sites, have been employed afterwards.

Ms. Pippa stated her son was a participant of Project Victory and how wonderful the program and services were.

Dr. Olivas stated she was curious regarding hard line of criteria utilized to identify possible participants. Ms. Ercilla explained there is not a set check off list and how individual reviews are done for each candidate. Ms. Ercilla stated this allows staff to identify perhaps any difficulties the student may be struggling with, address the issue and help the candidate with these so that they can be considered for the program the following year.

Ms. Liebl asked if this information of the available programs has been shared with the Beacon Council. Ms. Liebl stated through Opportunity Miami, Beacon Council has been speaking a lot about regarding inclusiveness, however mostly regarding racial not disability. Ms. Liebl stated she will be having a meeting to further discuss this issue with them. Ms. Ercilla and Ms. Torres advised they have not participated in any meetings with the Beacon Council, however if Ms. Liebl would like to go ahead and share information received. Ms. Torres stated they would love to have opportunities to meet with them. Ms. Torres stated available resources that can be shared. Ms. Torres advised regarding master calendar available on the MDCPS website which provides information of upcoming events and programs available.

Ms. Sando asked regarding the meetings mentioned held by MDCPS, the Advisory Panel meeting and Secondary Transition Sub-Committee meetings if they are open to the public as well as being on zoom. Ms. Ercilla and Ms. Torres advised how best to obtain information regarding upcoming dates for these meetings utilizing MDCPS master calendar.

Ms. Elejabarrieta stated if Board allowed, she would like to conduct further research to determine what would be the best way for the city to proceed and further information would be provided at upcoming March meeting.

Resolution – Self-Contained Classroom – Ms. Elejabarrieta

Ms. Elejabarrieta stated this Resolution was approved by Commission during their last meeting. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated further Miami-Dade County Schools has requested further information to determine best way to proceed regarding request of a self-contained classroom and it would most likely be at the middle school level. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised staff will be working directly with UM Card to obtain the necessary information.

April Autism Month – Ms. Elejabarrieta

Ms. Elejabarrieta requested for Board to contact her directly via email regarding any ideas they have for this month. Ms. Palacio stated she would work on meeting with Mr. Mark Trowbridge of the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce regarding participation during their upcoming breakfast and perhaps have De Moya Foundation present as well. Ms. Moss suggested to check topic being addressed by the United Nations in regards to Autism Month.

The WOW Center Miami – Ms. Elejabarrieta (Exhibit 2)

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised board regarding State Representative Demi Busatta Cabrera via the WOW Center having contacted the city seeking a space for a public installation for National Development Disabilities Awareness Month – March.

My Squad – Ms. Elejabarrieta

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised due to expected bad weather; scheduled the My Squad Pickle Ball & Pizza at Biltmore event was canceled. Ms. Elejabarrieta then provided information regarding the upcoming scheduled events and stated in the future there will be a backup plan to avoid having to cancel.

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised after a conversation with Ms. Palacio, who brought up how the city has not used anyone with a disability in their promotional materials, same was discussed and city moving forward will make sure to do so.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

NEXT MEETING: March 2, 2022

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned 11:28am

Motion by Adjourn: Blake Sando / 2nd Motion: Philippa Milne / All approved unanimously.

ATTACHMENT(S):
Minutes of the February 2, 2022