

**CORAL GABLES SCHOOL COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2015 – 8:30 A.M.
CITY HALL
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA**

MEMBERS	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul. 24	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	APPOINTED BY
Ruth Martinez				P	-	E	E	P	P				Mayor Cason
Andria Hanley				P	-	A	P	P	E				Vice Mayor Quesada
Aileen Ortega				P	-	A	P	P	P				Commissioner Keon
Samuel Joseph				P	-	P	P	P	P				Commissioner Lago
David Bianchi				P	-	P	P	P	P				Commissioner Slesnick
Nan Markowitz				P	-	P	P	E	P				City Manager Swanson-Rivenbar
													Commission-as-a-whole

A = Absent
E = Excused Absence
P = Present
- = No meeting

STAFF:

Naomi Levi, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS: Iraida Mendez-Cartaya, Dr. Jaques Bentolila, Dr. Michael Alessandri, Mr. Tim Staley, Dr. Osamudia James, Mr. David Pollack

RECORDING SECRETARY:

Naomi Levi, Government Affairs Manager

The following represents a summary of the items discussed during the Committee meeting.

- MEETING AGENDA -

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:30am. Sam welcomed all attendees and provided instructions on the meeting agenda.

II. ROLL CALL

All members were present except Andria Hanley, who had an excused absence. A quorum was present.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Ruth moved to approve the minutes from October 16, 2015 with one minor correction from David, and Sam seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Nan moved to approve the minutes from November 20, 2015 and David seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. MDCPS Compact Recommendations & Approval

- Iraida Mendez- Cartaya spoke briefly on the Education Compact and conveyed that the contemplated School Improvement Projects should be included as goals in a renewed Compact.
- In terms of timeline, once Commission approval is obtained, MDCPS, the City and the SCRC can begin working on the priority projects.

B. SIP Report: Special Needs Partnerships and Initiatives

- Dr. Michael Alessandri spoke on behalf of UM CARD (Center for Autism and Related Disorders) and discussed the wide range of programming they provide and the high instance of autism disorders in children (1/42 boys on the spectrum).
- Mr. Tim Staley spoke on behalf of YMCA of South Florida and discussed their after school programs and special needs programs. They currently have after school programs at Carver, West Lab and Tucker. David and Tim will be in contact to discuss the possibility of implementing a financial literacy program using David's book "Blue Chip Kids".

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. MDCPS/Public School Issues Discussion: Homework

- Dr. James discussed her research on homework which shows no link between homework and academic outcomes at the elementary school level. Her research also shows that after classroom teaching, the strongest predictor of student success is "what's happening at home" e.g. family dinner, reading before bed, strong family values etc.
- Dr. James went on to state that excessive homework is actually detrimental to young children because kids need play, sleep, art etc. and homework detracts from those activities.
- She shared her solutions with the group which included eliminating homework altogether or enforcing maximum time limits for homework that are actually followed.

- Ms. Mendez- Cartaya responded by emphasizing the need to balance district policy with teacher autonomy. She stated that there are guidelines for the amount of homework that is appropriate per grade level and asked parents to reach out to their school principal if they think those guidelines are not being followed.
- Dr. James requested that the district look at the homework policy and reeducate teachers. She recommended the following books to the group: The Case Against Homework and The Homework Myth.

B. MDCPS/Public School Issues Discussion: Testing

- Mr. Pollack talked about the amount of testing taking place at schools and conversed with Ms. Mendez-Cartaya about the best way to effectuate change.
- They seemed to agree that a grass roots effort to influence legislators, using a top down approach, would be the best method.

VI. DISCUSSION

Many parents agreed with Dr. James' findings and recounted their own experiences with excessive homework

Some general discussion ensued.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:07 am.

Next Meeting:

Next meeting will be on January

