

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

**DIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEETING
KCW Administration Building
December 4, 2008**

SUMMARY

CALL TO ORDER

The first meeting of the Diversity Committee, following the School Board Organizational Meeting, was called to order, at 6:38 p.m. by **Jean Darius, Coordinator, Diversity & Cultural Outreach Department**, with a quorum.

Members Present:

Dr. Veda Bailey	Julian Gazzano	Nancy Rogan
Yvette Colbourne	Bapthol Joseph	Barbara Williamson
Randy Fleischer	George Pedlar	Suzanne Yach
Roland Foulkes	Ernestine Price	Alyce Zahniser
Phoebee Francois	Sherry Reece	

Members Absent:

Marguerite Luster	Michael Rajner
Patrick Jabouin	Regina Santiago
Pepe Lopez	

Diversity & Cultural Outreach Staff:

Jean Darius, Coordinator; Terri Jones; Maryse Nelson; Marion Williams; Nancy Weintraub

Guests:

Joe Badran; C. L. Foulkes; Shellene Neil

(Ms. Reece arrived at 6:44 p.m.)

COORDINATOR'S REPORT, Jean Darius

Mr. Darius thanked the Members for their expressions of concern regarding **Dr. Watts** and announced that she is recovering well at home.

Mr. Darius advised the Members that the January 8, 2009, meeting would be devoted to the election of Committee officers. A Nominating Committee would be selected at the conclusion of the December meeting.

Mr. Pedlar's name did not appear on the Diversity Committee Membership Chart distributed to the Committee. **Mr. Darius** explained that the Diversity & Cultural Outreach Department did not receive information of his reappointment. That omission will be corrected as soon as confirmation is received.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Fleischer moved to change the order of the Agenda and to bring adoption of the Committee's Report forward prior to the presentation on Cultural Professionalism. **Mr. Darius** explained the guest speaker stated she required approximately 1 1/2 hours for her presentation. **Mr. Fleischer** was concerned that the Committee would lose quorum prior to voting on the adoption of the Report. **Ms. Francois** seconded the Motion. After discussion, the Motion was withdrawn and the Committee approved the Agenda as presented.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Committee approved the minutes of November 6, 2008, as amended.

- **Ms. Santiago** was present at the meeting.
- Page 9, paragraph 1: **Mr. Foulkes** asked that the following correction be made to his comments and that the contents of the message be presented as written.
Mr. Foulkes asked that the contents of the "hate mail" sent to a School Board, KC Wright Building-based, employee in September 2008 by an anonymous person be included in the records. The statement was, "There is no place for Niggers in the White House or the Crystal Palace."
- **Mr. Pedlar** noted his comments to **Mr. Notter** did not appear in the minutes.
Mr. Pedlar said he is tremendously pleased that **Mr. Notter** is so enthusiastic about the accomplishments and the progress, to date. He said **Mr. Notter** was correct when he said the District is not there, yet, and he doesn't believe any of the Members thought we were. The idea of 100% compliance is the objective. **Mr. Pedlar** said the Committee "can work with you on that. Certainly, we want to be your foot soldiers."

(**Ms. Zahniser** arrived 7:02 p.m.)

Mr. Darius entertained nominations for Acting Chair for the December meeting. **Ms. Williamson** nominated **Mr. Foulkes**. There being no further nominations, **Mr. Foulkes** was declared Acting Chair of the Diversity Committee.

Mr. Darius then invited the guest speaker to address the Diversity Committee.

(**Mr. Fleischer** left at 7:03 p.m.)

PRESENTATION BY MILDRED I. DUPREY DE ROBLES, CONCILIATION SPECIALIST, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, COMMUNITY RELATIONS SERVICE

(A copy of the PowerPoint presentation was distributed.)

Ms. Robles began her presentation by explaining the function of the Community Relations Service. She said it is not an investigative agency and it does not prosecute. It is the only agency within the Department of Justice that does not perform either of those functions. Its focus is conciliation and mediation, and addresses issues of "conflict and tension, that appear to be real or perceived, based on race, color, or national origin." It was developed as a result of the Civil Rights Act

and concentrates on “preserving peaceful relationships.” They work with schools on managing multicultural conflict, instituting a program called SPIRIT (Student Problem Identifying and Resolving Issues Together).

Ms. Robles stated her presentation would focus on the role of the Diversity Committee, acknowledging that the Members play a big role on what happens to the children in the District. Her presentation was titled “Cultural Professionalism” but focused on conflict resolution and the art of communicating, “even through conflict.” She said it is their experience that “the conflicts that affect our community that we serve, as a committee, may also have an impact of us, in us, in this group, as a committee. I am very encouraged to be able to present to you a way that you can address the areas of conflict, and not only address them, but also model them.”

To begin, conflict is a process between two inter-dependent parties. Committee Members represent different districts who come together as a committee and will “inter-depend” to ensure the Committee functions as “one”. Sometimes the goals seem incompatible and Members appear to interfere in the process of achieving those goals. In Cultural Professionalism, culture is something that is learned. We have certain value patterns that are learned and determine how we behave when we come together as a group. Not everyone on the Committee shares the same cultural patterns, especially in dealing with conflict.

Ms. Robles asked how the Committee members deal with conflict. **Mr. Joseph** said it doesn’t deal with conflict. **Ms. Yach** said that, “through critical analysis and analyzing data, the Members try to come up with a reasonable understanding of the situation, and that we try to take whatever action we can through motions, etc. to bring forth positive change.” **Ms. Robles** referred to this as the Committee’s pattern on dealing with conflict. She said it is a positive step that the Committee can identify its style. **Ms. Yach** added that the Committee is not afraid of conflict, that it sometimes engages in conflict with others to “bring forth resolution within ourselves to what we think is appropriate.” **Mr. Foulkes** said it depends on the type of conflict. He referred to inter-personal conflict and personality conflicts, indicating the Committee has “had its share of that.” He said the way to resolve that is to listen, respectfully agree to disagree, and move on. **Ms. Williamson** said she has a difficult time dealing with conflict. When there is too much conflict, she feels they are not reaching their goal or doing what needs to be done. She is “turned off” by conflict.

Ms. Robles said there are two elements of communicating that affect your style. One is “Report” and the other is “Emphasis on Information” (or the Element of Command).

Ms. Robles defined “Inter-Cultural Conflict Styles” as “a group’s preferred manner for dealing with disagreements and communicating emotions. She divided those styles into two: Direct and Indirect. They then were divided into two: Individualistic Cultures and Collective Cultures.

INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURES

- Value straight talk
- Tend to verbalize overtly individual wants and needs

COLLECTIVE CULTURES

- Value of contemplative talk

- Discretion in voicing one's opinions and feelings, perhaps in order to maintain in-group harmony

EMOTIONALLY EXPRESSIVE

- Value affective involvement
- More overt, visible, and intense display of feelings (animated facial expressions, body movement, gesturing, laughing, tone of voice)

EMOTIONALLY RESTRAINED

- Tend to contain or hide more intense and overt displays of emotion as the self-disciplined, mature way to handle conflict

This Committee takes the kind of people who have willingly chosen to be intellectually and emotionally committed to the basic unity of all people, while they are at the same time recognizing, legitimizing, accepting, and appreciating the differences of those people whom you represent.

Ms. Robles defined “discrimination” as differentiation, seeing and noting differences, making a distinction in favor of or against a person or thing as compared to others. “Judgment” is your very best opinion. “Bias” is an inclination marked by a strong prejudice to establish a reference to function. Many people do not like to admit they discriminate, that they have prejudices or biases. Many do not try to assess their (cultural) climate because “they cannot engage in affecting their inter-personal relations.”

When the Committee was asked how it would assess its climate, **Mr. Joseph** said, “by practicing decency and respect for others.” **Mr. Pedlar** said the climate is one of hostility and hopes the pitch of hostility will diminish as the Committee moves forward. **Ms. Yach** said there is a lot of posturing by Members. **Dr. Bailey** said she would assess the Committee cautiously, especially as a new member.

Dr. Bailey added that, when it comes to “patterned responses to conflict” (referred to on Page 4 of the PowerPoint material), she is more interested in the content of what is being said and declared that the Diversity Committee cannot afford to be without conflict, it cannot afford to have “group think.”

Ms. Robles said at times, when Members are offered opportunities to present their views, people may stop listening to what is being said because they have already made their judgments before hearing all of the information. She said in Cultural Professionalism, people remain “respectfully indifferent to any attempt to assimilate right away to a particular position...They disengage from any attempt to activate verbally or non-verbally in ways that (are going to) affect” how they accept what others may say. **Mr. Joseph** commented that he doesn't believe the Diversity Committee can remain indifferent or neutral. He said there are times when they must challenge other Members, or take a position, or assimilate based on positions other Members take. The Committee is defending students and doing what is best for students. Sometimes the Committee has to go over other Members' biases, prejudices, and discriminations to get to where they need to go. **Mr. Pedlar** said that by virtue of the diversity of the Committee, there will be divergent views, and that is a good thing. As a result, the Members have to understand that they must maintain a balance and acknowledge that they will not all be accepting of everyone else's views. The Committee has to come to terms with reaching

a consensus. Sometimes that requires putting our own views aside and accepting the views “of the masses.” **Ms. Francois** interprets the phrase to mean that you must respect everybody else’s views but not necessarily agree with them. **Ms. Robles** agreed with **Ms. Francois** and said that is the meaning of the statement, but not everybody read it that way.

As a committee, your Cultural Professionalism is how you define the style the Committee can, and has, adopted, and how to modify it, depending on the issue on the table and comments that are made. She acknowledged the Diversity Committee does not like to come to meetings and hear the same things “over and over again.” The Committee is prepared to take actions to move from a position and progress, through conflict.

Under Diversity in Dialogue Settings, **Ms. Robles** stated the participants’ realities are based upon their perceptions. Members acknowledge that they can, and are invited to, bring their positions and realities forward. It is welcomed in this Committee. The model she presented calls for a “dialogue leader”, a person who supports, respects, and protects the diversity that affects the advancement of a dialogue in the Committee. **Ms. Robles** said that, if the Committee could move beyond “simple tolerance”, it could explore the differences in a positive and effective manner.

Mr. Joseph observed that the Committee is “politically charged. When we don’t want to spend time on something, we just Call the Question or we just take a vote. We don’t really spend time in appreciating or accepting differences because they have the power of the vote to stop it.” He wondered how this model would work in a politically charged committee. **Ms. Yach** said the model appears to be open to “free, open, intellectual exchange in allowing for the expression of other people’s viewpoints and opening ourselves to receive what other people are saying, leaving our own biases and prejudices behind.” She referred to it as “collective genius” and “collaborative leadership” and said it is a leadership style. **Mr. Foulkes** referred to the phrase “politically charged” and said that the Committee has long been influenced by outside political interests. That is what has “electrified” the dynamics of the Committee over the years. As for being “politically charged”, the fact is that the Members are political appointees who come together once a month for two hours and try to do its best to accomplish its goals.

Ms. Robles asked the Members to define “political appointee”. **Mr. Foulkes** said it is “an individual who is appointed by the elected official to serve and represent their interests on a particular committee.” **Ms. Yach** said she doesn’t see the Committee as expressing political opinions. She sees the Committee as “having a shared goal and a shared vision, and that’s parity and equity and fairness and justice to the students of Broward County, be they K-12 or adult.” **Mr. Pedlar** said that, even though the Members are appointed by the elected official, they are not “necessarily carrying their message.” He said they are dealing with subjects, in an objective fashion, that are beneficial to the District’s educational program. The Committee may make decisions that are contrary to their appointer’s positions. It is not unusual for the Committee to “take them to task for not doing what we think they should be doing.” **Ms. Francois** said that while they are political appointees, what they need to do is follow the guidelines, objectives, and goals of the CCC Settlement Agreement. “That’s our purpose, that’s our goal, and that’s what we’re here for.” **Mr. Joseph** said they are serving the students first, not the person who appoints them. The Committee is bound by certain policies and must work within that framework. Some people are more independent in their actions than others,

but the reality is that they are political appointees. If the elected official is not happy with them, they can be removed.

Ms. Robles suggested the Committee take time to explore what it actually stands for and who they are. They should look at the influences that affect their role and the climate of the Committee. They should look at how they deal with situations that come before them as a Committee. As for being political appointees, she interpreted that to mean the Members are public servants. Board Members who give them the opportunity to serve should, also, be involved in defining the Committee’s “culture” by determining how they expect the Committee to communicate and deal with its objectives.

Ms. Robles said at times, on Committees, members appear to have a “professionalism in debating and a minor in dialogue.” When you debate, you are looking to win instead of looking at common ground.

DEBATE	DIALOGUE
Oppositional winning	Collaborative common grounds
Listens to find flaws	Listens to understand
Defends assumptions	Reveals assumptions
Causes critique of the other person	Causes introspection of one’s own position
Defends one’s own position/ excludes other solutions	Opens possibility of a better solution than the one originally presented
Closed-minded attitude	Open-minded attitude
Searches for glaring differences	Searches for basic agreements
Does not focus on relationship issues	Focuses on relationships

Mr. Joseph said that the Diversity Committee is a mixture of dialogue and debate, but the Site Visit Subcommittee is all dialogue. **Ms. Robles** commented that there is apparently a different culture in the Subcommittee than there is in the full Committee. She offered **Rules for Dialogue:**

- Move towards solutions rather than continue to express or analyze the problem.
- Reach beyond usual boundaries.
- Unite if divided-walk through the experience together.
- Aim to become a transforming agent, not just an agent of change.

Ms. Robles cautioned Members to fairly represent the groups they may be speaking for, and to be sure that what they state is what their constituents really feel or what they want to have communicated on their behalf.

The Committee should “aim to be a transforming agent and not just an agent for change.” When asked how the Committee would define that, **Mr. Pedlar** said, “Transforming seems to, in my mind, take on a much larger proportion in terms of ... (garbled on tape)... and you want to, perhaps, get a consensus, you probably have to convince quite a few people of your position. Whereas, if you are trying to change someone’s opinion, which is definitely going to (have to) change before you can get it transformed. So, once you get it changed, then eventually you’ll have them transformed. You can all come up with the same sort of conclusion or resolution, if that is what your aim is. But, one of my

concerns is that this module that you're talking about here, and I'm not being facetious, is very theoretical in my mind from the perspective that this Committee, as has been said before, has a very limited time and we have certain objectives or goals that we have to work to accomplish within that very limited timeframe. Sometimes, we just have to cut through the chase to get to the goal or objective." **Mr. Badran** was invited to comment. He said, "Taking a slightly more macro view of this, it would seem to me that when we compare one who wishes to transform with one who wishes to change, the transformer is one who's taking someone else's idea and is going to mold it more towards their liking. Being an agent of change is someone who comes along with something new and fresh, on their own."

Ms. Robles said "transforming agent" means that once you have all of the Committee's ideas on the table, you adopt one that will communicate what you want to communicate. She said, "Sometimes we do things because we have to do things." It comes down to: Who you are, Where you are, Where you want to go, and What will you do as individuals and with others to make a difference.

To **Ms. Robles'** questions about altering the culture of the Committee and the way it deals with issues, **Mr. Joseph** commented that anything on the Committee could be altered, but it depends on two factors. They are the leadership of the Committee and the membership of the Committee. Anytime there are new Members, there is change. Every time there is a new leader, that leader must take the Committee in a new direction from where it was before.

Ms. Robles summed up her presentation by identifying the Problem Solving Model:

- Define the issue.
- Brainstorm the solutions.
- Select the best solution.
- Develop an Implementation Plan and identify resources and a target date for completion.
- Evaluate the plan.

Ms. Robles said the models she presented were used "behind the scenes" before the Civil Rights Act was signed. The process is not new.

At the close of the presentation, **Mr. Foulkes** advised the Committee that, following the recent violent incident at Dillard High School that resulted in the death of one student and the arrest of another, he wrote a letter to **Mr. Battles**, of the DOJ's Community Relations Service, requesting they present the SPIRIT program at the School. He added that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta have departments focused on youth violence and school violence. They would like to provide resources to the community with respect to gun violence. **Mr. Foulkes** said articles following the incident at Dillard indicated that, "every school, going back two, three, four years, every school has had a weapons incident."

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Foulkes referred to pages 52 and 53 of the Report. Those pages indicate meeting dates and the Diversity Committee members who were present. He then proceeded to walk the Members through the Report, pointing out the changes that were made.

The “Signature Page” on page 6 indicated the names of the members of the Ad Hoc Committee for signature, rather than the full membership of the Committee.

(Motion to extend the meeting 15 minutes was passed.)

Mr. Foulkes reminded the Members that they are to vote on adopting the Report so that it could be forwarded to the School Board. He added that **School Board Member Ben Williams**, believing the School Board needed time to understand and absorb the information, suggested a workshop, or a series of monthly workshops, with the **School Board** in which the **Committee** would present and discuss its findings.

Members pointed out that the number of indicators at the top of page 12 and the bottom of page 13 needed to be changed to forty-five and 45.

Mr. Gazzano referred to page 6 and expressed his objection to having only six people sign the document, as opposed to the full membership. In addition, on the bottom of page 12 it indicates the Committee voted the District was not in compliance. **Mr. Gazzano** said he was the only Member to cast a negative vote and wanted the Report to indicate that. **Mr. Foulkes** responded that the Committee minutes are included in the Appendix to the Report. Those notes indicate the outcome of the vote on Compliance.

As to the signature page, **Mr. Foulkes** said it was his choice to limit the number of signatures to the members of the Ad Hoc Committee because of a discussion held at the Ad Hoc Committee meeting in which one of the members questioned the legality of putting her name or signature on the document. He indicated his personal preference is to have everyone sign off on the Report. **Mr. Gazzano** said he understood that and referred back to his vote on Compliance. He said every member has the right to vote and have that vote recorded. He wants his vote noted on the Report in support of the Superintendent’s efforts. He said the Superintendent is making progress, but not as quickly as some on the Committee would like. That was the purpose of his vote. **Mr. Joseph** said he does not believe the Appendix is the appropriate placement for **Mr. Gazzano’s** vote. He said it should be reflected on the same page as the results of the vote. (Page 12 of the Report.) **Mr. Gazzano** accepted the suggestion to have his vote, which was recorded in the minutes, be included in the Appendix, as long as the minutes are part of the report.

Mr. Foulkes went back to the signature page and asked for a consensus from the Committee. There was verbal consensus indicating the Members would sign off on the Report. **Mr. Foulkes** said the signature page would return to its original format, with all signatures.

Ms. Colbourne referred to the time spent on the training and felt there was not enough time left to review the Report. As a new Member, she said she would like to take it home and read it before voting on it. She offered the suggestion that individuals who were Members at the time should be the ones to sign the document. She said she did not feel comfortable voting on it at that time. **Mr. Foulkes** reminded her that there are no abstentions; she would have to vote yea or nay. He suggested she view the Committee’s documents on the Diversity website to familiarize herself with the work of the Committee. **Mr. Joseph** said this would not be the first time the Committee delayed a vote in order to review the material. He added that a reason for his preferring to delay the vote on the

Report was to give him time to complete the Findings and Analysis portion of the Report. **Mr. Foulkes** responded and said that, after much delay, the Committee had run out of time and proceeded with the Report, without the Findings and Analysis. **Mr. Joseph** accepted the decision.

(Motion to extend the meeting for 15 minutes was passed. **Mr. Darius** reminded the Members that they still must appoint a Nominating committee prior to adjournment.)

(**Ms. Rogan** left at 8:45 p.m.)

Mr. Pedlar asked if there was a timeframe for presenting the Committee's Report. **Mr. Foulkes** answered that it would be at a School Board workshop, and would likely not come up before January 2009. Referring to the Diversity Committee, **Mr. Pedlar** said, "The next meeting is going to be an election meeting, we don't know what's going to happen. It means that, perhaps, we have to expedite whatever we have to do to get this Report coming from this particular year's Committee, per se. Hence the reason for having finality, as it were, before we go into the new year." He added that any adjustments or amendments to the Report could be made after the Report is presented. "The point is, the objective is we have said to the Superintendent you have not met the requirements and we expect to monitor you in the ensuing year to see to it that that is done. In fact, we did commend him for what he has done."

MOTION by Mr. Pedlar, 2nd by Mr. Joseph: "That the response Report be adopted with the necessary adjustments, appropriate amendments for inclusions."

Ms. Williamson wanted to be sure that, if the Committee adopted the Report, the Analysis would be included. **Mr. Darius** clarified the Committee cannot adopt something it has not seen. Amendments and additions to the Report would be presented to the Committee at a later date. **Mr. Foulkes** added that those items could be incorporated into the "final, final document" before it goes to the School Board. **Mr. Joseph** commented that the names of members no longer serving on the Committee should appear on the signature page. **Mr. Foulkes** agreed. **Mr. Darius** reminded the Committee that the Report is for 2007-2008. Therefore, it does not have to indicate those Members no longer serve on the Committee. They were members during the time period covered in the Report.

Ms. Colbourne asked if other changes to the Report could be included as amendments. **Mr. Foulkes** responded that if Staff receives the suggested changes by December 18, those changes could be discussed and voted on at the January 8, 2009 meeting.

Motion passed 12-0.

NEW BUSINESS

REAPPOINTMENT OF JOE BADRAN

Mr. Gazzano expressed his "personal disappointment" that **Mr. Badran** was not reappointed to the Diversity Committee.

(**Ms. Reece** left at 8:50 p.m.)

MOTION by Mr. Gazzano, 2nd by Ms. Williamson: "That the Diversity Committee recommend to School Board Vice Chair Jennifer Gottlieb that she appoint Jawhar "Joe" Badran to the

Diversity Committee. This is the logical outcome of a unanimously passed motion made by two of her appointees---Randy Fleischer and Michael Rajner---in November to recognize the positive contributions of Mr. Badran to the Diversity Committee and to have Dr. Robert Parks re-appoint him to this committee.”

Motion passed 11-0

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

(Motion to extend the meeting 5 minutes passed.)

Mr. Darius asked for volunteers to serve on the Nominating Committee, which must meet sometime between January 5-7, 2009. The following Members will serve: **Dr. Bailey; Ms. Francois; Mr. Joseph; Ms. Luster; Mr. Pedlar; Ms. Price; and Ms. Williamson.**

EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION

Ms. Price expressed her appreciation to the **Staff of Diversity & Cultural Outreach** and to **Roland Foulkes**. She said this is one of the best years, one of the best terms, since filing the lawsuit. A lot has been accomplished. There is still a lot to do, but she feels very good about this term.

Mr. Pedlar expressed his appreciation for the presentation made by **Ms. Robles**. **Ms. Williamson** said, “No more debates, just dialogue.”

Mr. Joseph commented on the positive change in **Mr. Foulkes’** leadership toward the end of his term as Chair.

EMOTIONAL QUOTIENT/INTELLIGENCE TRAINING (EQ)

Mr. Foulkes said that in response to the recent killing at Dillard High School, he plans to bring forth a motion to train students on how to better deal with emotional issues via training in EQ.

Meeting ended 9:07 p.m.

**The next meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.,
in the Board Room at the KC Wright Administration Building.**

These minutes are summarized and were recorded at the December 4, 2008 Diversity Committee meeting. If any Committee member or other interested party would like more detailed information as to the contents of this summary, contact the Diversity & Cultural Outreach Department at 754-321-2090.