

**EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Thursday, April 15, 2021**  
**5:30pm**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**Call to Order**

Julie Fisher Cummings, subcommittee co-chair, called the meeting to order at 5:31pm. Tiffany David, of the City of West Palm beach Mayor's Office, took attendance of participants for the meeting record. Kayla Elson, of Justice & Sustainability Associates, reviewed the meeting agenda.

**March Meeting Minutes**

No comments were made about the March meeting minutes; the meeting minutes were unanimously approved as distributed.

**Presentation: Adult Education & Workforce Preparedness**

Tiffany David introduced Mr. Fred Barch, the Director of Adult and Community Education at the School District of Palm Beach County. The Adult and Community Education program wanted to provide pathways to continue education by helping young adults transition to independence. This included providing a stable and nurturing environment that includes housing, counseling, and education. His organization is looking for partnerships, especially for the free apprenticeship programs which teaches participants the skills and knowledge they need to know for their respective trade areas (example: plumbing). There are 34 sites/programs through Palm Beach County, most of them are hosted in schools. The bigger vision is to create an adult-educational technical college which will be centralized to provide career/technical education. The organization hopes to start dual enrollment credit for juniors/seniors in specific program trades. The subcommittee members requested a copy of the presentation be sent to them.

**Q&A**

Sally Chester, subcommittee member, asked if Mr. Barch had statistics on graduated students' job obtainment and job retention. Mr. Barch said it is hard to track students after one year, but they are working on ways to obtain this data. They currently do have some data. Sergio Piedra, subcommittee member, asked what the biggest challenges were and Mr. Barch said that the staff was spread very thin. They are looking at consolidating sites (with the benefit of creating a bigger community). Dina Rubio, subcommittee member, asked about class scheduling, and Mr. Barch said that certain centers offer morning/noon/night classes. They are trying to obtain more real estate to expand class options and times as well. Tiffany David asked if there were programs offered that paid students to attend. Mr. Barch said the program is part of a Federal



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grant that's a "pay for schooling" type program. A program (YEP) at Rivera Beach for out of school students has grant funds for students who meet specific benchmarks. Childcare is offered at specific program locations (such as Forest Hill High). Karen Whetsell, guest speaker, asked if there were bilingual teachers, which there are. Andre Wynn, subcommittee member, asked how the program advertises for these educational opportunities, and Mr. Barch said there are radio/TV ads, newspaper inserts, and website advertisements. The age range for participants is usually around 20 – 30. Julie Fisher Cummings asked how the program receives funding, Mr. Barch said it was Federal money coming down from the state and other grants.

### **Panel: Educator Perspectives on Addressing Racial Disparities in West Palm Beach**

Tiffany David introduced the panelist speakers and asked them to share what they think are the challenges in addressing inequities in schools, opportunities, and what the city can do to support these efforts from a policy standpoint.

Principal Esther Rivera was the first to speak. She is the Principal of Forest Hill High School, the largest high school in the city. Principal Rivera then introduced Karen Whetsell, who is the region's Instructional Superintendent. Principal Rivera has worked for Forest Hill High School for two years. Currently the school is over capacity which is good because it means more people want to attend there. There is a majority Hispanic student followed by black/African American students. One of the school's challenges is the English language learner population mainly because of the standardized state test and language barriers, not because of lack of knowledge. 61% of students are enrolled in accelerated courses, but another challenge is teaching these courses in the non-English languages. Latinos in Action is working to mitigate this by partnering with English Learners and helping them with work. Another program the high school rolled out was the Beta Class, which focuses on providing strategy and skills to students, partnering them with outside agencies, and bringing in guest speakers. It has also created mentorships with black businesses in the community. 100% of those students are now graduation ready (they were originally at-risk students).

Ms. Whetsell elaborated that support systems were put in place targeting non-white students because of the historical lack and discrimination of educational access. Forest Hill High School is a Title 1 school (students living in poverty) and poverty brings its own challenges in educational learning. One thing the city can do to support schools like this is to provide grants or funds, like what the village of Wellington does, that can go towards educational expansion or even hiring staff that are experts in educational grant allocations for example.

### **Discussion**

Sergio Piedra asked if students were inclined to go to college now because of these opportunities or if they're still looking for positions in high-paying technical fields. Principal Rivera believes there is a shift from career-themed fields to post-secondary



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education. Sally Chester asked if students were inclined to become teachers because they are teaching younger students. Principal Rivera said there is definitely increased interest in working in social work/teaching fields. Tiffany David asked about areas of foundation to provide support (a grant system would help) and how to provide opportunities to continue supporting this kind of focus (accelerated courses) in schools. Principal Rivera said that students have first dibs on accelerated courses before opening up these courses to outside students.

Principal Rivera thinks it's important that Forest Hill High School students/staff feel accepted/included by the City of West Palm Beach. She gave an example of how the City helped some high schools with funds, but not Forest Hill. Julie Fisher Cummings asked if the school had a specific foundation to donate money or supplies. Principal Rivera said that only certain choice academies (where accelerated programs are housed) have that but not the school itself. Sally Chester suggested introducing a program similar to Leadership Grow to the school and offered to help with kickstarting it. Palm Beach County would do all the fundraising for the program so students wouldn't have to pay for anything. Tiffany David suggested keeping a list of subcommittee ideas to identify what role the city could play.

### **Public Comment**

Kayla Elson opened up the floor for public comment. Tiffany David asked Dr. Prophete if she wanted to comment. Dr. Prophete said that there is a gap between K-3 and 4 and beyond students and that students start falling behind in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. The city can help fill this gap by developing supplemental content for schools (like information packages).

### **Introduction of Education Surveys**

The survey's target audiences are parents and school administrators/staff. A draft list of questions will be sent by Friday for subcommittee members to review. A list to collect names for distribution will also be sent.

### **Adjourn & Next Steps: June 12<sup>th</sup> Action Summit**

The team is looking at subcommittee members to support in Action Summit advertisement. In addition to digital advertisement, there will be physical. Subcommittee members were encouraged to send recommendations of places to distribute flyers.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:18 pm by Julie Fisher Cummings. The next meeting will be on Thursday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 5:30pm on Zoom.



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## ATTENDANCE

### Guest Speakers:

Fred Barch, Director of Adult and Community Education at the School District of Palm Beach County

Principal Esther Rivera, Principal of Forest Hill Community High School

Kare Whetsell, region's Instructional Superintendent

### Public Attendees:

Johanna

Xahejbajipura

Julia Dattollo

Dr. Karline Prophete

Show and Heal

### Present:

Julie Fisher Cummings, Subcommittee Co-Chair

Dina Rubio, Subcommittee Member

Sally Chester, Subcommittee Member

Andre Darnell Wynn, Subcommittee Member

Joyel Glaze, Subcommittee Member

Sergio Piedra, Subcommittee Member

Tiffany David, City of West Palm Beach Mayor's Office

Kayla Elson, Justice & Sustainability Associates

Emma Lipsky, Justice & Sustainability Associates

### Absent:

Alexandria Ayala, Subcommittee Co-Chair