

**President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education  
Third Meeting  
Hyatt Regency Coral Gables  
50 Alhambra Plaza  
Coral Gables, Florida 33134  
305-441-1234  
April 9-10, 2002**

**April 9, 2002**

**7:00 a.m.**     *Registration for Public Comment Period*

**8:00 a.m.**     *Welcome, Introductions, and Overview by Commission Chairman Terry E. Branstad*

**8:10 a.m.**     *Options for Parental Involvement in Special Education Part I: An Overview*

Panelists will discuss the role parents play today in their child's education in traditional public school systems, and what options may exist for improving that role in public schools and elsewhere.

- 1) Ms. Diane Emery, Public Relations Coordinator at the Cushman School located in Miami and Ms. Carol Lang, parent from the Cushman School**
- 2) Dr. Cathy Wooley Brown, State Charter School Coordinator for the Florida Charter School Resource Center at the At-Risk Institute, College of Education, University of South Florida**
- 3) Stephen V. Bird of North Carolina, parent of a child with a severe disability**

**8:50 a.m.**     *Commissioner Q&A for the Role of Parents Panel*

**9:30 a.m.**     *Options for Parental Involvement in Special Education Part II: The Economics of School Choice Options for Students with Disabilities*

This panelist will discuss her perspective that students with vouchers can be given maximum choice among schools. Allowing parents of children with disabilities to use vouchers to choose their child's schools provides a mechanism that rewards schools that, given the same resources and access to students, do a better job of providing quality educational services for children with disabilities.

- 1) Dr. Caroline M. Hoxby, Department of Economics at Harvard University and the National Bureau of Economic Research**

**10:00 a.m.**    *Commissioner Q&A with Dr. Hoxby*

**10:40 a.m.**    *Break*

**11:10 a.m.**    *Reports from the Task Forces*

- 11:30 a.m.**     ***Commission Discussion of Task Force Hearings***
- 12:00 p.m.**     ***Lunch Break***
- 1:30 p.m.**     ***Options for Parental Involvement in Special Education Part III: The McKay Scholarship and School Choice for Students with Disabilities***  
The panel will review the origins and implementation of the McKay scholarship program in Florida.  
**1) Diane McCain, Director, Choice Office, Florida Department of Education**  
**2) John Winn, Assistant Secretary, Florida Board of Education**
- 2:10 p.m.**     ***Commissioner Q&A on McKay Scholarships***
- 2:50 p.m.**     ***Break***
- 3:10 p.m.**     ***Options for Parental Involvement in Special Education Part IV: Advocacy Organizations and Related Services***  
The panel will review the role that advocacy organizations play in their communities and with local schools, and will examine ways to improve consumer-directed services for parents and their children with disabilities. The panel will also discuss the importance of related-services coordination for children with disabilities.  
**1) Santiago Garcia, Jr., of Homestead, Florida, disabled parent**  
**2) Alice Harris, a parent and the Executive Director and founder of the Parents of Watts Working with Youth and Adults, Inc.**  
**3) Rep. Elizabeth Coulson, Former Chairman, Department of Physical Therapy, Chicago Medical School and Illinois State Representative**
- 3:40 p.m.**     ***Commissioner Q&A on Community Resources and Related Services***
- 4:10 p.m.**     ***Public Comments***
- 5:10 p.m.**     ***Adjourn***

**April 10, 2002**

- 9:00 a.m.**     ***In the Classroom: Perspectives of Parents and Educators serving Children with Disabilities***  
This panel consists of classroom regular and special educators that serve children with disabilities. The Commission will hear from their perspective of what works and what does not work in today's current educational service delivery model.  
**1) Susan Thomas, a high school teacher of students with learning disabilities**  
**2) Linda Johnson, Cushman school director**

- 9:35 a.m.**     ***Q&A with Classroom Educators***
- 10:00 a.m.**     ***Case Study: The Importance of Leadership at the School-Level in serving children at-risk of academic failure***  
Crown Heights Elementary School in New York is a success story about serving children in a large urban school where 97% of the children are below the poverty line yet the school consistently scored at the highest levels for reading in New York State. This is a success story of intervening early for young children to identify reading difficulties and provide direct instruction as a model for reducing referrals to special education programs for those children who do not have disabilities. Former Crown Heights principal Erwin Kurz will discuss the school's success and his 13-year leadership as principal.
- 1) Irwin Kurz, Deputy Superintendent, Office of Leadership Development, New York City Board of Education**
- 10:20 a.m.**     ***Q&A with Mr. Kurz***
- 10:40 a.m.**     ***Break***
- 10:55 a.m.**     ***Options for Parental Involvement in Special Education Part V***  
Parental choice is an increasing option for parents of children without disabilities. Parents of children with disabilities should be entitled to the same options of public, charter, parochial, and other educational options. The growing trend in charter school options for children with disabilities is the focus of this panel.
- 1) Crisha Scolaro, a parent and founder of Pepin Academy located in Tampa, Florida**  
**2) Jo Ann Shaw, Principal of Pepin Academy**  
**3) Dr. Barry Morris, Curriculum Specialist at the Pepin Academy**  
**4) Laura Whiteside, a parent**
- 11:30 a.m.**     ***Q&A with Ms. Scolaro, Shaw, Morris and Whiteside.***
- 12:00 p.m.**     ***Lunch***
- 1:30 p.m.**     ***Options for Parental Involvement in Special Education Part VI***  
Parochial schools play an important role in the history of education in our nation. Many parents of children with disabilities send their children to religiously-affiliated private schools. These schools face unique challenges in financing and providing special education services for their students with disabilities. This panel consists of experienced private schools educators and administrators who will discuss the current status of special education services and make policy recommendations to better serve students with disabilities in this setting.
- 1) Mary Ellen Russell, Assistant Secretary for Catholic Schools Parental Rights Advocacy, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**  
**2) Rabbi Ezra Levy, Administrator of the Middle School of the Keshet School**

- 2:00 p.m.**     *Q&A with Ms. Russell and Rabbi Levy*
- 2:20 p.m.**     *Break*
- 2:40 p.m.**     *Options for Parental Involvement in Special Education Part VII: Future Options for Parents as Accountability Measures: The Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School.*
- 1) **Robin M. Wilkins, Special Education Director of the Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School, and Bonnie Schaeffer, the mother of a child with a disability who attends that school.**
- 3:10 p.m.**     *Q&A with the Virtual Charter School Witnesses*
- 3:25 p.m.**     *Break*
- 3:35 p.m.**     **What it's all about: Hearing from the Students about special education**  
This panel consists of students with disabilities who will share their experiences in receiving special education and related services. These are students who are or will soon transition from secondary to adult life. They will relate how well their schools have implemented transition services, including whether their schools actively involved them in planning for their future goals.
- 1) **Miriam Brinley, a freshman with a disability at St. Mary's College (a public college) in Maryland**
- 2) **Nicholas King, a 16 year old student from Temple Terrace, Florida**
- 3) **Caitlin Whiteside, an 11<sup>th</sup> grade student with a disability from the Pepin Academy**
- 4) **Josh Kemp, a 19-year-old student in transition from Oregon**
- 4:25 p.m.**     *Commissioner Q&A with the Students*
- 5:00 p.m.**     *Adjourn*