



Superintendent's Public Engagement Committee  
Meeting Minutes

**April 23, 2008, 8:30 a.m.–10:00 a.m.**  
**Gregory-Lincoln Education Center**

Abelardo Saavedra, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools

*The purpose of the Superintendent's Public Engagement Committee (PEC) is to support public-engagement outreach for the district's efforts in providing high-quality education, communicate critically important information, and gain valuable input from key community members.*

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Burt Ballanfant  
Rev. Leonard Barksdale  
Ann Blackwood  
Martin Cominsky  
Dale Davidson  
Marcario Garcia  
Mary Scott Hagle

Elsie Huang  
Arva Howard  
Joyce Jacquet  
Judy Long  
Linda Mercer  
Sandie Meyers  
Rev. Max Miller

Shawn Raymond  
Laura Richardson  
Rev. Leslie Smith  
Maggie Utter Solomon  
Bessie Swindle  
Melva Thornton  
Lillian Villarreal

Upon arrival, committee members drew numbers to determine service of two- or three-year terms. Absent committee members' terms were randomly assigned. Attached is a list of members and their respective terms (see page 4).

**INTRODUCTION**

HISD Superintendent of Schools Abelardo Saavedra welcomed the members of the Superintendent's Public Engagement Committee (PEC). Dr. Saavedra acknowledged Board President Harvin Moore, who was in attendance; introduced Manuel Rodríguez's new PEC committee member, Marcario Garcia; and also introduced Johnnie Jackson, principal of Gregory-Lincoln Education Center (GLEC). Mr. Jackson expressed gratitude for the new GLEC facility and conveyed its positive impact on the campus' students and staff members.

**FOLLOW-UP**

After reiterating the committee's purpose to serve as a vehicle by which the district engages the community, Dr. Saavedra thanked the committee for its suggestion that regional superintendents attend the PEC meetings, then introduced those in attendance. Emphasizing the importance of regional superintendents' role in a district the size of HISD, Dr. Saavedra then asked regional superintendents Adriana Tamez and Cynthia Wilson to give a brief summary of their regions' community-outreach efforts. North Region Superintendent Cynthia Wilson shared the work parent managers do to strengthen existing PTO/PTAs and help establish such organizations on campuses where none are currently offered. She also reported the positive impact of one-on-one ASPIRE tutorials provided to North Region parents. Central Region Superintendent Adriana Tamez echoed the positive impact of the ASPIRE sessions offered to Central Region parents and shared details of the "Community Connections" meetings wherein various topics of interest to the community are discussed. Ms. Tamez outlined several other community-outreach activities, including monthly PTO/PTA meetings, a regional newsletter, and parent training sessions.

## **DISCUSSION**

Folders containing the following were provided to each committee member:

- meeting agenda
- committee guidelines
- committee member roster and contact information
- ASPIRE flyer
- HISD Annual Report
- biographies of Odysseus Lanier and Sharon Murphy
- feedback survey

Dr. Saavedra continued by reviewing the five key areas on which the board and administration will focus in the coming year: 1) employee recruitment and retention; 2) building leadership capacity at all levels; 3) facilities and program design; 4) community collaboration; and 5) communications. Stating that the primary topic of discussion at this meeting was facilities planning and program design, Dr. Saavedra introduced Odysseus Lanier and Sharon Murphy from McConnell, Lanier, Jones & Murphy LLC, a consulting firm hired by HISD to provide expertise as the district considers the changes necessary to ensure the best use of resources to serve students. Ms. Murphy elaborated by explaining that her firm will facilitate community-outreach meetings to gather input that will help shape the Board of Education's ultimate decision regarding consolidation and closure of certain schools. She and Mr. Lanier gave a detailed presentation of their three-step community-engagement process followed by a question-and-answer period. Several committee members expressed concerns related to transparency, extent of communication efforts informing stakeholders of community-outreach meetings, the pros and cons of small versus larger student bodies, and consideration of each neighborhood's unique needs. Committee members also offered several suggestions regarding communications (e.g., asking local religious leaders to inform their congregations of outreach meetings, displaying meeting dates/times on school marquees or banners, and sending meeting invitations to parents at local day-care and early childhood centers) and the use of existing needs-assessment data available from neighborhood centers/community organizations.

## **CONCLUSION**

It was agreed that committee members will receive the presentation via e-mail and that they may send their answers to the questions posed in the presentation to the consultants should they choose to do so. Moreover, Ms. Murphy and Mr. Lanier encouraged committee members to send any input, questions, or concerns via e-mail to their associate, Ms. Khalia York, at [kyork@mjlm.com](mailto:kyork@mjlm.com) or by phone at 713-968-1661.

Dr. Saavedra acknowledged the members' concerns and thanked them for their commitment to helping HISD improve community outreach. He further affirmed the value of the work that this committee has undertaken and expressed regret that the discussion was cut short due to time constraints. He made a commitment to host the next PEC meeting sooner than originally scheduled so that discussion on the issue of facilities planning can continue and a dialogue on other important topics can be had. In closing, he asked committee members to complete the feedback survey provided in their folders before leaving.

## **RESPONSE TO DISCUSSION**

Senior staff members, under the leadership of Dr. Michele Pola, are considering the committee's input as well as that of the community at large, to help shape recommendations presented to the Board of Education for approval regarding facilities planning and program design. An update will be provided at the next PEC meeting.

**The next meeting of the Superintendent's Public Education Committee is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, June 25, 2008, at 8:30 a.m. at a location to be determined. Complete information is forthcoming.**

**Dr. Michele Pola, chief of staff, serves as the liaison to the committee.  
Contact information: 713-556-6011; [mpola@houstonisd.org](mailto:mpola@houstonisd.org)**

**2008 Superintendent's Public Engagement Committee**  
Service Terms

MEMBER	MEMBERSHIP TERM
Adams, Reginald	2 years
Ballanfant, Burt	3 years
Barksdale, Rev. Leonard	3 years
Blackwood, Ann	2 years
Calhoun, Bill	2 years
Cominsky, Martin	3 years
Crampton, Alton D.	2 years
Davidson, Dale	2 years
Garcia, Macario	2 years
Gershenson, Elliot	2 years
Goldman, Ginny	3 years
Hagle, Mary Scott	3 years
Howard, Arva	2 years
Huang, Elsie, President	2 years
Jacquet, Joyce	2 years
Jefferson, Howard	3 years
Long, Judy	2 years
Mercer, Linda	2 years
Meyers, Sandie	3 years
Miller Jr., Rev. Max	2 years
Neal, Sheryl	2 years
Nuncio, Carmen	2 years
Raymond, Shawn L.	2 years
Richardson, Laura	3 years
Robinson, John	2 years
Rodriguez III, Francisco B.	3 years
Shanklin Henderson, Donna	3 years
Smith, Rev. Leslie	2 years
Swindle, Bessie	3 years
Thornton, Melva	3 years
Uranda Adigun	3 years
Utter Solomon, Maggie	3 years
Villarreal, Lillian	3 years
Walker, Janice	3 years