

Embassy Creek Elementary School

School Advisory Forum Minutes

January 6, 2026

Meeting held: December 17, 2025

Advanced Academics

- The district is working to ensure school counselors are better informed and engaged with students from early grades to support academic planning. Example: GEM program for incoming sixth graders.

Discussion on Assessments and Student Support

- There is concern among parents about over-testing, particularly in elementary grades, where state mandates are supplemented by district and teacher assessments.
- Distinction made between state-required standardized tests (e.g., FAST/STAR, PM1/2/3), district-wide assessments, and regular classroom tests for grades.
- Frequent assessments serve data collection and instructional adjustment purposes but can be perceived as excessive.
- Parents desire clearer communication about the purpose and frequency of various assessments at the start of the year.
- Calls for more timely notification when students are excelling, so parents can advocate for enrichment or placement in advanced programs.
- Schools engage in regular data chats to identify both struggling and excelling students, with efforts to offer support or acceleration where appropriate, though individualized attention is more feasible at the elementary level.
- There is an ongoing need for counselors to help parents understand implications of academic decisions, especially regarding early acceleration and transcript impact.

Virtual Reality in Middle School: PRISMS

- Virtual Reality in Middle School: PRISMS starts on sixth grade, in select schools.
- The immersive program enhances engagement and motivation, allowing students to experience math/science in a hands-on way, then collaborate with peers to reinforce learning.
- Science teachers will also use PRISMS in addition to math, following recent professional development.
- PRISMS is highlighted as part of BCPS's push toward future-ready, innovative classroom experiences.

District and Policy Updates

- School Choice application window extended to January 28th/29th to allow families more time after board votes on boundary changes.
- School Recognition (A+) Funds are distributed to schools increasing/maintaining grades; if not disbursed by deadline, funds go to current instructional staff only.
- Superintendent's redefining recommendations include several elementary and middle school consolidations, boundary changes, and potential future campus repurposing (e.g., turning some into K-8s or regional staff offices).
- Utilization of underused buildings includes relocating district staff and exploring partnerships (e.g., first responder training centers).

Suggested Action Items

- Ensure guidance counselors receive up-to-date training on academic pathways, credit transfer, and advising for both elementary and secondary students
- Improve communication at the start of each year about assessment purposes and frequency
- Notify parents proactively when students excel, to support advocacy for enrichment or acceleration
- Continue district presentations for parents and staff to promote awareness of programs like PRISMS, Bright Futures, and school choice options