

Embassy Creek Elementary School

School Advisory Forum Minutes

November 4, 2025

Location: Media Center

Time: 2:48 pm to 2:54 pm

Recap of Notes taken from SAF Chair Mrs. Jenny Weinrub

ESE Department Overview

- Andrea Siati, Director for Specialized Instruction, mentioned that ESE serves over 40,000 students, including those in public, charter, and private schools.
- Department is organized into curriculum teams (support in schools), support and compliance (IEP compliance, Medicaid, due process), and specialized instruction (OT, PT, speech, hospital/homebound, DHH/VI services).
- Notable programs include early intervention (Child Find, Pre-K services), assistive technology, hospital/homebound education, and itinerant support for DHH and visually impaired students.
- Ongoing collaboration with charter and private schools to ensure service compliance and support.

Mental Health and Student Support Services

- Dr. Shapiro shared a story highlighting the importance of building relationships for effective mental health support.
- Services include crisis response teams, grief counseling, suicide prevention, resiliency education, and Youth Mental Health First Aid for staff.
- Family counseling is available, with up to 12 free sessions, and additional support through behavioral health partners if needed.
- Tiered interventions: universal (all students), targeted, and intensive support; wellness centers and recovery services are being expanded.
- Focus on positive school culture, behavior support, mentoring, pro-social clubs, and district committees to enhance student wellbeing.

- Xello, a K-12 college and career readiness platform, supports interests, strengths, FAFSA, scholarships, and applications, but needs better parent communication and access.

Parent Feedback and Q&A on Services

- Parents requested more frequent, clear communications about Xello, including reminders, how-tos, and troubleshooting access or login issues.
- Suggestion to create engaging explainer videos and regular bulletins for scholarships and deadlines, especially for senior parents.
- Clarification on the difference between ESE counseling (IEP/diagnosis-based) and family counseling (general support, open to all families in a zone).
- Parents asked about graduation credentials for ESE students: most receive standard diplomas (on grade-level or access points); the certificate of completion is no longer used.
- School-provided evaluations for IEP eligibility are available at no cost to families; guidance counselors and ESE specialists are the first points of contact.
- Discussion about the need for timely counselor transitions and proactive school counselor outreach so families know how to access support.
- Wellness Centers located at multiple district schools serve as hubs for preventative mental health services.

Policy Updates and Legislative Impacts

- Recap of school board decisions:
- - High school students may now use cell phones during lunch; K-8 phones remain prohibited by state law.
 - Facility rental policy clarified: routine meetings (PTSA, SAF) only require principal approval; special events need formal rental process.
 - Banner policy revised for consistency and to allow sponsor images.

- School reorganization proposals include school mergers, converting middle to technical schools, expanded K-8s, new choice programs, and boundary adjustments. Detailed discussion about the process and parent advocacy impact.
- State legislation (HB 1255, 1105) now enables charter schools to co-locate, often rent-free, in underutilized district facilities and access a share of public education funding, raising concerns about resource allocation and public school competitiveness.
- Clarified that city commissions can advocate for schools but have no direct control over district decisions.

Technology and Device Management

- Advisory committee updated on increased deployment of AI tools (Microsoft Copilot), device rollouts, and upcoming opt-in forms that clarify parent liabilities and data monitoring on school-owned laptops that are taken home by students.
- Discussion around blocking/allowing certain AI and web apps, ensuring teacher support, and the importance of parent awareness of monitoring and device policies.
- Concerns raised about access to devices, support for career tech classes, and the impact of district technology choices on instructional quality.

Community Engagement and Advocacy

- Emphasis on the power of parent voices, peer-to-peer advocacy, and the impact of social media in promoting public school successes and countering negative perceptions.
- Suggestions included parent training on social media advocacy, sharing positive stories, and collaborating with school staff for effective outreach.
- Highlighted the ongoing need for parent feedback on issues such as afterschool supervision, nurse availability, special services, and communication gaps.