

Ms. Betsy H. Kaplan, Member

SUBJECT: A PROPOSAL THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, ABOLISH THE PRESENT COMMITTEE SYSTEM AND RESUME ITS FORMER PRACTICE OF MEETING TWICE MONTHLY

For many years the Miami-Dade County School Board held meetings twice a month. Briefings on the meeting agenda were held for School Board members' administrative assistants on the Monday before each Wednesday meeting. At the briefings, the assistants had the opportunity to ask questions reflecting Board members' concerns, so that staff had time to prepare well-researched responses prior to Board meetings.

On November 5, 1997 the Board voted to meet once monthly, in addition to the annual organizational meeting, budget hearings and attendance boundary hearings. In a related action, the Board initiated a committee system that parallels the district's administrative structure, with each member chairing a committee corresponding to an administrative area. Most of the committees meet monthly, with staff liaisons called upon to brief committee members on the items before them.

Most committee meetings are sparsely attended. Few, if any, members of the public are aware of them, and it would be onerous for the most dedicated citizen activist to attend meetings of all nine committees, held on various days, at different times of the day and sometimes in various offices.

Monthly School Board meetings are lengthy, and several Board members have complained about having too little time to consider too many items. During sessions of six or more hours, some agenda items involving major expenditures and with long-range consequences have been dealt with hastily. Moreover, Board members' questions often go unanswered during the meetings, without sufficient time for staff to obtain the required information.

Most importantly, the committee system hampers our constituents' ability to follow the activities of their elected officials. More frequent public meetings, accessible to the entire community on television and radio, would provide the accountability that our constituents expect and deserve.

For these reasons, I propose that The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, abolish its present committee system and resume its former practice of meeting twice monthly, supplemented by staff briefings for School Board members' administrative assistants.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. BETSY H. KAPLAN:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, abolish its present committee system and resume its former practice of meeting twice monthly.