

Merrett R. Stierheim, Superintendent

**SUBJECT: REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENT TO REQUEST AN INCREASE OF THE STATUTORILY-IMPOSED CHARTER SCHOOL CAP ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS ACCORDING TO SPECIFIC CRITERIA AND RECEIVE THE BRIEFING PAPER: *THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY***

The Florida Legislature authorized the creation of charter schools in 1996. Section 228.056, Florida Statutes, Charter Schools, recognizes charter schools as public schools; defines the purpose; and delineates the rights and responsibilities of both the Sponsor, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and each charter school.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools established the first charter school in the State in 1996. There are currently eighteen charter schools in operation. An additional six are scheduled to open in the 2002-2003 school year. Overall, applications for a total of 59 charter schools to be opened over the next five years have been approved by the School Board.

However, Section 228.056(6), Florida Statutes, Charter Schools, establishes a limit of no more than 28 schools in each school district that has 100,000 or more students. Notwithstanding this limitation, a district School Board or a charter school applicant has the right to request an increase of the limit on the number of charter schools authorized to be established within a school district from the Florida Board of Education. A minimum of three charter school applicants have submitted formal waivers to the Florida Board of Education to have this cap lifted.

Based on the number of currently approved applications in excess of the statutorily-imposed cap, and as charter schools assist the district in building capacity, it is recommended that the School Board request an increase of the cap from the State Board of Education that will allow the district to approve new charter schools on a case-by-case basis for charters that *substantively* meet the legislatively defined purpose of charters.

Criteria for approval of new applications that exceed the cap shall minimally be for those charter schools that specifically address how they will:

- increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as academically low achieving;
- improve student learning through the use of innovative instructional approaches; and

- expand the capacity of the public school system by establishing charter schools in areas which the District has determined to be overcrowded and at sites which have been mutually agreed upon by both the applicant and the District.

Additionally, in order to present an overview on charter school implementation in Miami-Dade County, a briefing paper entitled: *The Impact of Public Charter Schools in Miami-Dade County*, has been developed by staff in the Division of Program Evaluation, with input from various district offices. This briefing paper will serve to help guide the future direction for the district in relation to the implementation of charter schools.

**RECOMMENDED:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida:

1. authorize the Superintendent to request an increase of the statutorily-imposed charter school cap on a case-by-case basis according to the aforementioned criteria; and
2. receive the briefing paper: *The Impact of Public Charter Schools in Miami-Dade County*.

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