

Education  
Mercedes Toural, Associate Superintendent

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO USE NEW TITLE I FUNDS IN TITLE I ELIGIBLE SCHOOLS TO FUND THE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM FOR AT-RISK CHILDREN**

Section 230.2305, Florida Statutes, which governed the implementation of the Prekindergarten Early Intervention Program for at-risk three and four-year-olds, was repealed as of January 2002. Changes as a result of the legislation, which moved program policy decisions and oversight to the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, will impact the prekindergarten program delivery model for the upcoming academic year. Major legislative changes include:

- A decrease in the reimbursement rate from \$4,774 to \$2,390 per child
- A change in the adult/child ratio from 1:10 to no specific ratio

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is committed to the continuation of high quality prekindergarten programs that serve as a foundation for the district's early childhood goals and are dedicated to maintain strategies that will ensure quality program delivery. Projected funding made available through the Miami-Dade County School Readiness Coalition will not support continuation of the current quality instructional model that utilizes a State-certified classroom teacher and a full-time paraprofessional, nor the support services associated with the program.

Based upon legislative changes, M-DCPS has the following options:

- Lower the quality of the program by staffing the program with paraprofessionals
- Subsidize the program with District funds at a time when the District is facing a budget crisis
- Maintain the current high quality program model through the use of Title I funding

The First Interim Report of the Prekindergarten Longitudinal Study 1993-2007, presented at the Accountability and Compliance Committee Meeting, concludes "that all children would benefit from a quality Pre-K experience." The report recommends that "Pre-K services should be expanded to all children in Miami-Dade County." As a result of this evaluation, staff recommends that the District maintain the high quality program through the use of Title I funding.

Approximate current level of expenditures for the 63 established Title I classes is \$6,066,941. Total monies required to fund 117 additional prekindergarten classes for the 2002-2003 school year is \$12,032,516. For the 2002-2003 school year, Title I will fund 180 prekindergarten classes for an approximate cost of \$18,099,457.

The Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Equity, Safety and School Support, Division of Public Schools and Community Education, has advised the District that new Title I funds may be used to provide prekindergarten services at schoolwide Title I eligible schools. Existing Title I school site funding will not be impacted by this action.

**RECOMMENDED:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to use Title I funds to provide prekindergarten programs in Title I eligible schools.

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