

Rudolph F. Crew, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA TO AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENT TO ESTABLISH THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ZONE AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE DESIGNATED SCHOOLS

COMMITTEE: EDUCATION AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Through a differentiated approach, the School Improvement Zone promotes high achievement while eliminating low student performance in urban schools.

This differentiated approach, delineated in an action plan, provides schools in the School Improvement Zone with:

- a focus on literacy at the core of the instructional program,
- a structured curriculum utilizing research-based materials,
- innovative and appropriate instructional strategies,
- instructional decisions based on student achievement data,
- supplementary education through an extended day and year,
- a proven rigorous professional development strand, and
- a reappropriation of resources.

Criteria For Designation Of Schools To The School Improvement Zone

All schools assigned to the School Improvement Zone have had low performance for three years. Schools were identified based on the following criteria: leadership capacity, individual school and feeder patterns academic performance. Mobility rates, percentage of limited English proficient (LEP) student population and Exceptional Education Students (ESE) population were also considered.

The 39 schools fall within the following feeder patterns: Hialeah-Miami Lakes Senior High School, Homestead Senior High School, Miami Central Senior High School, Miami Edison Senior High School, Miami Jackson Senior High School, Miami Norland Senior High School, Miami Northwestern Senior High School, and Booker T. Washington Senior High School. Attachment A lists the schools and the selection criteria. Attachment B depicts the schools in their respective feeder patterns.

The Organization of the School Improvement Zone

The Deputy Superintendent for School Improvement will lead the effort to advance high achievement while eliminating low performance in the 39 designated schools. A University Community Advisory Board will provide guidance, generate ideas, identify resources and supports, and serve as a critical friend. Under the supervision of the Deputy Superintendent will be two Assistant Superintendents for Instructional Support, one focused on elementary schools and one focused on secondary schools. The Assistant Superintendents will plan, analyze and interpret data, develop budgets, and monitor school sites. Each Assistant Superintendent will be supported by an Instructional Support Team composed of literacy and math specialists, a professional development coordinator, leadership mentors, and, specific to secondary level schools, a school to career specialist. The Instructional Support teams will directly serve schools in the School Improvement Zone. Additionally, this unit will work closely with staff in the following offices: Curriculum and Instruction, Finance, Budget, Construction, Accountability and Systemwide Performance, and Professional Development. Attachment C represents the organization of the unit.

Instructional Program Of The School Improvement Zone

Attachment D is the action plan which outlines the implementation of the School Improvement Zone concept. The plan provides an overview and detailed descriptions of the Instructional program. Included are examples of typical school days.

Focus On Literacy

The core instructional program focuses on literacy from kindergarten to the 12th grade. To promote literacy, common reading materials will be used at all the schools in the School Improvement Zone. The reading intervention approach devotes additional attention to children with pronounced difficulties in reading. Students with reading deficiencies and students retained in grade three will receive small group instruction four days a week in an extended day format. Students in middle and high schools will be scheduled for a seven period day, with an additional period four days a week for students at FCAT levels I and II. The seven period day will occur within the current time frame.

A Structured Curriculum

The structured curriculum emphasizes a comprehensive reading program, supplemental materials, and intervention in literacy at all grade levels. Student assessment data guides instruction by screening, diagnosing, and monitoring student progress. The instructional schedule will be blocked, and potentially double blocked. This schedule will offer teachers appropriate preparation time and students additional study time. The materials selected to support this intensive program were chosen based on scientific research and exemplary performance in the field. The blocked schedule permits special area instruction in art, music, bilingual education, health, and physical education to be delivered during the course of a school day and/or week.

Instructional Strategies

At grades 6 and 9, students will participate in a Transition Academy experience that provides intensive orientation to the next phase of their K-12 journey. The 10 day extension to the school year will support transition academies during the summer and at key points in the school year. The transition academies will concentrate on orientation to middle and high school, emphasizing career readiness, FCAT preparedness, promotion and graduation requirements, the Code of Student Conduct adherence and home learning techniques. Students will also receive guidance on how to develop positive relationships with peers, teachers, counselors, and social workers.

At grades 6 and 9, students will be housed in small learning communities that are grade specific. The curriculum content of the small learning communities will include reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies. Technology will be integrated and a research project will be mandatory at grades 6 through 12. The learning communities will assist students in developing a career portfolio at grade 6 and a job portfolio at grade 9. The ongoing orientation weaves character education throughout the year.

Extended Day and Extended Year

The plan involves a one hour extension of the day and a ten day extension of the school year. Four of the five additional hours will be used for intensive literacy instruction for retained students and those students performing at levels one or two in reading. All teachers will instruct small groups of students during the extended period. The fifth additional hour will be devoted to professional development for teacher teams and administrators.

Professional Development

The professional development plan requires that teachers participate in learning activities two times a month on Saturdays. Professional Development plan includes the use of the coaching model, critical mass training, and curriculum development. Every administrator, teacher, reading leader, and department chair in the School Improvement Zone will participate in professional development activities. The extended day will provide teachers and administrators with one hour of additional professional development every week.

Re-Appropriation of Existing Resources

The School Improvement Zone will be cost neutral to the system because the expense of the school improvement initiative will be covered by re-appropriation of existing funds. Each school in the School Improvement Zone will have a Student Development Team comprised of Literacy and Math Specialists, Counselors, Social Workers, a Community Involvement Specialist, and College Assistance Advisors (senior high schools only). In addition, re-appropriation resources will support the expense of purchasing common core curriculum materials for all schools in the School Improvement Zone. Identification

and re-appropriation of funds is under way and a detailed plan will be submitted to the Board upon conclusion of labor negotiations.

Assistance Plus

The *Assistance Plus, 2004-2005 District Action Plans for F Schools and Repeating F Schools* require that districts report to the State Board of Education with evidence of compliance in all areas of state mandated requirements by August 17, 2004 and September 21, 2004. The School Improvement Zone Action Plan is consistent with requirements in the State Board of Education Assistance Plus Plans.

Note: Aspects of this plan are subject to negotiation through collective bargaining process with appropriate unions.

The attachments will be transmitted to the Board under separate cover. Additionally, they will be placed on file in the Citizen Information Center and the Office of the Board Secretary.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida authorize the Superintendent to:

1. establish the School Improvement Zone;
2. implement elements of a conceptual plan of action that include:
 - a. negotiating through a collective bargaining process with the appropriate unions regarding implementation of the plan;
 - b. submitting the State-mandated report providing evidence of compliance in all areas associated with the implementation of the *Assistance Plus, 2004-2005 District Action Plans for F Schools and Repeating F Schools*;
 - c. directing Financial Operations to establish appropriations for funding in an amount to be brought back to the Board for approval;
 - d. changing of the opening and closing times of the designated schools;
 - e. extending the number of days in the school year for the designated schools;
 - f. initiating rulemaking to amend the K-12 school calendar for the designated schools; and
3. modify and submit the final plan to the Board no later than the October Board meeting.