

Office of Human Resources
Paul M. Cholak, Chief Personnel Officer

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT WITH FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR 60 ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY TEACHERS TO EARN A MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN READING EDUCATION

COMMITTEE: LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PERSONNEL SERVICES

At the School Board meeting of April 14, 1998, the Board approved the Comprehensive Reading Plan which included the provision of an opportunity for selected elementary school teachers to participate in a master's degree program in reading education. The READS (Reading to Energize and Accelerate Developmental Strategies) master's degree program was specially designed in collaboration with Florida International University (FIU) and the United Teachers of Dade (UTD) for elementary teachers in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). Since that time, four cohorts of teachers have participated in the degree program, with the fourth cohort having graduated during Summer, 2003. The program has been formally evaluated by the Office of Evaluation and Research as an integral part of the professional development activities of the Comprehensive Reading Plan, and was found to be very successful. The revised Comprehensive Reading Plan, approved by the Board on April 14, 2004 (Board Agenda Item B-26), continues to include the provision of a degree program as a recommended practice.

Recognizing the critical importance of improving the quality of reading and literacy instruction at both the elementary and secondary school levels, Project READS-LE was designed for the purpose of enhancing the knowledge and skills of M-DCPS elementary and secondary school teachers, including middle and senior high school teachers, to teach reading and to be literacy leaders in their schools. Following the Standards for Reading Professionals (2003) of the International Reading Association, the program provides coursework designed to prepare teachers to function as reading specialists in classrooms, and to serve as mentors to other teachers of reading. Additionally, the program's curriculum has been structured to allow participating teachers to take the five courses required for reading endorsement at the beginning of the program.

The Comprehensive Reading Plan identifies FIU as the collaborating agency to provide this graduate program. Consequently, the recommended contract does not require submission to the Professional Services Contract Committee for a waiver from School Board Rule 6Gx13-3F-1.021.

This collaboration offers a program which:

1. offers practicing K-12 teachers the opportunity to obtain a Master of Science Degree in reading education from FIU while teaching full time;

K-6

2. equips Miami-Dade County teachers with the ability to connect content and pedagogy with practice;
3. enhances the abilities of participating teachers to deliver instruction in reading that is consistent with the Comprehensive Reading Plan;
4. provides participating teachers with opportunities to develop their leadership skills as reading specialists and mentors to other teachers;
5. provides a curriculum consisting of 36 credit hours of part-time study beginning January, 2005;
6. provides participating teachers with a program whose only costs are textbooks, materials, and additional fees;
7. provides a Master's Degree program which is considered to be in-field for advanced credential payment; and
8. requires teachers participating in this program to deliver instruction in reading to M-DCPS' students for three full years after the completion of the master's degree.

Authorization is requested to enter into a contractual agreement with Florida International University to provide a master's degree program in reading education for a total of 60 M-DCPS elementary and secondary teachers (20 elementary school teachers and 40 middle and/or senior high school teachers).

Funding in the amount of \$130 per graduate credit, for a total of \$280,800 over two years (average annual cost of \$140,400) is available through the District Tuition Reimbursement Fund. The remaining costs, including tuition and other program related expenses, up to a total of \$286,855 over two years (average annual cost of \$143,427.50) will be funded by the Title II, Part A, Teachers and Principals Training and Recruiting Fund grant program. The total cost of this program will be \$567,655.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to enter into a contractual agreement with Florida International University to provide an advanced degree program in reading education for 60 elementary and secondary teachers beginning in January 2005 through March 2007, for a total cost of \$567,655.

The appropriation for this item is included in the District Tuition Reimbursement Fund and the Title II, Part A, Teachers and Principals Training and Recruiting Fund 2004-2005 grant program budget, and will be included in program budgets for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 fiscal years.

PMC/lc