

February 15, 2005

Sonia E. Díaz, Deputy Superintendent  
Curriculum and Instruction

**SUBJECT:           REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE  
                      COUNTY, FLORIDA, ACCEPT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
                      INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY GRADES FEASIBILITY STUDY**

**COMMITTEE:       INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

At the October 20, 2004, School Board meeting, Mrs. Perla Tabares Hantman brought forth an item directing the Superintendent to conduct a feasibility study to determine how best to offer a District-wide foreign language program in all primary grades. This item was unanimously passed.

The attached feasibility study supports the theory that receiving foreign language instruction in the primary grades improves academic achievement. Current practices in the District and existing national program models point to two possible ways to expand foreign language instruction to students in all elementary grades: (1) extend Spanish instruction for non-native Spanish speakers to grades K and 1, or (2) expand the Extended Foreign Language (EFL) programs to all elementary schools and K-8 centers. Both potential ways to expand elementary foreign language instruction have advantages and disadvantages. One approach EFL offers at least twice as much weekly foreign language instruction as the other, while being fiscally neutral for personnel costs. At the same time, this approach is not supported by the majority of principals and has problems with staff availability (based on the results of a survey conducted as part of this feasibility study). Extending the World Languages-Spanish program to grades K and 1 enjoys the support of the majority of principals, as long as necessary instructional staff can be hired. On the other hand, this approach offers less instructional time and carries a large, potentially prohibitive, financial burden for the District, estimated to exceed five million dollars.

In light of these facts, staff recommends an expansion of the EFL programs to those schools that have broad support for establishing the program, including principals' backing, sufficient qualified staff, and substantial parental interest in the program. Additionally, the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages will continue to inform and educate school site administrators on the benefits of bilingual instruction.

**REVISED  
A-4**

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

1. accept the *District-wide Foreign Language Instruction* feasibility study;
2. direct the Superintendent to expand the Extended Foreign Language (EFL) program at the elementary level on a system-wide basis, to be implemented through a controlled choice model within each feeder pattern;
3. explore a variety of viable models to incorporate foreign language offerings within the context of elementary and secondary school reform; and
4. direct the Superintendent to provide to the Board an implementation plan with appropriate timelines within 90 days.

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