

Rudolph F. Crew, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRE-KINDERGARTEN FRAMEWORK, *READY CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS*

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

During the fall of 2004, a collaborative partnership was initiated between Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) and the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe to address the needs of children from birth to age five. A framework for a comprehensive Pre-Kindergarten program was created through this collaboration.

The establishment of a comprehensive Pre-Kindergarten program requires a thorough understanding of current trends in early childhood education at the national, state and local levels. It also requires substantive partnerships with institutions that serve the needs of children from birth to age five. The school system currently serves approximately 7,300 children from birth through Pre-Kindergarten. To ensure that young children possess the knowledge and skills required for a successful transition into Kindergarten, the school District recognizes the need to support and work collaboratively with families and other service providers. The Pre-Kindergarten program must also facilitate training and support for approximately 1,500 child care providers of various Pre-Kindergarten services to meet the expectations of the school system for children entering Kindergarten. Accordingly, an effective early childhood system must be bolstered through a professional development program that strengthens teachers' understanding and mastery of the learning environment, teaching methods, core curricula, assessment and critical transition periods for young children.

Currently 34,356 children are eligible for voluntary Pre-Kindergarten in Miami-Dade County. Approximately, 7,300 children are served by M-DCPS in 444 classrooms offering the following models: Community Education Fee Supported, Title I, Title I Montessori, Title I Migrant, Montessori Magnet, Even Start, and programs for students with disabilities. In addition, many young children receive services from one of 1,500 community child care programs.

Recently enacted Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Education legislation sets forth Child Performance Standards, establishes Curricula Standards and mandates Emergent Literacy courses for instructors. The Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten legislation further requires that Pre-Kindergarten instructors must be high school graduates and hold Child Development Associate (CDA) certificates.

To create a seamless system from birth through 12th grade, new partnerships, unprecedented collaboration and the alignment of curricula and professional development activities must be put into effect. **Ready Children, Families and Schools (RCFS)** proposes to reach the birth to age three populations through partnerships with the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, local colleges and universities and service-providing agencies. In addition, M-DCPS will provide Pre-Kindergarten for children aged three and four and establish Regional Primary Learning Centers and Parent Academies to foster effective teaching and learning.

The **Ready Children, Families and Schools** program will ensure that children entering Kindergarten develop a solid foundation in literacy, obtain emotional, physical and mental health support and acquire behavior patterns that are essential for success in school. **Ready Children, Families and Schools** espouses a vision to raise academic achievement and close the gap for the youngest learners. It proposes an aggressive strategy to foster learning and appropriate development for children from birth to five years of age by creating an integrated system of early care and education that supports all children including children living in poverty, children who do not speak English as a native language and children with disabilities.

Authorization is requested to accept the M-DCPS Pre-Kindergarten Framework. A detailed implementation plan and budget will be submitted to the Board in June 2005. The underlying principles of the plan are to expand the quality of services provided to preschool age children and their parents through a phased implementation plan that includes:

- Regional Primary Teaching and Learning Center Hubs.
- Intensive professional development for M-DCPS Pre-Kindergarten teachers, paraprofessionals and school administrators as well as private child care providers and center directors.
- Clinical and Field Assessment teams based at the regional hubs to provide screening and diagnostic assessment services and interventions for children aged birth to five years of age.
- Partnerships with colleges, universities and community colleges to establish a professional development school at each Primary Teaching and Learning hub and to jointly offer course credits to degree seeking paraprofessionals and advanced degree seeking teachers placed in M-DCPS Pre-Kindergarten classrooms.
- Parent Academies.
- Ready Children, Families and Schools "Transition Events" to create regional networks between private child care providers and the M-DCPS system for the purpose of increasing the level of Kindergarten readiness for preschoolers.
- Enhanced services to children of teens participating in the M-DCPS Teen Parent Program.

Copies of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Pre-Kindergarten Framework, Ready Children Families and Schools will be transmitted to the School Board Members under separate cover and are available for inspection by the public in the Office of the Board Recording Secretary, SBAB-Room 924, and the Citizen Information Center, Room 158, 1450 N.E. Second Avenue, Miami, Florida 33132.

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

1. Receive the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Pre-Kindergarten Framework, Ready Children, Families and Schools; and
2. Approve the plan contained therein.