

August 15, 2005

Dr. Marta Pérez, Member

SUBJECT: REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DIRECT THE SUPERINTENDENT TO ADOPT THE RECOMMENDATIONS ISSUED IN THE JULY 18TH 2005 MIAMI-DADE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On July 18, 2005, the Miami-Dade Grand Jury released a report outlining flaws in the system by which Miami-Dade County Public schools verifies the authenticity of educational credentials. The Grand Jury outlined several recommendations found herein to safeguard the district from the future employment of persons with fraudulent credentials (Please see attached report).

- **STATUTORY ENACTMENTS:**

Miami Dade County Public Schools in conjunction with the Department of Education should seek legislative action, specifically amending the affidavit form and warning currently provided in section 1012.56 (2) (b), Florida Statutes creating felony violations for applicants and teachers who knowingly try to fraudulently obtain and/or maintain teaching positions.

- **ASSURING LEGITIMACY OF DOCUMENTATION:**

In an effort to ensure the legitimacy of the documentation presented the Grand Jury has recommended the following procedures for implementation:

- a) Formalize a library of sample transcripts and accreditation sources for internal use by those charged with verification of applicant credentials;
- b) Establish a protocol and create a formal checklist of steps to be taken by employees at each stage of the verification process, requiring said checklist to be made part of every file;
- c) Require strict adherence to the aforementioned protocol and checklists;
- d) Train all pertinent personnel involved in certification and recertification duties as to the procedures to follow, the use of the checklists, and the use of other resources available;
- e) Verify submitted documentation including contact with issuing institutions.

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Additionally, Miami Dade County Public Schools should contact, at the very least, colleges and universities in the State of Florida and establish a procedure with the registrars to receive and verify transcripts.

- **ELIMINATION OF MOTIVE:**

Miami Dade County Public Schools should impose a ban on organizations such as MOTET. It is recommended that a rule be established which identifies a pre-approved list of courses, programs, and accredited colleges and universities by which an individual can attain their certification and recertification.

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- **ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION:**

Miami Dade County Public Schools should take administrative action against those teachers who knowingly submitted false academic credits for the purpose of certification or recertification.

- **PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE INDEPENDENT WATCHDOG:**

It is to our understanding that the Board Chair has submitted board item B-2 which addresses this recommendation by the Grand Jury.

It is not only our responsibility, but our duty, to ensure that the students of Miami-Dade County Public Schools are taught by qualified individuals who have met all their requirements. One way to ensure this is to establish safeguards against those who try to cheat the system. Adopting the recommendations provided by the Grand Jury is a good first step in achieving this goal.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. MARTA PÉREZ:**

That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida direct the Superintendent to adopt the following recommendations issued in the July 18th, 2005, Miami Dade County Grand Jury Report:

- 1- Seek legislative action, specifically amending section 1012.56 (2) (b) Florida Statutes creating felony violations for applicants and teachers who knowingly try to fraudulently obtain and/or maintain teacher positions
- 2- Implement a verification system which ensures the legitimacy of documents and transcripts presented
- 3- Impose a ban on fraudulent organizations and establish a pre-approved list of courses, programs, and accredited colleges and universities by which an individual can attain their certification and recertification.
- 4- Administrative action should be taken on teachers who knowingly submitted false academic credits for the purpose of certification or recertification