

Dr. Martin Karp, Member

SUBJECT: THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA DIRECT THE SUPERINTENDENT TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO ESTABLISH MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS A "FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION FRIENDLY WORKPLACE," AND TAKE ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE COORDINATION AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES TO FOSTER CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The mission of Miami-Dade County Public Schools is to provide the highest quality education so that all of our students are empowered to lead productive and fulfilling lives as lifelong learners and responsible citizens. Our District serves many at-risk youth that face major life challenges due to factors outside of their control, and which make the act of participating in the educational process sometimes insurmountable. Many of those at-risk children are caught in the cycle of the state's child welfare system. As of June 15, 2005, the Department of Children and Families reported that it was serving an estimated 5,000 children and young adults in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.

Each year, many families in Miami-Dade choose to foster and/or adopt many of these children, but more willing families are needed. Families that foster or adopt these at-risk children provide much needed stability in the child's life, but often at great personal sacrifice. These at-risk children may be babies or older children, children who have been removed from their families by Court order, brothers and sisters, children with disabilities, or children who simply do not have parents or family members. Regardless of the type of child or situation, the stability provided by a foster or adoptive family can make the possibility of achieving an education more realistic. Therefore, in accordance with our District's stated mission to ensure that all of our students are empowered to lead productive and fulfilling lives as lifelong learners and responsible citizens, it would be a logical extension of this mission to empower our own employees who want to help these at-risk children on a more personal level by bringing them into their homes. In order to aid our employees who are willing to reach out to these children, this item directs the Superintendent and his staff to develop a plan to make Miami-Dade County Public Schools a "Foster Care and Adoption Friendly Workplace."

B-13

In addition to assisting our employees with the fostering and adoption process, we must also do our part to help these children succeed academically. Therefore, this item also directs the Superintendent to support the development of an inter-agency agreement between Our Kids, Inc., the Department of Children of Families, and Miami-Dade County Public Schools that will ensure that the needs of dependent children attending public schools within Miami-Dade are addressed. Children removed from their home and placed in another residential setting often have a high mobility rate and face other issues that prohibit them from getting consistent and appropriate educational services. The Superintendent and his staff must ensure that educational related services follow these children and that their foster parents or relatives acting in supervisory authority can receive needed assistance in a streamlined fashion.

These at-risk youths need every advantage that this school system can offer. The District can help those who wish to improve the lives of these children, which will greatly benefit our students, school system and community.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY:
DR. MARTIN KARP**

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

1. develop a plan to make Miami-Dade County Public Schools a "Foster Care and Adoption Friendly Workplace";
2. identify a number of experienced foster parents to advise and assist the school district in developing the plan;
3. submit the plan to the Board for approval no later than December 2005;
4. support the development of an inter-agency agreement between Our Kids, Inc., the Department of Children of Families, and Miami-Dade County Public Schools that will ensure that the needs of dependent children attending public schools within Miami-Dade are addressed;
5. submit the agreement to the Board for approval no later than February 2006; and
6. research the availability of grants and federal funding to improve the delivery of services to children in foster care.