

Office of Human Resources
Mariaelena Vidal, Human Resources Officer

SUBJECT: REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT WITH THE VISITING INTERNATIONAL FACULTY (VIF) PROGRAM TO RECRUIT INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS IN HIGH NEED AREAS

COMMITTEE: SCHOOL SUPPORT ACCOUNTABILITY

The Visiting International Faculty (VIF) Program is the largest cultural exchange program for teachers and schools in the United States. Designated by the U.S. government as an Exchange Program Sponsor, VIF recruits the world's finest experienced educators, matches them with U.S. primary and secondary schools, and empowers them for success. VIF teachers serve for up to three years as full-time classroom teachers and cultural ambassadors.

VIF began hosting K-12 teachers in 1989 in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. For several years, the program focused on foreign-language teachers. Presently VIF instructors span the range of teaching specialties, including science, math, ESOL and special education. VIF is the largest cultural exchange program for teachers and schools.

In the 2005-2006 school year, more than 1,700 educators are teaching in U.S. schools. VIF's highly qualified and experienced teachers work in a number of U.S. states, including North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia. VIF teachers are from more than 50 nations, including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Germany, Ireland, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Participants work as exchange teachers for three years, then return home to share their international experiences with students and colleagues, contributing to a "brain gain" for their nations.

VIF's thorough selection process includes a detailed application with essays, verification of credentials, professional references, criminal-background checks and personal interviews. VIF is highly selective, accepting only one (1) in 10 applicants. Participant teachers must be fluent in English, have a university degree or teaching diploma equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree, and have teacher training and experience at the elementary or secondary level. VIF offers logistical and follow-up support to help participants make a smooth transition to their new job and country to ensure a rewarding experience for teachers, schools and students.

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The Professional Services Contract committee reviewed the contractual agreement on February 8, 2006, and recommended an exception to School Board Rule 6Gx13- 3F-1.021, Professional Services Contracts, regarding bids or Requests for Proposals to be granted as otherwise determined by the committee based on the time-sensitive nature of the project and VIF's unique specific expertise among international programs for teachers, only a few of which exist in the United States.

The cost charged by VIF per participant is not to exceed \$11,880 per year, up to 100 hired teachers. This cost is offset in that the District only pays the base salary and worker's compensation per participant. VIF pays the fringe benefits (health/life insurance and retirement) and there is no FICA cost on a J1B visa for the first eighteen months. VIF is at this time working with government relations to eliminate the FICA payments that would be due in the last eighteen months as was originally envisioned and written in the Fulbright-Hays Act that governs US exchange programs. The anticipated savings by the District for the first eighteen months will offset the payment of FICA in the event VIF is unsuccessful in having FICA requirements removed for international teachers. These costs covered by VIF will make the fee charged per participant cost neutral.

The appropriation for this item will be included in the General Fund of the 2006-2007 adopted budget.

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

1. authorize the Superintendent to enter into an agreement with Visiting International Faculty (VIF) Program to recruit international teachers in high need areas, effective February 16, 2006 through June 30, 2009, with fees paid by The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida not to exceed \$11,880 per participant, per year, up to 100 hired teachers.
2. grant an exception to School Board Rule 6Gx13- 3F-1.021.

The appropriation for this item will be included in the 2006-2007 General Fund.

MV:mtp