

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

SUBJECT: ACCEPT THE LEADING EDUCATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS (LEADS) PILOT PROGRAM PLAN TO INCREASE THE BUDGETARY AND OPERATIONAL AUTONOMY AT SELECTED HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, EFFICIENCY AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has made great progress over the last 18 months in the areas of academic improvement and increased efficiency and effectiveness at the District operations level. Much of this improvement has been the result of focusing resources on student achievement and increased performance accountability. In a continuation of these efforts, we are preparing to launch a pilot program for implementation in FY 2006-2007 that will allow for the delegation of added financial and operational autonomy to school-site administrators who have exhibited outstanding performance. This program will be known as the Leading Educational and Administrative Demonstration Schools (LEADS) pilot program in recognition of the leadership position that the participating schools will occupy as M-DCPS moves forward into our next phase of continued improvement.

Traditionally, budgetary and operational processes at the school-site have been determined primarily by formula-driven allocations and districtwide policies intended to be applied uniformly across similarly configured school facilities. This traditional model of resource allocation and policy implementation provides little room for school-site administrators to tailor their budgets or building operations to their school's unique mixture of students and needs. Such restrictions are necessary in schools that are performing at or below standard expectations or in the event of a school-site administration that has not yet become seasoned. However, where outstanding performance has been exhibited by an experienced administrative staff, allowing an increased level of autonomy is warranted.

Therefore, during the 2006-2007 school year the LEADS pilot program will be implemented at no less than 18 high-performing schools across the District. LEADS will grant limited autonomy to selected schools with the goal of identifying and replicating effective management and instructional practices. The initial 18 schools selected to participate in the LEADS program will include at least one elementary, middle, and senior high school from each Region. Schools will be selected for participation in consultation with the Regional Center Superintendents, the Associate Superintendent for School Operations, and subject to approval by the Superintendent of Schools. Criteria for the selection of schools will include an assessment of the experience of the principal, recent school accountability performance, integrity of the school-site business

operations, compliance with School Board rules and requirements for the use of funds, and the capacity of the principal to take on this added responsibility. The participating schools will be reported to the School Board once they have been selected.

Once the participating schools have been selected, they will begin the LEADS program by developing their school-based budgets for the coming year and completing a School Strategic Plan for 2006-2007 that will include specific targets for student achievement and school performance. The LEADS schools will not receive the usual allocation of specific positions that typically drive the traditional school budget process, but will instead receive an allocation of funding based on projected FTE and school demographic characteristics (ESE, ESOL, Title I eligibility, etc.) with the flexibility to determine staffing ratios, materials purchasing, and other issues subject to the constraints established by state and federal law.

Once the LEADS schools have built their budgets and completed their School Strategic Plans, a review will be conducted by a District support team focused on ensuring an appropriate anticipated return on investment (ROI). Under this model the ROI would be measured as anticipated improved student achievement and exemplary school performance. This process is more aligned to a business planning model than the traditional formula-based allocation of resources common in education. In addition, this model, with its increased administrative flexibility, brings with it a higher level of accountability for decision-making at the school-site.

Expansion of the LEADS program beyond 2006-2007 will be based on an evaluation of the implementation of the program and the performance of the selected schools. The intent of beginning the LEADS program as a pilot is to test the impact of granting autonomy within a controlled environment with our most experienced and highest performing administrators at the helm. It is anticipated that the LEADS program will provide opportunities to improve on existing successful strategies which may then be replicated in similar school environments, create a cadre of master school-site administrators, recognize outstanding administrators, and continue to increase performance accountability.

Future expansion of the LEADS program will likely include the implementation of a "sliding scale" of autonomy, the granting of varying degrees of school-site control based on performance and other measures, expand the number of schools participating in the LEADS program, and expanding the areas of operations over which local school-site control may be granted. A copy of the LEADS program plan will be submitted to the Board under separate cover for informational purposes.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, accept the Leading Educational and Administrative Demonstration Schools (LEADS) pilot program plan to increase the budgetary and operational autonomy at selected high-performing schools.