

Antoinette Dunbar, Deputy Superintendent
Curriculum, Instruction, and School Improvement

**SUBJECT: REQUEST AUTHORIZATION TO ESTABLISH A SCHOOL OF LAW
STUDIES, HOMELAND SECURITY, AND FORENSIC SCIENCES**

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Rationale:

With the authorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, public school choice options have grown significantly in popularity across the country. Much of the success of these public options can be directly attributed to the active engagement of students and parents as a result of having a personal choice in the selection of a school that meets their individual needs and reflects the cultures and traditions of their community. Research indicates that this active engagement is an essential component of successful schools and is directly linked to gains in student achievement. However, this level of engagement is often lacking in many public schools, particularly in large urban school districts.

The compelling evidence that supports public choice options as an integral part of school improvements is the foundation for a bold new initiative in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). Through collaboration and partnerships with the community, new educational models designed to engage students and families in the educational process and bridge existing gaps in services and support are being conceptualized. One such model is the proposed School of Law Studies, Homeland Security, and Forensic Sciences.

Research on Criminal Justice and Legal Services industry:

The demand for this highly specific job preparation is exemplified by programs such as the Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs plan to provide more than \$84 million in DNA grants nationwide as part of the *Advancing Justice through DNA Technology* initiative. This program is a five-year, \$1 million commitment to improve the nation's capacity to use DNA evidence, improve crime lab capacity and provide training for all stakeholders in the criminal justice system. This initiative includes \$13.6 million to improve criminal justice forensic services. Additionally, a recent report by the Miami-Dade Police Department Training Bureau indicates that there is a need for trained individuals who are capable and prepared to meet the challenges facing today's criminal justice industry. This information clearly indicates the benefit to students who explore this career path.

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Proposed Model:

As part of the Secondary School Reform initiative, this school will serve students in grades 9-12. As a small learning community, students will benefit from a more personalized environment structured to meet rigorous standards. In addition to the credits required for graduation, students in the School of Law Studies, Homeland Security, and Forensic Science will take courses such as: (1) Principles of Public Service; (2) Criminal Justice Operations 1, 2, and 3; (3) Law Studies; (4) Comprehensive Law; (5) Legal Systems and Concepts; (5) Constitutional Law Studies; and others, depending on the area of specialization chosen by the student.

This school will operate in partnership with the City of Miami Police College. This affiliation lends authenticity to the program and will make education meaningful to students. It is envisioned that the school would be housed in the new police college training facility proposed to be built adjacent to the current City of Miami Police Department in downtown Miami. That facility is currently in the space programming/design phase and District and City staff have been in discussions centering on the incorporation of an approximate 500-seat high school in the proposed police college facility. In addition to the programmatic advantages of co-locating these facilities, the proposed collaboration would also provide an opportunity to leverage public resources through cost sharing and joint use of specialized spaces such as labs and resource areas, and/or common areas such as the auditorium, kitchen or gym. Based on the preliminary program and size of the facility, the District estimates its contribution towards capital costs to be approximately \$12 million. It is recommended that the School Board authorize inclusion of an initial allocation of \$1 million in FY 06-07 for design and a funding allocation of \$11 million for construction over two years, FY 07-08 and 08-09, since the facility is not projected to open until 2008.

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

1. establish a School of Law Studies, Homeland Security, and Forensic Sciences for students in grades 9-12;
2. authorize an amendment to the capital plan to include an allocation of \$1 million in FY 06-07 for design and a total of \$11 million for construction spread over the following two fiscal years, FY 07-08 and FY 08-09;
3. open the School of Law Studies, Homeland Security, and Forensic Sciences in the 2008-2009 school year for grades 9-10; and
4. add a grade level each subsequent year.