

Business Operations
Ofelia San Pedro, Deputy Superintendent

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO EXTEND CONTRACT
 WITH THE NTI GROUP, INC., TO DELIVER MESSAGES TO
 PARENTS AND STAFF OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC
 SCHOOLS FOR TWO YEARS**

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COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, EFFICIENCY & GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

At its School Board meeting of December 14, 2005, the Board voted, under Agenda Item E-47, to enter into a one-year contract with The NTI Group, Inc., Connect-ED, to deliver messages to parents and staff of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and evaluate at the end of year, and obtain prior Board approval for subsequent contract extension. M-DCPS has since used the Connect-ED system to deliver daily, student-attendance notification messages to parents about student absences and school and District activities. The system also has been used to convey important information to parents and employees in emergency situations.

Connect-ED is an outbound communication solution, created and designed specifically for K-12 institutions and built with state-of-the-art technology. It is used by several other school districts throughout the country, including Pinellas, Volusia, Pasco, and Monroe counties in Florida. The system requires no additional hardware, software or additional phone lines. It provides an unlimited and user-friendly method for sending information to parents regarding student attendance, PTA/PTSA events, and emergency information. For the past year, Connect-ED has been effective in delivering messages to M-DCPS parents about various events and activities, including but not limited to: FCAT preparation and administration activities, Parent Academy classes and events, Supplemental Educational Services eligibility, Open House events, freshman orientation activities, immunizations, and Saturday school. Principals also use Connect-ED to notify parents about student absences and tardiness. Due to the success and demand for the Connect-ED product, the The NTI Group, Inc. recently announced that it is expanding its service to serve higher institutions, municipalities and other government agencies.

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In February, Connect-ED was used to notify the parents of 9th-, 10th-, and 11th- graders about the annual College Fair sponsored by the District and the National Association of College Admission Counseling. More than 12,000 students attended this district-wide event. More recently, Connect-ED was used to communicate important pre- and post-Tropical Storm Ernesto information to students, parents and employees across the District. Through Connect-ED, District stakeholders received timely, targeted, and essential information regarding the opening and closing of schools during the storm.

CLIENT CARE

The Connect-ED Client Care team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through email and a toll-free telephone number. Each school has a client care representative who is able to assist with scheduling and delivering messages and to share tips and best practices. Through Connect-ED, authorized users may schedule a call from a school or non-school location:

ADVANTAGES OF THE CONNECT-ED SYSTEM

- Self-service, web-based system, using the latest technology, enabling school and District administrators to access the web, create the message, select the target audience, choose the language and send the message, 24/7.
- Capable of sending phone messages, emails, or surveys. Emails can include fliers or direct mailings to support District and school activities.
- Emergency messages are instantaneous. The system can send 400,000, 30-second messages in 30 minutes.
- School staff can simultaneously notify all parents of absent children, via prerecorded messages.
- Reports are robust, electronic and by location. Principals can review daily attendance calls online, for usage, number of missed calls, trends, etc.
- Daily uploads to ITS with information and corrections from site.
- Both employees and students can be reached.
- Outstanding customer support and training.
- Web-based system ensures operation during a local disaster.
- Pricing and system are available for charter schools.

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CONNECT-ED USAGE

The return on investment in the Connect-ED system has been substantial and positive for the District. In October 2006, schools across the District sent nearly 1,000 separate community outreach messages to parents and employees, compared to approximately 450 outreach messages during the months of January and February, combined. The October numbers represent approximately 2-3 messages sent per school to parents and employees, to inform them about school-wide tests, meetings, learning activities and events. During the past 12 months, the system generated 9.3 million calls and 36,700 messages. Additionally, the percentage of successfully delivered Connect-ED calls grew from 59% in January 2006, to 79% in October 2006. The percentage has steadily increased month by month since January. This gain can be attributed to the Connect-ED reporting capabilities, because principals are immediately notified of incorrect contact information. } REVISÉD

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, EXTEND the contract with The NTI Group, Inc., to deliver messages to parents and staff of Miami-Dade County Public Schools for a period of two years, effective January 16, 2007, through January 15, 2009, at a cost of \$930,800 annually. } REVISÉD

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