

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
ONE YEAR**

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.

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

- School and District administrators can notify and update parents and staff within minutes of an emergency situation from any phone and distribute messages to all students and/or employees in the District in under four hours.
- School staff can review reports via the Internet to track usage and success rates, which encourage regular updating of the school's contact lists.
- Connect-ED can support other communication awareness strategies, such as the distribution of fliers and direct-mailers to promote District and school activities.
- School staff can simultaneously notify all parents of absent children, via pre-recorded messages.
- In-person and Internet training is available at the request of the client.
- Authorized users may create subgroups for message delivery. For example, a school may create a group to send messages to a specific grade level or to members of a specific club. This feature allows the user to tailor the message to a specific audience.

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. 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 Connect-ED data being used to update contact information for students/parents and employees.

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 one year, effective January 16, 2007, through January 15, 2008, at a cost of \$930,800 annually.

OSP/lja