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Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants Administration, and Community Services

SUBJECT: REQUEST AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT A “TRADÚCELO AHORA” DONATION FROM IBM CORPORATION FOR FOUR SCHOOL SITES, AND AN ADDITIONAL DONATION FOR THE READING COMPANION PROGRAM FROM IBM CORPORATION FOR EIGHT SCHOOLS

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COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Authorization is requested to accept two donations from IBM Corporation with a total amount of \$160,000, for the period of December 14, 2006, through May 25, 2007. The first donation, “Tradúcelo Ahora,” is to implement the IBM WebSphere Translation Services software to translate web sites from English to Spanish for schools and community translations. The software was piloted in 2005-2006 at Dr. Carlos J. Finlay Elementary School, which has a four-year partnership with IBM through their “Partnering with IBM in Education” program and has participated in their LaFamilia activities. An additional three schools were selected to receive the software in 2006-2007. They include: South Dade Senior High School, Everglades K-8 Center, and Riverside Elementary Community School. The schools were selected by the sponsor based on data provided by the Office of Parental Involvement that substantiated the high incidence of Spanish-only speakers in the parent population, and the school’s ability to install and implement the software without any upgrade in hardware or infrastructure.

Beginning in December, the four selected schools will begin using the innovative translation software. Numerous benefits of the software include improved and enhanced communication between parents and their child’s school (teachers and administrators). Spanish-speaking parents will be able, through the use of the software, to e-mail their child’s teacher in their own language. English-speaking teachers will be able to send e-mails to their students’ parents in English and have it translated into Spanish for their Spanish-speaking families. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is one of approximately 50 school systems and nonprofit organizations throughout the nation to pilot the software, funded for all these selected users by IBM Corporation

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In addition, eight schools have been selected by the sponsor to receive and begin using IBM's Reading Companion software. Each school had to submit a letter of interest to IBM to receive the software. Every school which submitted a letter was selected. These schools include: Dr. Carlos J. Finlay Elementary, Brentwood Elementary, Downtown Miami Charter, North Glade Elementary, North County Elementary, Opa-locka Elementary, South Pointe Elementary, and Youth Co-Op Charter. The literacy (voice recognition) software will be installed into each school and be accessible to parent, student, and staff users. The Reading Companion software acts as a supplement to existing reading curriculum by allowing teachers to select books from the software's library for their students. The students practice reading with the software's voice recognition system, which provides positive reinforcement and correct word pronunciation. The software also allows teachers to view the individual progress of a student and helps teachers make assessments and recommendations for the learner.

A founding Dade Partners member, IBM Corporation has been involved with M-DCPS for approximately 30 years and has provided support and resources to the District, as well as innovative programs for M-DCPS students, including the national Exploring Interests in Technology and Engineering (EX.I.T.E.) summer camp and mentoring program for girls.

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RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to accept the "Tradúcelo Ahora" donation from IBM Corporation to implement the translation software at four school sites, and an additional donation for the Reading Companion Program from IBM Corporation for eight schools, for a total value of \$160,000.

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