

Antoinette Dunbar, Deputy Superintendent
Curriculum and Instruction

**SUBJECT: REQUEST SCHOOL BOARD DENIAL OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL
APPLICATION FOR THE NATIONAL BEN GAMLA CHARTER
SCHOOL FOUNDATION, INC., ON BEHALF OF THE BEN GAMLA
CHARTER SCHOOL**

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**LINK TO DISTRICT
STRATEGIC PLAN: GENERAL OPERATIONS**

As established in School Board Rule 6Gx13- 6A-1.47, Charter Schools (K-12), Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has received charter school applications from individuals and/or organizations in the community.

On October 31, 2006, the M-DCPS Charter School District Review Committee (DRC) met to review to application for The Ben Gamla Charter School; however, as a consequence of a tie vote, the DRC's initial recommendation was to deny the application. On November 27, 2006, the charter school's Founding Board requested an additional opportunity to submit a revised application for DRC's consideration. In light of the previously-rendered tie vote, the DRC agreed to review a revised application.

On December 15, 2006, M-DCPS Charter School District Review Committee met to review the revised application for The Ben Gamla Charter School and by a unanimous vote made a recommendation for approval of the application to the Superintendent of Schools.

However, based on findings of impropriety contained in a report prepared by the Office of Management and Compliance Audits functioning in the role of the Office of Inspector General, the Audit Committee in its meeting of January 30, 2007, voted to sustain the findings of the Chief Auditor and transmit his report to the Board. The report questions the propriety of certain lease transactions involving charter schools currently managed by Academica Corporation, the lack of transparent disclosure of the cross ownership of the properties in question, the lack of justification for all Academica managed schools' exclusive engagement of the same Certified Public Accountant firm and a questionable loan to Somerset Academy, a Broward County Charter School. Academica Corporation is also under investigation by the State Attorney's Office. Therefore, based on evidence of poor governance as documented in the November 2006, Internal Audit Report *Investigation of Allegations of Impropriety - Mater Academy Charter School(s) and Academica Corporation*, and the findings of the Audit Committee at its January 30,

2007, Meeting, it is recommended that this application by a charter school proposed to be managed by the same parties be denied.

Copies of the application are available for inspection by the public in the Office of Board Recording Secretary, Room 924, and in the Citizen Information Center, Room 158, 1450 NE Second Avenue, Miami, Florida 33132.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, deny the charter school application submitted by The National Ben Gamla Charter School Foundation, Inc. on behalf of The Ben Gamla Charter School.

AMV:elg