

Antoinette Dunbar, Deputy Superintendent
Curriculum and Instruction

SUBJECT: REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT WITH THE SMITHSONIAN EARLY ENRICHMENT CENTER (SEEC), IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$50,000, TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES THAT SUPPORT MUSEUM-BASED LEARNING, EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 26, 2007, THROUGH APRIL 18, 2008

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN: INCREASE PARENTAL CHOICE OPTIONS WITHIN DISTRICT TO PROVIDE DIVERSE AND HIGHER QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Authorization is requested for the Superintendent to enter into a contractual agreement with the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center (SEEC), in an amount not to exceed \$50,000, effective October 26, 2007, through April 18, 2008, to provide rigorous professional development grounded in the fundamentals of museum studies and museum-based learning.

The SEEC is an educational program with multiple sites, located directly within the Smithsonian museum complex. The mission of the SEEC is two-fold: to provide a model, high-quality educational program for young children, and to advance educational opportunities for all children by sharing the SEEC's expertise on a national level, thereby furthering the educational mandate of the Smithsonian Institution. As a model program with specific expertise in museum-based education for young children, the SEEC provides leadership within the educational community and extends its expertise through national seminars, conferences, curriculum licensing, and consulting.

The program focuses on museum-based learning as a strategy that extends student learning beyond the textbook by studying objects in museums and in the classroom. Objects offer real-world, concrete, sensory-based opportunities for exploring ideas and concepts that heighten awareness and stimulate interest in learning, thereby creating and sustaining an effective learning environment.

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On October 26, 2004, The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorized the Superintendent to accept a grant award, entitled "Expanding Choice Options for Every Student" (ECHOES), from the USDOE for funding under the Magnet Schools Assistance Program. The purpose of ECHOES is to develop and implement high quality public school magnet programs that promote practices that result in improved student academic performance while reducing minority group isolation.

The SEEC will provide professional development services throughout the school year to approximately 125 teachers from two of the ECHOES schoolwide magnets: Southside Elementary and Shenandoah Middle schools. The training is designed to provide participants with the ability to incorporate museum-based learning strategies into their curriculum, thereby enabling teachers to make a paradigm shift in instructional methodology.

The Professional Services Contract Committee established by School Board Rule 6Gx13- 3F-1.021, reviewed this Board Item on September 27, 2007, and recommended that an exception to the rule regarding bids or Request for Proposals be granted for the SEEC as specific expertise. Specific expertise is based on the Smithsonian Institution's history in successfully implementing educational programs that are geared toward infusing literacy with intensive museum-based instruction. Specialized Programs – Schools of Choice seeks to replicate the SEEC's program at two Miami-Dade County Public Schools which have museum themes. As the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center is the only program in the nation concurrently implementing and providing comprehensive training in museum-based education, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was not initiated.

The Executive Director of the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center (SEEC) is Dr. Sharon Shaffer.

The appropriation for this item is included in the Other Federal Programs Fund of the 2007-2008 Adopted Budget under Fund 0420, Function 6300, Program 3892, Object 5310, Location 9610.

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

1. grant an exception to Board Rule 6Gx13- 3F-1.021, for SEEC based on specific expertise; and
2. enter into a contractual agreement with the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center (SEEC) to provide professional development services that support museum-based learning, in an amount not to exceed \$50,000, effective October 26, 2007, through April 18, 2008.

The appropriation for this item is included in the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant for Specialized Programs – Schools of Choice.

LCR/MB:msm