

Ms. Evelyn Langlieb Greer, Member

SUBJECT: YEAR-END REPORT OF THE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN: DEVELOPING OUR STUDENTS SO THEY ARE ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPETE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

The Miami-Dade County Student Government Association (SGA) is a county-wide organization dedicated to voicing the opinions and concerns of all students in the District. Senior high school student government representatives from each school's association attend monthly meetings to discuss and review issues from the student perspective. Prior to the School Board meeting, members of SGA review the Board agenda, develop positions and relay them to the Student Advisor for presentation at the Board meeting.

The 2007-2008 school year has been most successful for SGA. Some of the year's highlights included the Student Leadership Conference, lobby days in Tallahassee, legislative forums, and the annual "Meet Your Board Member" meetings. To summarize the work of SGA during the 2007-2008 school year, the attached report has been developed by the leadership of SGA.

The Miami-Dade Student Government Association reviewed this report at its May 22, 2008 meeting and recommended that the School Board receive this report.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. GREER:**

That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida:

1. Receive the 2007-2008 Report of the Miami-Dade Student Government Association; and
2. Request the Superintendent to hold an annual workshop each fall with Miami-Dade County Student Government Association.

**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY STUDENT GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION**



Established 1973

**2007-2008
Final Report**

Elliott McCarthy
President

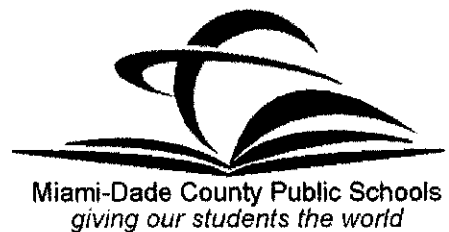


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MIAMI-DADE COUNTY STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION



Executive Board

Elliott Knofsky McCarthy
President

Samantha Jean-Baptiste
Vice-President

Angelique Gayle
Corresponding Secretary

Coral Silva
Recording Secretary

Adam Wexelbaum
Student Advisor to the School Board

Robert C. Brazofsky
Co-Advisor

Maria Elena Sardiñas
Co-Advisor

Who Are We?

The Miami-Dade County Student Government Association (SGA) is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to voicing the opinions and addressing the concerns of students who attend Miami-Dade County Public Schools. We meet once a month with representatives from every high school student government association. Our meetings are held at either the School Board Building or at a host senior high school.

At the end of each school year, officers for next year's SGA are elected by a majority vote of students representing different high schools throughout the county. Each high school gets one vote regardless of size or number of representatives and the officers selected comprise the Executive Board of the SGA. These officers include the President and leader of the organization, the Vice President and second in command, a recording secretary and a corresponding secretary. A student representative to the School Board is also elected and sits on the School Board as a non-voting member and voices the opinions of the student body to the School Board. There is also the position of Legislative Liaison which the new Executive Board appoints at the beginning of the year.

We are a representative body that facilitates the civic engagement and local involvement of the students of Miami-Dade County. We are a group that represents the approximately 330,000 students county-wide. All of our efforts are independently run by students and for students. The organization is not an opposition to the established adult leadership, but a partnership to ensure better conditions and services for each and every student regardless of economic, social, racial, gender, or ideological situation. We are the present and future. The work of the SGA is supported by staff in Curriculum and Instruction, Social Sciences.

Partnered Organizations and Committees

The Student Government Association has engaged this year in many issues ranging from our local district to our state legislature. As the voice for students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, we have joined a few organizations that have helped us in our mission to let our voices be heard.

The Miami-Dade County Student Government Association is a member organization of the:

- Committee to Rewrite the Student Code of Conduct
- District Suspension Taskforce
- Equality Florida
- Hands on Miami
- Multicultural Planning Committee

PTA/PTSA
Student Services Advisory Board
The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade
The Youth Advisory Council to the Children's Trust of Miami-Dade
The Youth Advisory Council to the United Way of Miami-Dade
United Way of Miami-Dade

District Engagement

Service Learning Summer Conference

During the summer of 2007, the President and Student Advisor attended the Service Learning Workshop and Student Leaders Conference. There, they learned and discussed the concepts and essential leadership skills of Service Learning, meet former SGA officers, interacted with student leaders from Miami-Dade County, and participated in a question and answer session between the students and Florida State Representatives Daniel Gelber and Julio Robaina. It was a very insightful experience and the beginning of the journey that would define the 2007-2008 school year.

Student Government Association Meeting with Dr. Crew

On November 19, 2007 a district meeting of the Miami-Dade County Student Government Association was held at MAST Academy with Dr. Rudy Crew as the guest speaker. It was the largest district Student Government Association meeting ever held, with over 190 students from 45 senior high schools in attendance. The students participated in an hour-long question and answer session with Dr. Crew, where they were able to voice their concerns over a wide array of diverse issues affecting all the students of Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Universal Representation Resolution

At the November 19, 2007 district Student Government Association meeting, one of the major resolutions up for discussion was to strike out the language in the SGA Constitution that stated that the District Student Government Association represented only senior high school students, and replace it with "all students of Miami-Dade County Public Schools." The intent of this resolution was to be fully inclusive of all students and student concerns and have a legitimate claim to represent their interest. The resolution passed with a vote of 44-1 with no abstentions.

Meet Your School Board Members

Following a practice started a few years ago by the Student Government Association Executive Board, the Student Advisor scheduled town hall meetings between members of the School Board of Miami-Dade County and student government leaders from senior high schools in the School Board member's district. Students participated in a question and answer session with their School Board member. The purpose of these town hall meetings was to allow students to get to know their School Board member, as well as to voice their comments, ideas, suggestions and concerns on diverse issues that affect the student body.

Non-Profit and Community Engagement

United Way Student Campaign

A member(s) of the Executive Board of the Student Government Association has a seat on the Executive Board of the United Way of Miami-Dade County. Additionally, the member of the Student Government Association also chairs the Youth Advisory Council for the United Way of Miami-Dade. The Student Advisor had the privilege of serving on both of those boards during the 2007-2008 school year. The Student Advisor and the President of SGA were also part of the United Way Youth Cabinet for the 2007-2008 United Way campaign. The campaign helped raise over \$822,686 from Miami-Dade County Public School students, which is a national record for a single campaign. At the school site level, all fundraising activities for the United Way campaigns are run and operated by the Student Government Association leaders and their advisors.

The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County

The Student Government Association of Miami-Dade County Public Schools also has a seat on the Executive Board of The Children's Trust (TCT). Chaired by Mr. David Lawrence, Jr. and its current CEO, Mr. Modesto Abety, the Children's Trust has a budget of just over \$612 million, the vast majority of which goes to serve youth of all ages in our community year round. As a member of this executive board, the President of SGA is in a position to truly represent the student voice. The SGA member also chairs the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) of the Children's Board, whose primary purpose is to provide key input and oversight to the Children's Trust on behalf of the students and children that it serves. In addition, the YAC was given the opportunity to do two key things. They were given the opportunity to put out a Request For Proposal (RFP) for \$10,000 and to elaborate and expand on the 100 Innovative Ideas for Florida's Future to make it 101. Both of those projects have been available in years past, but it was only this year that they both became realities.

Legislative Engagement

Tallahassee Trip with The Children's Trust

During Children's Week in Tallahassee, The Children's Trust sponsored a trip to the state capital for the members of their Youth Advisory Council (YAC). In Tallahassee, the YAC members were able to meet their state representatives and share with them the items of interest and concern to Miami-Dade County Public School students. The members of the Youth Advisory Council attended public hearings, participated in discussions with the Governor's Cabinet and were able to lobby on behalf of students in Miami-Dade County.

Informational Session with Representative Daniel Gelber

During the early part of the school year, the SGA was represented at an informational session with State Representative and Minority Whip Daniel Gelber. During this informational session, hosted by the PTSA, the SGA member invited to participate was able to ask questions about the growing economic crisis and the budget cuts taking place at the national and state level and other pertinent key issues and concerns. It was a productive and informative meeting which helped solidify the standing of SGA in local and state politics.

SGA Spring Leadership Conference

On April 23, 2008, the Student Government Association of M-DCPS convened the first annual Student Government Association Spring Leadership Conference. Over 300 students, representing 37 high schools from M-DCPS, came together to engage in an interactive conversation with a panel of community leaders from Miami-Dade County. These leaders included: Mr. Charles Auslander, the Chief Programs and Operations Officer of The Children's Trust; Rabbi Robert Davis, a Rabbi at Temple Beth Sholom Miami Beach; Lt. Colonel David Treleaven of the US Southern Command; Chief Raphael Hernandez, Chief of Police, City of North Miami Beach; Mr. Michael Aller, Director of Tourism, City of Miami Beach; and Mr. Jawan Strader, an Anchor at CBS-4 and My33. The theme of the conference was "Leading by Example" and "Inspiring Others to Lead." The conference was made possible with the assistance from Miami Dade College/Wolfson Campus and the Office of Curriculum & Instruction, Social Sciences. The planning and running of the event was coordinated by all members of the Executive Board of SGA.

Student to Student Communication

Given their increased popularity, online networking sites has become one of the primary modes of communication between students. Therefore, the SGA Executive Board made it a priority this year to increase email communication between the Executive Board and the respective SGA Officers at the schools. Email communication has increased ten fold and the President created the "Online President's Network" for enhanced communication among the SGA Presidents throughout the district.

2007-2008 President's Summary

It has truly been a year of discovery and learning for all the members of the Executive Board of the Student Government Association. The Student Government Association has taken the critical role of representation and inspiration. This year, the SGA introduced a resolution that we now formally represent all students throughout this school system. This has been a key step in truly equal representation. In previous years, it has been that SGA has only formally represented the high school students. Therefore, any issues that came up that did not directly affect current high school students fell out of the realm of our representation. However with this most current resolution, we are now able to formally represent the interests of all students enrolled in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. This was voted on in a district wide vote of 44 schools for and 1 against with no abstentions.

Most of the accomplishments of the SGA cannot be measured in numbers or in surveys or in events. Rather they can be measured in a mindset and in the development of what it means to tell someone "I am a part of the Student Government Association." The relationship with the School District, the Superintendent, and the School Board has never been stronger. It is no coincidence that the United Way Student Campaign raised a record number of funds this year. It is no coincidence that The Children's Trust Youth Advisory Council is putting out an RFP for \$10,000 and that the goals set for this year were all achieved. SGA can not take any credit for these accomplishments; however, one thing stands in common. They both have representation on their executive boards and their youth councils from the SGA. In addition, the United Way fundraising drive was run and led at the district leadership and the school leadership levels by the SGA officers.

I would like to thank the people who were absolutely essential to this year's efforts. First to my Executive Board of SGA of M-DCPS: without Samantha, Angelique, Coral, Sarah, and Adam, none of the things that we accomplished this year would have been possible. This is in no regard a one man show and it cannot be run as such. I would also like to thank the Co-Advisors of SGA, Maria Elena Sardiñas and Robert Brazofsky

from the office of Social Sciences. They have kept us in check, made us go the extra mile, and helped us to achieve all that we did this year. I would like to thank the School Board of M-DCPS, especially Dr. Karp, Mrs. Greer, and Dr. Crew. Without your continued support we would not have been able to make the progress that we have. Working directly with us to make our events into successes were two key people: Dr. Kamela Patton and Mrs. Karen Cohn. Without them and the Activities Directors throughout M-DCPS, our effort to raise awareness and activity would be in vain and the messages would not have been received. They found us in holes, given us shovels, helped to dig us out, and helped us use those same tools to build a better foundation for the future. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Whenever one is in a room with any of the Executive Board officers, one immediately feels that this student knows what he or she is doing and that he or she is focused on what needs to be done. It is an inexplicable thing, but it is there. This is because of the dynamic leadership qualities at all levels of leadership in SGA. This is also true with the SGA officers at the schools and from being in the same room as these individuals and having extensive conversations with them, I can attest to this phenomenon. The world we are about to be thrown into has many challenges and many bumps in the road ahead. However that is exactly what they are: bumps and challenges. They are not walls and they are not unconquerable obstacles. We have mountains to scale, oceans to cross, and wildernesses to explore so that we can solve the problems that have been thrown our way. However, we are mountain climbers, we are sailors, and we are fearless explorers. I ask that you trust in our abilities as young people and allow us to find our own paths to greatness. However, we also ask for your everlasting support and your encouragement as the challenges arise. If we try to change the world, it is very likely that we may fail. However, if we never try at all, we most assuredly will fail. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for supporting us in this school year and I look forward to seeing the relationship between our organizations form and develop. Problems are not solved if there are not sustainable solutions. Quick fixes simply will not do. The leadership next year is able and willing to stay the course, continue on the path, and solve problems however difficult they may be. Thank you for this amazing experience and I wish you all good health and good luck in whatever the future holds for you.

Elliott McCarthy- President SGA M-DCPS 2007-2008