

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

SUBJECT: EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is committed to the provision of high quality, equitable, and rigorous educational opportunities and programs for all students. In doing so, it recognizes and embraces the ethnic and cultural diversity of the community and student population it serves, and that a significant number of foreign born families and their children arrive to the community seeking education as a pathway to freedom, opportunity, and life-long success.

The education of immigrant students is guaranteed by the *Plyler vs. Doe* decision, and certain procedures must be followed when registering immigrant children in school. In *Plyler vs. Doe*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that children of undocumented workers and children who themselves are undocumented have the same right to attend public primary and secondary schools as do U.S. citizens and permanent residents.

M-DCPS has established policies which evidence its understanding and embrace of its obligation and commitment to open access and enrollment into its public schools pursuant to relevant Board Policy, state statute, Consent Decrees, and federal law. In fact, *Policy 5114-Foreign Students* indicates that for "initial entry into District schools, all students will register at the schools of the actual residence of the parent in the attendance area as approved by the School Board... and that entry requirements into the District schools are the same for all students regardless of race, color, ethnicity, country of birth and immigration status." Policy 5114 also provides for specific actions that the District will provide in assisting and supporting students and their families in enrolling and attending districts schools. Such actions include but are not limited to:

- *Providing orientation to District schools for parents and students in English, Spanish, Haitian-Creole, and other languages within available resources;*
- *Analyzing foreign educational records provided by the International Placement Advisors in the Federal and State Compliance Office to be used for those students without educational records;*
- *Assisting in the school-level registration and placement process, if a need arises, by serving as a liaison between the home and the school; and*
- *Distribution of information on parent's/student's responsibilities, rights, and due process procedures in the parent/student language within available resources.*

In addition to the abovementioned actions performed by the District, M-DCPS, pursuant to *Board Policy 2260-Nondiscrimination and Access to Equal Educational Opportunity* "shall provide equal opportunity for all students and will not discriminate ...on any basis prohibited by law or Board Policy."

Lastly, *Board Policy 2226--Foreign Languages*, establishes proficiency in English as a primary educational goal and affirms that the District "shall provide the opportunity to study in and through their native language until they can participate fully in the regular program in English...and that parents of ELL students shall also be offered opportunities and encouragement to increase their facility in English."

The above policy provisions, consistent with research and evidence-based practices, recognize the critical value that students' and parents' proficiency in English have in the learning and academic success of immigrant students whose home language is not English.

In addition, at the School Board Meeting of September 1, 2017, School Board Member Maria T. Rojas proffered School Board Agenda Item H-14, *Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Student Immigration Influx Plan*. This item which was passed by the School Board, was also co-sponsored by Ms. Susie Castillo, Dr. Steve Gallon III, Ms. Lubby Navarro, Dr. Lawrence Feldman, Ms. Perla Tabares-Hantman, and Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall. This item, which addressed policy, planning, and preparation relating to immigrant students affirmed the Board's recognition and commitment to educational access, equity, and opportunity for immigrant students.

Despite the Board's policies and positions regarding the provision of educational services and support for immigrant students, challenges and issues continue to exist and emerge in not only M-DCPS, but in both urban and rural school districts across the nation. With immigration levels sustained at well over one million arrivals per year, immigrant students are entering public schools in record numbers. Research and data reveal that immigrants and language minority students (i.e., English learners) are among the fastest growing populations in U.S. public schools. The Urban Institute found that the share of children enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade that is composed of children of immigrants more than tripled from 6 to 20 percent between 1970 and 2000, and was on a trend to constitute more than 30 percent of the nation's school population by 2015. In Miami-Dade, these numbers may be even higher. These, as well as other issues that have arisen locally in M-DCPS, have tremendous implications for school boards and districts to ensure fair and seamless access, sound program development and delivery, evidence-based curricula, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and adequate and equitable funding for immigrant students.

Through the adoption and implementation of sound policy and the provision of proper support and assistance from the local school district and community, most immigrant children who arrive to a new country and enter a new system of learning fare well. However, immigrant teens often face unique, debilitating challenges related to their age of arrival at the time of enrollment, last recorded grade level, language proficiency, as well as issues related to cultural and social adaptation and acute poverty. In their transition into a new educational system, this combination further exacerbates their chances for learning, and life-long success in a new country. Newly arriving immigrant teenagers also have a very limited time to learn English, study the required material for high stakes tests, and catch up to their native English-speaking peers before graduation. As a result, dropout rates have shown to be significantly higher for

immigrant students, especially those arriving as teenagers. In fact, immigrant teens in some ethnic groups suffer a dropout rate much higher than the national average.

While some school districts such as M-DCPS have chosen to adopt and implement well intended programmatic strategies such as *Success Management Academies (SMA)*, both quantitative and qualitative studies have shown that program development and implementation alone are insufficient to address the myriad of issues facing immigrant students, especially those in their teens at the time of arrival and enrollment. Proven strategies, best practices, and/or compliance with policies relating to enrollment, screening, placement, monitoring, assessment, evaluation, and ongoing support for immigrant students and their families have proven crucial processes in ensuring the learning and life-long success of immigrant students.

A program such as *SMA*, devoid of these essential components and strategic coordination across different district departments and functions, will not yield the impact and outcomes sought and result in immigrant students falling through the cracks.

For example, innovative ways to address linguistic and cultural barriers faced by immigrant students, specifically those in their teenage years or older, address topics such as dating norms, dangers of gang involvement, and postsecondary education opportunities. They also address parents in overcoming language barriers, cultural conceptions of the role of teachers, and predisposed notions and in some cases, a sense of intimidation of the bureaucracy of a large public-school system due to a lack of familiarity. Helping parents of immigrant students, as well as immigrant students in their teenage years and older learn about and navigate the system will enhance their understanding of not only their rights and responsibilities in a new country and educational system, but also in better understanding issues and topics such as enrollment, graduation requirements and options, opportunities for parental involvement, instruction, specialized programs, social services, school safety, and services for bilingual and special education.

This item seeks to review the enrollment practices as well as educational and related programs and services provided to immigrant students in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools and explore ways to ensure compliance with relevant Board Policy, state statute, Consent Decrees, and federal law, as well as best practices and evidence-based programs for addressing and supporting immigrant students and their families.

This item has been reviewed by the School Board Attorney for legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

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

1. review the School Board Policies, including but not limited to 5112--*Entrance Requirements*, 2260--*Nondiscrimination and Access to Equal Educational Opportunity*, and 2226--*Bilingual Education/Foreign Languages*, as they relate to the enrollment practices as well as educational and related services provided to immigrant students in M-DCPS;
2. work with the School Board Attorney's Office to review, discuss, and clarify relevant Board Policy, state statute, consent decrees, and federal law relating to enrollment and the provision of educational services to immigrant students in M-DCPS;
3. codify guidelines and procedures for the enrollment and provision of educational services for newly arrived immigrant students in M-DCPS;
4. meet with school principals, counselors, region and district staff, and the Diversity, Equity, and Access Committee (DEEAC) staff to review, discuss, and clarify guidelines for the enrollment and provision of educational and related services provided to immigrant students in M-DCPS;
5. develop a plan and process to assess and evaluate programs designed to support and provide educational and related services to newly arrived immigrant students in M-DCPS and provide an annual report to the Board on educational impact, outcomes, and opportunities for improvement;
6. make policy recommendations and/or amendments, as appropriate; and
7. provide update to the Board on the abovementioned no later than the School Board Meeting of September 5, 2018.