

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: IDENTIFICATION, EVALUATION, ELIGIBILITY
DETERMINATION, AND PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN MIAMI-
DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (M-DCPS)**

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

**LINK TO STRATEGIC
BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS, AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS**

In order to be fully included in the educational process and to reduce barriers to learning, parents are eager to work closely with educators to optimize their child's potential for lifelong learning. Understanding the value of education and the purpose of special education can provide the basis for collaboration. Like general education, special education opens doors to all possibilities. With specially designed instruction that utilizes adaptive devices, benchmarks, supplementary aids and services, program modifications, peer-involved learning environments and progress evaluations, children with disabilities can become adults who pursue degrees, attain careers, achieve goals, and set records.

The School Board has always been an outstanding supporter of exceptional student education, including gifted education. Discussions have been held at Board meetings to bring forward issues and concerns which need to be addressed and developed. At the School Board meeting of September 6, 2017, Board Vice Chair Dr. Martin Karp proffered Agenda Item H-12 Revised – Gifted Education Evaluation. Board Member Dr. Steve Gallon III presented Agenda Item H-4 – Review of Exceptional Student Education Program and Related Services. The Board always works collaboratively and is very much together to ensure that all children receive equal access to all that public education has to offer.

At the School Board meeting of December 19, 2018, the Board approved the new document *Exceptional Student Education Policies and Procedures (SP&P) Effective Dates: 2017-2018 through 2019-2020*, which is incorporated by reference in School Board policy 2460. The SP&P serves as the basis for identification, evaluation, eligibility determination, and placement of students in special education programs.

The first activities of the evaluation process for possible student placement in special education programs are the actions delineated in the School Support Team (SST) guidelines. The SST processes and reviews all pertinent information relevant to a student concern by a parent or school staff. A student academic and behavioral progress is monitored by the SST and can range from daily intervention reviews and monitoring to biweekly intervention reviews depending upon the measure being utilized.

M-DCPS, pursuant to the SP&P, follows a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)/Response to Intervention (RtI) which is implemented and closely monitored by the SST. The key components of MTSS/RtI are to deliver evidence based instruction/intervention, develop an infrastructure for a school-wide intervention system; implement an integrated data collection/assessment system to filter struggling students and to make data driven decisions at each Tier; and to have active involvement from the school-based leadership team. The three-tiered approach moves through a progression of support to meet the unique academic, behavior, and mental health concerns of all students. In summary, the three tiers include: Tier 1 – high quality teaching and behavior support for all students in the school; Tier 2- additional interventions for students who need more help on specific academic performance, social/emotional development, and behavioral issues; and Tier 3 – intensive support and interventions designed to address the unique needs of an individual student. Student's academic and behavior progress in Tier 3 is reviewed and monitored by the SST. Access to the student's intervention plan and monitoring data are available to the classroom teacher, the interventionists, the school psychologist, the parent and any member of the SST.

Pursuant to the SP&P, "A parent of a student suspected of having a disability may request, at any time, an evaluation to determine if the student is eligible for specially designed instruction and related services as a student with a disability. The District must conduct the evaluation or notify the parent in writing of the reasons for refusing to conduct an evaluation and the refusal for evaluation notice will be provided to the parents within 30 calendar days. If the District agrees with the parent that an evaluation should be conducted, staff must obtain parental consent (the following calendar days shall not be counted toward the 60 calendar-day requirement: all school holidays and Thanksgiving, winter and spring breaks as adopted by the district school board as required by Rule 6A-10.019, F. A. C.)." The SP&P further describes that "The school district shall ensure that initial evaluation of students and preschool-age children age three through kindergarten-entry age suspected of having a disability are completed within 60 calendar days after the school district's receipt of parent consent for evaluation." Evaluation means procedures outlined to determine whether a student has a disability or is gifted and in need of specially designed instructional related services, and the nature and extent of the exceptional student education that the student needs. Finally, the SP&P further states that "The District shall schedule and conduct an eligibility determination meeting, and if eligible for services, develop an IEP within 20 school days of the completion of the student's evaluation and submission of the report for staffing."

This agenda item provides recommendations to ensure that services are provided in a timely manner, that students and families receive the necessary services which hopefully will ensure success in life, and that the School Board is well-informed, fully engaged, and supportive of the needs of the District, the schools, and the students M-DCPS serve.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:

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

1. review current guidelines and timelines for the implementation of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)/Response to Intervention (Rtl); and
2. present to the School Board at the Academics, Innovation, Evaluation & Technology Committee meeting of July 22, 2019, with an update report to include:
 - a. the number and completion timelines of initial referrals, evaluations, staffing for initial placement in an exceptional student education program including gifted education during the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 school years by regions and/or by School Board Member districts;
 - b. recommendations for enhancing and updating the MTSS/Rtl manual; and
 - c. propose recommendations based on staffing needs to ensure that evaluations and placements are conducted in a timely manner.