

Dr. Martin Karp, Vice Chair

SUBJECT: SUPPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT'S EFFORTS TO OFFER SERVICES TO STUDENTS WITH AUTISM BY EXTENDING PROGRAMMING FOR THESE STUDENTS BEYOND THE CURRENT AGE LIMIT

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Autism rates over the past 20 years have grown substantially. The Center for Disease Control in 1992 showed that autism effected 1 in 150 children. Today, that rate has almost tripled to 1 in 59 children. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has programs to provide many skills and educational services for students with autism and other students with special needs until the age of 22. Based on annual growth projections, we expect more and more young adults to age out of M-DCPS's services.

M-DCPS's goal for this group of Exceptional Student Education students is to prepare and offer programs that create and provide transitions such as vocational training and internships. Many children with special needs take the next step and find supported employment or special college courses or other types of safe and appropriate programming. But there are many young adults with autism who do not have choices of safe and/or productive options once they graduate. This could be due to circumstances including opportunities that are long distances away from students' places of residence with longer daily bus commutes being an issue, or because some of the programs offered have waiting lists and are fee-based. Other programs disqualify some students, because they might not possess prerequisites such as certain social or verbal skills.

Even those who are more fortunate and gain employment or participate in programs are limited as a result of fewer hours or select days of the week offered. This leaves parents with the challenge of transporting their children in the middle of work days. Many young adults with autism are sometimes left at home spending most of their time in front of a television or computer screen and/or their parents had to quit work to supervise them.

Currently, the Superintendent and some representatives are advocating to extend the age limit for these young adults so they could be provided programming beyond age 22. This item is intended to show full support of the Superintendent's efforts and to ask the Superintendent to continue taking the necessary actions to help these students go beyond an arbitrary age. Initiatives can include putting this in our legislative platform, asking our lobbyists to advocate for this issue, partnering with other organizations and increasing public awareness of this very important issue

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. MARTIN KARP:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, support the Superintendent's efforts to offer services to students with autism by extending programming for these students beyond the current age limit.