

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: REQUEST APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 20-XXX OF
THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
RECOGNIZING MRS. PHYLLIS L. COHEN**

**COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL, & COMMUNITY
SUPPORT**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC
BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED
STAKEHOLDERS**

Outstanding instructional leadership ensures that educational programs make the desired impact and outcomes. An effective leader inspires action and takes an optimistic view of the future and sets a good example by being honest, humble and passionate, having integrity, and treating people with respect and fairness. Instructional leaders are resource providers and instructional resources. They are good communicators and create a visible presence. They are highly respected by their peers, support teachers' efforts to improve student learning, and are innovative and creative. Instructional leaders maintain trust, spur motivation, empower teaching and learning, and enhance collegiality. Throughout her career, Mrs. Phyllis L. Cohen, former Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Deputy Superintendent for the Office of Instructional Leadership has been nationally recognized as an instructional leader, a curriculum innovator, and an inspirational supervisor.

Mrs. Cohen began her career in New York City when she graduated from Hunter College with a major in English and a minor in Psychology. She also holds a Master's Degree in Education with a major in Secondary Supervision from the University of Miami.

She began her career in Miami-Dade County as a language arts teacher, and later, a language arts chairperson at the junior and senior high school levels. After serving as an assistant principal for curriculum at South Miami Junior High School and Miami Killian Senior High School, Mrs. Cohen became one of the first women in M-DCPS to be appointed as the principal of a junior high school.

As her next step, she became the school district's first director of the Management Academy where she was involved in the training of principals. Next, she served as Director of Management Selection where she obtained a grant for the first assessment center for school-site administrators. At that time, she was serving on the Florida Council for Educational Management as one of Governor Bob Graham's appointment from Miami-Dade County.

In 1982, Mrs. Cohen moved to an area office where she was appointed as a director. One of the prime movers in the development of the district's Teacher Assessment and Development System (TADS), she worked in conjunction with the United Teachers of Dade to develop and implement this newly established teacher evaluation system.

Mrs. Cohen also developed a School Assessment Model for elementary and middle schools that was extensively used to provide feedback to schools on program quality. From 1988 to 1991, Mrs. Cohen served as Region I Superintendent. In 1991, she was appointed Deputy Superintendent for the newly established Office of Instructional Leadership. In her new role, she established a culture in the school district where teaching and learning became the main focus of all actions, deliberations, creativity and innovation with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement.

During her tenure, she was instrumental in obtaining \$42 million in state and federal grants for Project Phoenix, following the impact of Hurricane Andrew. Project Phoenix created a model for rebuilding and revitalizing an urban school district. This vision for the future provided school stakeholders with the means and models to enable them, working together, to design schools that were not only effective in raising student achievement, but also met the special psychological, physical, and academic needs of Miami-Dade County's diverse student population. Additionally, these grant funds provided much needed instructional and psychological support to over 60 schools in the South Dade area, devastated by Hurricane Andrew.

Furthermore, the school district's major systemic change initiative, the development and implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), became a major driver of school innovation, inspired by national standards and the inclusion of a multicultural curriculum for all subject areas. The curriculum approach provided a new focus for instruction by identifying specific competencies that students should be able to demonstrate at each grade level and in each course. The emphasis was on the application of knowledge rather than the accumulation of unconnected facts. The curriculum also included greater rigor in coursework and increased student performance expectation by incorporating state-of-the-art teaching strategies. Moreover, during her tenure a number of grants were awarded to M-DCPS, including the Education America Grant, awarded by the Florida Department of Education to support critically low performance schools. Project BETTER (Bilingual Education Through Training, Enhancing, and Restructuring, Project BEST-E (Bilingual Education to Stimulate Thinking-Enhanced, Project TALENT (Tools to Attain Language Efficiency and Nurture Thinking, the Academy for Instructional Leadership Grant, and the first M-DCPS Urban System Initiative \$15 million grant awarded by the National Science Foundation. Her efforts also initiated the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC) partnership with M-DCPS serving as one of ten other communities and states as a jurisdiction for comprehensive school improvement efforts. NASDC provided an array of designs that best addressed educational improvement needs in public schools and communities.

As Mrs. Cohen often mentions, one of her greatest accomplishments was her marriage to her dear husband Edwin and being the mother of Scott, a doctor in Washington, D. C., and Mindy, a lawyer in Miami.

The School Board of Miami-Dade County Public Schools proudly honors Mrs. Phyllis L. Cohen, a dedicated, committed, and passionate instructional leader.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 20-XXX of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Mrs. Phyllis L. Cohen.

**RESOLUTION NO. 20-XXX
OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
RECOGNIZING MRS. PHYLLIS L. COHEN**

WHEREAS, Mrs. Cohen began her career in New York City when she graduated from Hunter College with a major in English and a minor in Psychology. She also holds a Master's Degree in Education with a major in Secondary Supervision from the University of Miami;

WHEREAS, she began her career in Miami-Dade County as a language arts teacher, and a language arts chairperson at the junior and senior high school levels. After serving as an assistant principal for curriculum at South Miami Junior High School and Miami Killian Senior High School, Mrs. Cohen became one of the first women in M-DCPS to be appointed as the principal of a junior high school;

WHEREAS, she became the school district's first director of the Management Academy where she was involved in the training of principals. Next she served as Director of Management Selection where she obtained a grant for the first assessment center for school-site administrators. At that time, she was serving on the Florida Council for Educational Management as one of Governor Bob Graham's appointment from Miami-Dade County;

WHEREAS, in 1982, Mrs. Cohen moved to an area office where she was appointed as a director. From 1988 to 1991, Mrs. Cohen served as Region I Superintendent;

WHEREAS, in 1991, Mrs. Cohen was appointed Deputy Superintendent for the newly established Office of Instructional Leadership. In her new role, she established a culture in the school district where teaching and learning became the main focus of all actions, deliberations, creativity, and innovation with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement;

WHEREAS, after her retirement from M-DCPS, Mrs. Cohen has served as Senior Education Consultant for The McKenzie Group in Washington, D. C. She also serves as national education consultant to large urban school districts and provides technical assistance for strategic planning and systemic reform initiatives sponsored by the National Science Foundation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 20-XXX of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognizing Mrs. Phyllis L. Cohen.

A copy of this resolution is placed in the permanent records of this Board.

Presented this twelfth day of February, A. D. 2020

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

CHAIR

ATTEST:

Secretary

