

Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' SCHOOLHOUSE REOPENING DATES**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

At its meeting of September 21, 2020, the School Board unanimously approved SP-1, as amended, authorizing the Superintendent's implementation of the School Reopening Plan for 2020/2021 under Phase 2 community conditions including the recommended phased launch of the Schoolhouse model based on parental choice with staggered starting dates based on grade level configurations as not to begin prior to October 14, 2020, and fully operational by October 21, 2020, as may be required by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), as well as with October 13, 2020, as a non-opt teacher planning day and verified provision of all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and related resources and full compliance with all required and represented procedures, protocols, personnel, and approaches presented regarding employee and School House Model reopening readiness presented by the Superintendent. A formal recommendation from the Medical Experts regarding school reopening will be provided to the Board prior to reopening.

On Friday, September 25, 2020, the District received correspondence from Florida's Commissioner of Education advising of his concerns regarding the Board's decision to defer the return to the schoolhouse until at least October 14. In his letter, the Commissioner advised that the district-wide decision directly contradicts M-DCPS' state-approved reopening plan. Pursuant to Commissioner Corcoran's letter, the Board has the following three options: 1) follow the previously approved 2020-2021 Optional Innovative Reopening Plan; 2) submit an amended plan for approval, inclusive of an in-depth, six-point analysis for each school in the district by October 2; or 3) withdraw Miami-Dade's Optional Innovative Reopening Plan and proceed under the existing statutory framework.

The administration has reviewed the options outlined above. Based on this review and analysis of potential actions and consequences, the following information is provided for the Board's consideration.

Should the Board choose to move forward with option 1 to follow the approved plan on file with the FLDOE, staff is prepared to implement a staggered reopening plan, subject to FLDOE concurrence, beginning with students returning as early as October 5. Under this scenario, October 2<sup>nd</sup> will be a non-opt teacher planning day.

Should the Board choose to move forward with option 2 to file an amended plan inclusive of the required analysis of all schools, it should be noted that such a plan would still be subject to approval by FLDOE. Further, point 6 of the required analysis stipulates that, "If

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you determine that not a single student can receive in-person instruction at a school facility within the timeframe reflected in [the] approved reopening plan, please provide a reasoned explanation to support that finding, citing the specific health and safety guidance you are relying upon.” Subsequent to the receipt of this letter, on Friday, September 25, 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis signed Executive Order 20-244 initiating Phase 3 of Florida’s Reopening Plan allowing all businesses, parks, and beaches to reopen; and on Saturday, September 26, 2020, Mayor Carlos Gimenez signed Emergency Order 30-20 relaxing previously imposed local restrictions in conformance with the Governor’s order.

Finally, if the Board chooses to pursue option 3 to withdraw Miami-Dade’s Optional Innovative Reopening Plan and proceed under the existing statutory framework, this administration believes that the result could carry significant financial implications if the State determined that M-DCPS would no longer qualify for “guaranteed funding at levels beyond what would otherwise be available,” because the District was deemed to be operating in a manner inconsistent with the Commissioner’s Emergency Order 2020-06.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the administration that the School Board consider whether to pursue the first option offered by Commissioner Corcoran to follow the previously approved Reopening Plan inclusive of a timeline to allow students to begin returning to the schoolhouse as early as October 5 or the second option to sustain its position adopted at its meeting of September 21 and submit an amended reopening plan to FLDOE.

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**RECOMMENDED:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida,

1. consider revising the adopted school reopening timeline to allow a return of students to in-person schooling as early as October 5, 2020, with a non-opt teacher planning day set for October 2, 2020; and
2. authorize the Superintendent to take actions necessary to secure the Florida Department of Education’s approval of the revised reopening timeline, including a potential staggered deployment of the schoolhouse model, with a student start date of October 5, 2020, in order to ensure the District remains eligible for the reporting flexibility and financial continuity guaranteed under Emergency Order 2020-EO-06; or
3. sustain its previously adopted action with staggered starting dates not to begin prior to October 14, 2020 and fully operational by October 21, 2020, and authorize the Superintendent to submit an amended Innovative Reopening Plan to the FLDOE.

Added