

Management and Accountability  
Carol Cortes, Deputy Superintendent

**SUBJECT: EVALUATION OF THE K-8 CENTERS PROGRAM**

As part of a pilot program, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) inaugurated two K-8 schools, or K-8 centers, during the 1998-99 school year. Three additional K-8 centers opened at the beginning of the current school year, 1999-2000. A K-8 center combines grades in one location or school that are usually assigned to separate elementary (PK-5) and middle schools (6-8). The K-8 centers model is based on the idea that students benefit by reducing the number of school transitions they make. With the goal of verifying this claim, the present evaluation contrasts the school performance of students at K-8 centers with that of students attending 'traditional' middle schools.

As part of the evaluation, all 637 sixth-grade students attending K-8 centers during the entire 1999-2000 school year were targeted for participation. Each K-8 student was matched to a student attending one of 15 neighboring middle schools according to the following variables: grade, ethnicity, gender, free/reduced-price lunch status and Stanford Achievement Scores for the previous year in both reading and mathematics. The 1999-2000 school performance of K-8 students was then compared to that of the matched students. The attitude toward school of sixth-graders at both K-8 and comparison schools was measured with the year 2000 School Climate Survey. Additionally, the parents of all K-8 students, as well as K-8 center teachers, were surveyed, and the K-8 center principals were interviewed.

This evaluation was conducted during the first year of an extended process that will track students entering K-8 centers until they reach high school and will compare their performance to that of students attending 'traditional' middle schools. A summary of this evaluation, including recommendations, is contained in the Executive Summary beginning on page iii of the report.

Copies of this report will be distributed to Board Members, the Superintendent of Schools, and appropriate district staff and will be placed on file in the Office of the Recording Secretary to the School Board and in the Citizen Information Center.

**RECOMMENDED:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, receive the report Evaluation of the K-8 Centers Program.