

May 15, 2001

Jacqueline V. Pepper, Member

**SUBJECT: REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, DIRECT THE SUPERINTENDENT TO DRAFT A NEW BOARD RULE TO ALLOW INFORMAL MONTHLY DISCUSSION SESSIONS OF ALL BOARD MEMBERS FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING POLICY ISSUES AND B BOARD ITEMS PROPOSED BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS AT THEIR DISCRETION. THE RULE IS TO CONTAIN PROVISIONS THAT 1) NO VOTES OF ANY TYPE SHALL BE TAKEN IN THESE INFORMAL SESSIONS, 2) THE SESSIONS ARE TO BE FACILITATED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESIGNEE, AND 3) ALL REQUIREMENTS OF THE SUNSHINE LAW ARE TO BE MET.**

Conceptually, approval of this item would provide for monthly informal sessions (in the sunshine) where all interested Board Members could discuss among themselves proposed solutions to District policy issues with the objective of arriving at workable, practical policies which will solve District problems.

This proposal would provide a new method for Board Members to discuss and develop policy issues as well to discuss any B agenda items an individual Board member is considering bringing forward. This would allow the Board to benefit from the diverse knowledge and experience of Board Members which under the present structure can not be utilized due to restrictions of the Sunshine Law. The Sunshine Law prohibits Board members from participating in private discussions with other Board members about any issue that may come before the Board in the future. An informal setting will facilitate frank and open discussions and help the Board Members to function more effectively together. By using these discussion sessions to allow input from all interested Board Members through open and candid discussion prior to developing individual solutions to complex issues, better solutions will be developed. It is virtually impossible for the Board to develop a workable amendment to a complex policy issue during a regular Board meeting.

Because no formal Board action could be taken at these discussion sessions, there would be no quorum requirements, and, thus, Board members would be free to attend or not attend, at their convenience. In order to comply with the Sunshine Law, agendas would be established and advertised. Topics for discussion could be: 1) Any proposed B agenda item which a Board Member wishes to have discussed, or 2) Policy issues, which could be proposed by any Board Member.

In order to ensure these discussion sessions would be informal and productive, there would not be a chairperson, but would be a facilitator who would be selected

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by the Superintendent from his staff. The facilitator would be responsible for limiting the discussions to items on the advertised agenda.

The Superintendent's designee would be responsible for taking and publishing minutes, for preparing the agenda, for advertising the sessions, and for establishing a location for the discussion sessions. The location and layout selected should be conducive for open and frank discussions among the Board Members.

It is proposed that discussion sessions be held on the Wednesday prior to each regular Board meeting. In order to provide for preparation of the discussion session agenda and advertising the session five days in advance, proposed items to be discussed would need to be turned in to the Superintendent by each participating Board Member the same day as agenda items are now due before each Board Meeting.

While it is anticipated that these discussion sessions would have some effect on reducing the amount of discussion on a given agenda item during the actual Board meeting, it is anticipated that each B item would still be discussed. Since the number of B items seems to be increasing and may continue to do so, discussion sessions would streamline the process, help eliminate redundancy of proposals, and reduce conflict between proposals of different Board Members.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
JACQUELINE V. PEPPER:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida direct the Superintendent to draft a new Board Rule to allow informal monthly discussion sessions of all interested board members for the purpose of discussing policy issues and B Board Agenda Items proposed by individual board members at their discretion. The rule is to contain provisions that 1) No votes of any type shall be taken in these informal sessions, 2) The sessions are to be facilitated by the Superintendent's designee, 3) All requirements of the Sunshine Law are to be met. The draft Board Rule is to be presented to be Board at or before the June 20, 2001, Board Meeting.