

Education
Mercedes Toural, Associate Superintendent

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR SCHOOL BOARD APPROVAL FOR THE DESIGNATION OF SELECTED SCHOOLS IN REGION III TO BE INCLUDED AS PART OF THE / CHOOSE! INITIATIVE

COMMITTEE: EDUCATION AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS

On October 23, 2002, the School Board approved Agenda Item A-5, which accepted a grant award of \$14,617,615 from the United States Department of Education for the implementation of the Voluntary Public School Choice Program (VPSCP), as authorized under the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. The purpose of the VPSCP is to support efforts to establish or expand public school choices for parents. The District proposal, titled *I Choose!*, is a five-year initiative which will provide a broad array of educational opportunities and increased transportation service for schools within compact geographic *Choice Zones*. On November 20, 2002, the School Board approved Agenda Item A-3, which established Ada Merritt Elementary School, the District's first commuter school, as the initial school designated under the *I Choose!* initiative.

School Board approval is now being sought to include the following schools within the initiative:

- **Lillie C. Evans Elementary School** will be designated as a professional development laboratory school affiliated with Florida International University (FIU). The school will focus on literacy development, language, literature, writing, journalism, and broadcast media.
- **Poinciana Park Elementary School** will be designated as a professional development laboratory school affiliated with a local college or university. The school will focus on mathematics and science. The school's large exceptional student education (ESE) population will also serve to train future teachers as a model ESE inclusion center.
- **Lorah Park Elementary School** will implement an International Studies program for selected world languages.
- **Melrose Elementary School** will implement an International Studies program for selected world languages.

- **Earlington Heights Elementary School** will implement the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program.
- **Liberty City Elementary School** will extend the Calvert Model, currently being implemented in grades Kindergarten to two, to all grade levels.
- **Martin Luther King Elementary School** will offer a Pre-K to grade two Montessori program.
- **Brownsville Middle School** will be the District's first All-Academy middle school program. The school will offer various distinct programs accommodating articulation needs from the preceding elementary choice programs.

Should any of the proposed *I Choose!* models necessitate adjustments to attendance boundary configurations, such changes would be subject to the Attendance Boundary Committee process in the 2003-04 school year as well as to subsequent School Board approval.

These schools have been selected for inclusion in the *I Choose!* initiative because they have been adversely affected with declining enrollment due to the Hope VI Project, McKay Scholarships, Opportunity Scholarships, and the Florida Child scholarship program. The proximity of these schools to overcrowded areas such as Hialeah, Miami Lakes, and Doral will likely generate a voluntary shift of students whose parents wish to take advantage of the enhanced learning opportunities being implemented through this initiative.

The process to convert these schools into model choice programs described will be a two-year process, partially funded by the *I Choose!* grant, with full implementation in the 2004-2005 school year. Each school will receive an annual budget not to exceed \$150,000 for the first two years of the program. Additional funds will be allocated from existing sources currently budgeted at each school e.g., Title I, Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E), magnet program/school special allocation funding, and school discretionary fund allocations. Continued funding for programs that prove effective after the initial two year implementation will be submitted for consideration through the District's annual budget process.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida approve the designation of the following schools in Region III to be included as part of the *I Choose!* initiative:

- Lillie C. Evans Elementary School,
- Poinciana Park Elementary School,
- Lorah Park Elementary School,
- Melrose Elementary School,
- Earlington Heights Elementary School,
- Liberty City Elementary School,
- Martin Luther King Elementary School, and
- Brownsville Middle School.

MB:dcr