

Dr. Martin Karp, Board Member

SUBJECT: GIFTED EDUCATION EVALUATION

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, EVALUATION AND TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS & INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS

Miami-Dade County Public Schools' (M-DCPS) record of achievement has garnered international, national and state honors. Included in the growing list of accolades are record-breaking graduation rates and numbers of associate degrees, and unprecedented growth in new choice/magnet programs bringing the total to nearly six hundred. An opportunity exists to look at our gifted programs and address each student's Greatest Priority Educational Need (GPEN), which addresses individual talents.

Traditionally, gifted programs in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools offer a differentiated curriculum for students who benefit from goals and objectives that emphasize developing critical and creative thinking skills specifically created for divergent thinkers.

At different times in the past, there was a need to review and recalibrate. Agenda item B-14, at the August 17, 2005 School Board meeting directed the Superintendent to evaluate the implementation of gifted programs, and to address the shortage of gifted endorsed and certified teachers. What followed was the report *Revamping Education for Gifted and All Learners (REGAL) Plan*, which authorized the implementation of a three year plan of action to restructure gifted K-12 programs in M-DCPS. One outcome was the establishment of gifted programs in every school across the District. At the October 17, 2007 School Board meeting, item H-23 addressed the issue of a single text core adoption of a reading series that was not challenging and limiting.

Today, the challenge is that grading formulas place a greater emphasis on standardized tests. Therefore, there is a tendency to exert less effort in developing and delivering curricula that provide students with in-depth units of study based on a thematic approach to learning. There is a lesser likelihood of encouraging participation in academic competitions, increasing experiences in hands-on exercises, and on delivering lessons that emphasize strengthening each child's GPEN. More recognition is given to improving basic skills, which ultimately adds pressure to teach gifted classes at all levels using acceleration rather than implementing a differentiated curriculum, which recognizes the needs of individual learners.

Widely held perceptions over the years have led many to conclude that students who qualify for gifted programs will ultimately succeed on the strength of their own academic abilities and talents. Gifted children are often incorrectly seen as not needing special help or instruction. An erroneous point of view is that gifted students will do well no matter what kind of education they receive (America 2000). This is far from the case.

Gifted children are at risk for boredom, frustration, underachievement, using drugs, turning to delinquency and committing suicide. (Teaching Gifted Children). A study by Ralph, Goldberg and Passow classified 42 percent of gifted students as underachievers. A study by Harvey and Seely of the juvenile courts in Colorado revealed that 15 percent of the delinquent population was composed of students in the top 3 percent of the nation intellectually. This is five times higher than any other group, if taken proportionately.

There is a stereotype of a gifted child being well behaved and a high academic achiever. In reality, some of the most talented gifted minds are people who have shown gifted exceptionality and another exceptionality (e.g. ADHD, dyslexia, speech impairment). These students are often referred to as the 2E's. Some examples of 2E's were Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Helen Keller, and Steve Jobs. Extra workload and a pure acceleration model might not be the appropriate education for all gifted students. Each subgroup of gifted students must be evaluated to see if an education plan is in place that supports each student's growth in reaching his or her full potential while recognizing that some students may at times distract fellow classmates during this process.

Every gifted child needs to be challenged. There are signs of a child's ability early on and they should not be ignored. At John Hopkins Center for Talented Youth, early talent is identified and there is a focus on children developing their talents at young ages. The Center has had major mathematicians go through their door and has included people like Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, Google's co-founder Sergey Brin, and musician Lady Gaga. If we look around, many countries are starting to invest at home by allocating significant resources in gifted education. In one nation, a major National Talent Development plan was enacted to support and guide top students into science

In M-DCPS, gifted programs are affording many students the opportunity to receive the appropriate services and achieve academic excellence. Nevertheless, the time is right for an evaluation of current gifted services and the level of differentiation in the curriculum, and to determine if the District is addressing the needs of gifted children who have another exception. If the evaluation shows the need for modification or remediation, then immediate action is needed.

As we continue to focus on expanding choice options and improving services for all learners, consideration should be given for re-instating the District Parent Advisory Committee for Gifted Education, and re-evaluating the models of gifted programs offered in the District.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. MARTIN KARP:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to:

1. Evaluate current gifted services and the level of differentiation in the curriculum, which would include surveying students, parents, teachers and administrators about such services; and
2. Determine if a special magnet or school curriculum, or type of training needs to be added or given for the purposes of educating gifted children with dual exceptionalities; and,
3. Explore reinstating the District Parent Advisory Committee for Gifted Education; and,
4. Provide a report by the October 2017 Miami-Dade County School Board meeting.