

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

**SUBJECT: REVIEW OF BILINGUAL SPEAKERS IN SCHOOLS, REGIONS  
AND DISTRICT OFFICES**

**COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC  
BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS**

Miami-Dade County Public School (M-DCPS) remains committed to the engagement of all parental and community stakeholders regardless of race, color, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and/or home-language. *Pillar IV, Priority 3 of M-DCPS' Vision 2020 Strategic Plan* focuses on improving parental involvement at the school site, specifically through the "development of content for home-school communications for elementary and secondary levels in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole." In doing so, it is critically important for the district to strategically provide bilingual speakers to schools, parents, and related community stakeholders, based on data, throughout the district and at school and district-sponsored and related events.

The importance of having bilingual speakers in M-DCPS' has grown as the number of parents and community stakeholders who speak languages other than English has increased. In fact, over the past 30 years, the number of people who speak a language other than English has grown exponentially, a growth that has been significantly realized in Miami-Dade County and other areas whose residents send their children to district schools and interact with regional and district offices.

According to a recent U.S. Census Bureau report based on data collected between 2009 and 2013, more than half of South Florida's population ages five and older speaks a language other than English at home. It also reveals that in total, 128 languages are spoken across Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties. While English is still the most popular language spoken at home in Broward and Palm Beach counties, the number of Spanish-speaking households far outnumbers English-only households in Miami-Dade County. In addition to Spanish, the number of Creole-speaking households are significant and reflected in the student population in district schools, especially those located in communities with a high concentration of Haitians and Haitian-Americans.

At the School Board level, the importance of having bilingual speakers in M-DCPS was realized when a Haitian-Creole speaking parent addressed the Board on an issue at the meeting of July 26, 2017. The unavailability of a Haitian-Creole speaking employee at the moment rendered the Board unable to understand and respond to the speaker's concerns. This incident, albeit isolated at a School Board Meeting, illuminated the chasm of communication and understanding that may exist in M-DCPS' schools and/or region and district offices - locations in which parents and community stakeholders frequent and endeavor to communicate regarding the education of their children and/or concerns of the community.

Research has posited that while having a bilingual speaker on staff can be helpful to any business, there are certain businesses where it is particularly beneficial and critically important such as education and healthcare. To be better able to communicate with and support parents and school stakeholders who speak English as a second language, it is important that a member of the school staff such as an administrator, counselor, or office staff member is a bilingual speaker.

In addition to hiring new employees who speak languages other than English, school districts may also consider having their existing employees learn other languages. As incentives, districts can offer to pay for the training and subsequently stipends to employees who pursue learning and acquire languages deemed a school or districtwide critical shortage area.

This item seeks to conduct a review and analysis of the availability of bilingual speakers in M-DCPS' schools, region and district offices, and at school and district-sponsored and related events. It also seeks to explore ways to ensure the recruitment, training, and provision of bilingual employees, based on data, to assigned schools, region and district offices, and at school and district-sponsored and related events. This item, however, does not seek to impose any minimum requirements regarding bilingualism for applicants seeking employment with M-DCPS.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

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

1. conduct an assessment of bilingual staff, specifically, administrators, counselors, or office staff members at schools and region and district offices for the languages of Spanish and Haitian-Creole;
2. review and analyze the demographic and Home Language Survey data at schools where there is a high percentage of parents and community stakeholders whose home language not English and is Spanish and Haitian-Creole;
3. determine the availability of bilingual staff, specifically, administrators, counselors, or office staff members at schools that speak Spanish and Haitian-Creole, based on established percentage thresholds of students whose home language is not English and is Spanish or Haitian-Creole;
4. explore strategies to ensure the hiring, assignment, training, and/or recruitment of bilingual staff for schools and region and district offices, where needed, and take appropriate action that do not include additional bilingual requirements for applicants seeking employment with M-DCPS; and
5. provide update to the Board no later than the Board Meeting of December 6, 2017.