

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: PREKINDERGARTEN TEACHERS**

**COMMITTEE: FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC**

**BLUEPRINT: HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS, LEADERS AND STAFF**

When a child enters kindergarten lacking the necessary skills to be successful, it becomes difficult to move him or her forward. When a teacher gets a child who cannot express himself or herself because of limited vocabulary or a child who does not know how to follow directions or positively interact with his or her peers, it affects the teacher's ability to teach the kindergarten curriculum because he/she has to help build the foundation that should have been built before entering kindergarten.

Many students attend the outstanding prekindergarten program offered in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). Throughout the years, we have seen that there is a significant difference among those students who attended prekindergarten and those who did not. These students have a higher vocabulary, are more able to follow directions, are more confident, and have the ability to soar higher.

Without a doubt, the prekindergarten curriculum offered in M-DCPS is exceptional and the teachers in the program are brilliant and remarkable and they merit the respect and admiration they so richly deserve. However, Florida Statute (F.S.) 1012.01 does not define prekindergarten teachers as instructional personnel. The statute states "*Instructional personnel means any K-12 staff member whose function includes the provision of direct instructional services to students. Instructional personnel also includes K-12 personnel whose functions provide direct support in the learning process of students.*" Furthermore, pursuant to state certification requirements in Florida, specialization requirements for certification in the area of prekindergarten/primary education (age three through grade three) are just as rigorous as those for other certification areas like elementary education or subject area specializations. Prekindergarten teachers were not eligible for Florida's Best and Brightest Teacher program because they were not considered instructional personnel.

Additionally, pursuant to F.S. 1012.71, The Florida Teachers Classroom Supply Program, the term "classroom teacher" means a certified teacher employed by a public school district or a public charter school in that district on or before September 1 of each year whose full-time or job-share responsibility is the classroom instruction of students in prekindergarten through grade 12, including full-time media specialists and certified counselors serving students in prekindergarten through grade 12, who are funded through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP)."

Only prekindergarten Exceptional Student Education (ESE) teachers funded under the FEFP were eligible. Lastly, the 2020 Florida Legislature created the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation to increase the minimum teacher salary to \$47,500. However, the law specifically addresses those classroom teachers defined in F. S. 1012.01(2)(a) and prekindergarten teachers funded in the Florida Education Finance Program.

This agenda item authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to include in the 2021 M-DCPS State Legislative Program appropriate language to address the inclusion of prekindergarten teachers as instructional personnel in Florida law. It further requests for the Superintendent to review current Florida Statutes and make recommendations to the Board as to whether or not any additional language should be considered in the 2021 State Legislative Program to include prekindergarten teachers in all state enhancement programs.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to include in the 2021 M-DCPS State Legislative Program appropriate language to address the inclusion of prekindergarten teachers as instructional personnel in Florida law; and to review current Florida Statutes and make recommendations to the Board as to whether or not any additional language should be considered in the 2021 State Legislative Program to include prekindergarten teachers in all state enhancement programs; and provide an updated report of his findings to the Board by August 12, 2020.