

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNATING MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (M-DCPS) AS A MULTILINGUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC**

**PLAN: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS, & INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has been a national leader in developing and implementing multilingual programs. The first publicly funded bilingual school in the United States opened its doors at Coral Way Elementary School on September 3, 1963. The international studies program has surpassed expectations with the expansion of dual language programs throughout the school district and international agreements with the governments of Spain, France, Germany, and Italy. Miami-Dade County Public Schools students using a home language other than English include over 170,000 students who speak Spanish; over 9,900 Haitian Creole; 2,223 Portuguese; 1,287 Russian; and 1,149 speak French (M-DCPS *Statistical Highlights 2020-2021*).

Students who learn to speak more languages may develop an appreciation for other cultures and an essential acceptance of cultural differences. For all students, learning a second language can mean higher cognitive function, better grades, increased language proficiency, and higher graduation rates and college enrollment.

As future citizens of the world, students may be more diverse and more willing and open to experience and understand what other cultures have to offer. Career options are expanded many times over people who speak only one language as the world has become smaller and definitely more interconnected. Business executives involved in international companies and organizations look to hire individuals who may speak more than one language and will be able to relate to foreign clients and contacts. Multilingualism can enhance employment opportunities, career advancement, and entrepreneurship development.

For decades, the School Board has consistently supported multilingual programs in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Throughout the years, a leader and a supportive champion of multilingual education has always been Board Chair Perla Tabares Hantman who has proffered several agenda items related to this topic. Some of these include the following:

- Board meeting of August 27, 1997, Agenda Item B-7 – Reaffirm the district’s goal of bilingualism. Review and revise the 1997-98 formulas for the Bilingual/Foreign Language programs. Directed the Superintendent to design and implement a plan to improve program delivery at the elementary school level.

- Board meeting of August 22, 2001, Agenda Item K-13 – Reconvene the Ad Hoc Multilingual Task Force
- Board meeting of February 11, 2004, Agenda Item D-5 – Request that the School Board of Miami-Dade County Direct the Superintendent to Develop a Plan for a Public Awareness Campaign to Educate Students and Parents on the Advantages of Being Bilingual and Biliterate
- Board meeting of October 11, 2006, Agenda Item B-7 – Reconvene the Ad Hoc Multilingual Task Force
- Board meeting of July 15, 2009, Agenda Item H-3 – Request Report on the Implementation Status of the Recommendations of the *Multilingual Task Force 2007*
- Board meeting of September 9, 2015, Agenda Item H-14 – Request that the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve the Creation of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Seal of Biliteracy to Recognize High School Graduates Who Have Attained a High Level of Competency in a World Language.

Finally, the Board approved Board policy 2226 – *Bilingual Education/Foreign Languages* in July 2011. This policy delineates the bilingual education and foreign languages goals and establishes a set of operating program procedures to achieve these goals.

Language is the most important tool to transmit knowledge and culture. The world has become more interconnected and economic opportunities for those individuals who speak more than one language are vast, diverse, and challenging. This may be the ideal time to review the accessibility of multilingual programs to all students and research the operational, academic, human capital needs, and financial feasibility of designating Miami-Dade County Public Schools as a multilingual school district. After the Board receives this report, then the Board may be able to consider and determine the designation of Miami-Dade County Public Schools as a multilingual school district.

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, direct the Superintendent of Schools to review the availability of multilingual programs across all schools in the district, and research the operational, academic, human capital needs, and financial feasibility of designating Miami-Dade County Public Schools as a multilingual school district, and provide a report to the Board by May 14, 2022.