

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Chair

**SUBJECT:                                    COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE AND REVIEW OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS FOR READING AND MATHEMATICS SKILLS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (M-DCPS)**

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

**LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN:                                        RELEVANT, RIGOROUS, & INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS**

Since the founding of our public school system, education has had among its principal goals the acquisition of basic skills and knowledge and motivations necessary to enable a student to gain admission to college, enter the world-of-work, find a job, advance in his or her career, or serve the country by enlisting in the military. There is no doubt that from the standpoint of these traditional goals, public education in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has been extraordinarily effective.

While our schools continue to successfully make learning gains in student achievement, we are at a turning point where we have to shift all of our resources and policies to ensure that all students can learn, all students can be proficient in reading and math, and all students will be successful as they enter adult life. Although the 2022 Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics show that M-DCPS students are beginning to recover, we must remember that while 56% of Grade 3 students in M-DCPS scored at grade level or above, in the FSA ELA, 44% scored below; 41% in Grade 5 scored below levels 3-5; 46% in Grade 8 scored below levels 3-5; and almost 48% in Grade 10, scored below levels 3-5.

We are well aware that the challenges of reading instruction may be complicated, widespread, and a far cry from the imaginary innocence of what we used to know as the Little Red Schoolhouse of many years ago. The number of English Language Learners is increasing, curriculum must align with new state standards, interventions for struggling readers are on the rise, digital technologies are driving new modes of teaching and learning, and high-stakes assessments are changing classroom instructional methodology. We also know that reading is the basis for all other learning. Without good reading skills, students cannot succeed in any other subject area. They cannot learn history. They cannot comprehend math problems. They cannot write. They cannot conduct a scientific experiment.

The science of reading is the converging evidence of what matters and what works in literacy instruction, organized around models that describe how and why. We must also understand that one research study does not make a science. Many studies have been published, and in some cases, results have been at odds with each other. For educators to be able to consume research meaningfully, we need to look for documented evidence and when many well-designed studies point to a similar result, we must and should pay attention to the results. At the same time, for many years the research has been clear about what matters to teach in early literacy instruction including phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary and oral language comprehension, and text comprehension. For each of these, there is evidence that tells us what works and what does not work.

Of all subjects, Mathematics encourages logical reasoning, critical thinking, creative thinking, abstract or spatial thinking, problem-solving ability, and even effective communication skills. Mathematics is applied in various fields and discipline, including mathematical concepts and procedures used to solve problems in science, engineering, and economics. The complexity of those problems often requires relatively enhanced mathematical literacy, including understanding and learning math computation skills and concepts. Math computation skills include addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, commonly known as basic arithmetic. Even in the technological world of computers and calculators, students must be taught and learn how to compute without them. Math concepts involve understanding the subject and the “why” or the main idea of mathematics. Knowing this implies you understand the reasoning behind the solution.

Mathematics plays a vital role in all aspects of life, whether in everyday matters such as time, tracking, driving, cooking, or jobs such as accounting, finance, banking, engineering, science, and software. And, while M-DCPS continues to outscore their counterparts in the State and other large school districts, in the administration of the 2022 Florida Assessments (FSA) Mathematics, 57% of all students scored within levels 3-5; in Grade 3, 39% scored below levels 3-5; in grade 5, 46% scored below levels 3-5; and in Grade 8, 61% scored below levels 3-5.

Therefore, this agenda item seeks to direct the Superintendent of Schools to conduct a comprehensive review of the teaching and learning process for reading and mathematics skills in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), including the latest research available, the programs and instructional materials the District is currently implementing; the operational, programmatic, and financial recommendations for the Board’s consideration; and other findings of this review; and provide a report to the School Board at the Academics, Innovation, & Evaluation Committee Meeting of March 8, 2023.

While M-DCPS follows state statutes, state rules, and the B.E.S.T Standards, the School Board and the Superintendent should consider a new direction for the teaching and learning of basic education with a strong emphasis on reading and mathematics skills as we enter a new and enhanced era of an instructional reform that will have a positive impact on all students.

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

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

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

1. conduct a comprehensive update and review of the teaching and learning process for reading and mathematics skills in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), including the latest research available, the programs and instructional materials the District is currently implementing; the operational, programmatic, and financial recommendations for the Board's consideration; and other findings of the review; and
2. provide a report to the School Board of this comprehensive update and review at the Academics, Innovation, & Evaluation Committee Meeting of March 8, 2023.