

Ms. Luisa Santos, Board Member

Co-Sponsors: Ms. Monica Colucci, Vice Chair
Ms. Lucia Baez-Geller
Ms. Mary Blanco
Dr. Steve Gallon III

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SUBJECT: PROJECT PROGRAMS AT SCHOOL BOARD AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS, AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS

Acknowledging the importance of National Developmental Disability Awareness Month in March, we must reaffirm our commitment as a district to delivering comprehensive support for all students with disabilities. The Office of Educational Services & Exceptional Student Education ensures that the needs of our students with disabilities are addressed. This commitment, shared by the entire district, extends to enhancing academic success for all students by providing access to appropriate school and community resources¹. This includes specific programs like early identification, intervention, transition support, and truancy prevention².

In our district, "Project" programs provide a range of school-to-work opportunities tailored for young individuals with mild to moderate disabilities as they seek to become ready to join the workforce. Programming is available for students with disabilities as they complete their requirements for graduation as well as for those students who opt to postpone obtaining their standard high school diploma. These placements are designed to correspond with the post-secondary objectives specified in students' Individual Educational Plans (IEP). The offerings available through our district's Project programming are in line with our Strategic Plan's emphasis on ensuring that every student graduates with a practical and achievable post-secondary plan³.

Project programs are devoted to implementing innovative approaches to workforce and career development for individuals with disabilities, placing them in work environments where they can leverage their strongest skills to thrive. In the past, we have implemented Project programs such as Project SEARCH and Project VICTORY. The collaboration with Project SEARCH extends to offering a one-year, post-secondary school-to-work program for youth with mild to

¹ Miami-Dade County Public Schools, The Office of Educational Services & Exceptional Student Education. <https://ese2.dadeschools.net#!/rightColumn/480>.

² Ibid.

³ Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, <https://strategicplan.dadeschools.net#!/>.

moderate cognitive disabilities who have chosen to defer receipt of their standard high school diploma⁴. Notably, this program has partnerships with Boeing Distribution Services, Inc., City of Hialeah, and City of Miami. Project VICTORY began with worksite locations in a variety of spaces, including hospitals, retail locations, and our own School Board Administration (SBAB). This initiative aimed to establish a career development platform across various industries⁵. Project VICTORY offers student interns valuable on-the-job training within a dedicated workroom environment, including settings such as Nicklaus Childrens' Hospital, Publix Supermarkets, and the M-DCPS Department of Transportation

While Miami-Dade County Public Schools' has previously facilitated internships within our School Board Administration Building (SBAB), we should explore bringing Project programs back to the SBAB space. This extension aligns with our board's theory of action, ensuring that our day-to-day workflow remains centered on supporting our students. This strategic move not only contributes to M-DCPS' objective of increasing employment prospects for qualified individuals with disabilities but also positions us as advocates for their inclusion in the workforce of other organizations within their communities.

This item has been approved by the Office of the General Counsel as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. LUISA SANTOS:**

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

1. Explore the feasibility of bringing a Project program opportunity into School Board and District Administration offices; and
2. If feasible, establish a plan of action for students to commence their participation in this program in the Fall of the 2024-2025 school year; and
3. Report back to the Board by no later than the Board meeting of May 15, 2024.

⁴ Miami-Dade County Public Schools, ESE Transition Programs and Services.

⁵ Law Offices of the Public Defender, <https://www.pdmiami.com/public-defender/community-engagement/project-victory-project-independence.page>.