

Dr. Steve Gallon III, School Board Member

Co-Sponsors: Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Chair
Mr. Roberto J. Alonso
Mr. Danny Espino

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SUBJECT: EXPANSION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS THROUGH PROVIDER PARTNERSHIPS

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: RELEVANT, RIGORUOUS, & INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is committed to providing and supporting high quality early childhood education programs for children and their families. In doing so, it recognizes that through partnering with governmental entities, municipalities, groups, and organizations, educational and related opportunities to children and their families could be expanded. In fact, M-DCPS's commitment to early childhood education and related programs is found in School Board Policy 5410, *Student Progression Plan*, and in numerous agenda items approved by the School Board.

At the School Board Meeting of October 16, 2024, the School Board approved Agenda Item H-7 Revised, proffered by School Board Member Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, which focused on Early Childhood Curriculum Development. At the School Board meeting of April 17, 2024, the School Board approved Agenda Item H-17, proffered by School Board Member Danny Espino, which focused on enhancing and expanding Early Childhood Education (ECE) Options prioritizing increased ECE funding through the legislative process, expanding ECE/CTE labs at high schools, and continuing to collaborate with external partners such as the Children's Trust and Early Learning Coalition. Additionally, at the School Board Meeting of September 6, 2023, the School Board approved Agenda Item H-2 Revised, proffered by School Board Chair Maria T. Rojas, which focused on the inclusion of state funding for Pre-K-3 in the M-DCPS 2024 Legislative Program Priority.

M-DCPS is proud of the recent achievement and success in the learning and academic performance of its students. It also recognizes the inextricable link between the provision of high-quality ECE programs and the present and future success of students in schools. Research and practice have proven that ECE plays a vital role in children's development and future learning, success in school, and lifelong success. It provides a strong foundation for later academic, social, and emotional growth which are all crucial for not only academic learning, but in navigating challenges beyond school and well into life. A key benefit of ECE is the support it provides to prepare children for entering kindergarten. Many ECE programs teach children to reason by incorporating problem-solving tasks, which helps to develop their critical thinking skills.

**Revised
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Also, it has also been widely known that the effective teaching and acquisition of literacy skills are essential for all student learning. ECE lays the groundwork, during a child's early years, for more advanced literacy skills. During early childhood education, young students develop pre-reading abilities as they practice letter recognition and phonics, as well as building their vocabulary. Even at this young age, children are exposed to a rich language environment, which helps them learn how to communicate.

Lastly, early childhood education programs serve as a bridge between home life with parental involvement and the more structured world of elementary school with teachers. Childcare centers and preschools provide environments that mirror the classroom to encourage adaptability and prepare children for future academic challenges.

These early educational settings also play a crucial role by imparting various skills necessary for healthy development. Young kids become accustomed to adhering to routines while they enhance their abilities to listen and follow instructions.

In building upon the prior work of the School Board, the District's commitment to early childhood, and the community's unwavering and measurable investment in high quality ECE programs as supported and promoted by community partners such as the Children's Trust and the Early Learning Coalition, M-DCPS is well positioned to further explore an expansion and enhancement through direct partnerships with private providers and strategic contemplation of the use of its existing assets.

At the School Board Workshop held on November 13, 2024, specific goals were identified and discussed regarding access, competition, enrollment, funding, and community and strategic partnerships that are aligned with the unique needs and trends of the community. Based on this discussion, there are opportunities to further review, analyze, and consider "optimizing assets" in a manner that preserves and aligns with the District's educational mission; enhances and expands access to high quality early childhood programs; establishes new and leverages existing strategic partnerships; and/or generates additional revenue. Such an approach would not only provide for immediate impact on improved learning for students and expanded early childhood education access for families but provide a framework and pathway for increasing student enrollment in District schools. Lastly, this approach would also further strengthen partnerships with parents, families, and external stakeholders toward achieving both short- and long-range goals and objectives related to both improving student readiness for learning and increasing student enrollment.

This item seeks to direct the Superintendent to review previous School Board and District proposals and plans for expanding access to early childhood education and adjust/update these proposals and plans, as appropriate; review the criteria for high quality early childhood education programs to determine academic, financial, and operational viability, such as Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CASS); continue to conduct a review of District assets, specifically those District-owned assets that may be viable for early childhood education expansion consideration; engage local community partners such as the Children's Trust and the Early Learning Coalition, as well as establish a process to identify and include high quality private providers to discuss and explore approaches, partnerships, and strategies that expand and enhance access to early childhood education programs; continue to work with the State and members of the Legislature to address and/or remove existing and/or potential barriers to early childhood education access for children and their families and to expansion efforts by school districts, early childhood education providers, and community based

organizations; and provide an update to the School Board regarding the findings and viability as it relates to potential implementation for the 2025-2026 school year, where feasible, no later than July 31, 2025.

This item has been reviewed by the General Counsel's Office as to form and legal sufficiency.

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

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

1. review previous School Board and District proposals and plans for expanding access to early childhood education, and adjust/update these proposals and plans, as appropriate;
2. review the criteria for high quality early childhood education programs to determine academic, financial, and operational viability, such as Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CASS);
3. continue to conduct a review of District assets, specifically those District-owned assets that may be viable for early childhood education expansion consideration;
4. engage local community partners such as the Children's Trust and the Early Learning Coalition, as well as establish a process to identify and include high quality private providers to discuss and explore approaches, partnerships, and strategies that expand and enhance access to early childhood education programs;
5. continue to work with the State and members of the Legislature to address and/or remove existing and/or potential barriers to early childhood education access for children and their families, and to expansion efforts by school districts, early childhood education providers, and community based organizations; and
6. provide an update to the School Board regarding the findings and viability as it relates to potential implementation for the 2025-2026 school year, where feasible, no later than July 31, 2025.