

Dr. Martin Karp, Board Member

SUBJECT: REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENT TO EXPLORE DEVELOPING A BOARDING SCHOOL FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN OR CHILDREN FROM FOSTER CARE, NEGLECTFUL OR HOMELESS FAMILIES

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: STUDENT, PARENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At the August 3, 2011 School Board meeting, the Superintendent brought forward many exciting new initiatives for the 2011-12 school year, which received strong positive feedback from School Board members and community stakeholders. One idea that the District should consider for the 2012-13 school year is a residential education program that would further expand our efforts to provide greater choice and opportunities for children and their families.

There has been a growing movement to expand the availability of residential education programs, some of which include live-in faculty. Such programs have been successful for families who can afford them, but few opportunities exist for foster children, families with financial constraints, those who may be experiencing domestic problems, or for parents and caregivers who may not be able to provide adequate support for their children with special needs.

Currently, public boarding schools do exist in certain parts of the United States for children in disadvantaged areas and for students who have special education needs, such as The Florida School for the Deaf and Blind. Several boarding schools place their focus on children with learning disabilities to help educate children with Asperger's.

As school districts and private investors begin to develop such projects, this District should take a closer look at these partnerships and education models to determine whether developing a boarding school in Miami-Dade is feasible. While running the Chicago Public School District, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan promoted public boarding schools.

Public boarding schools could potentially increase disadvantaged students' educational opportunities. According to data from one school where students live on campus five days a week, they have a 91 percent graduation rate and of those students, 97 percent are accepted to a four-year college.

A national nonprofit organization promotes strengthening residential education programs for economically and socially disadvantaged youth. Today, 78.5 percent of the nonprofit organization's 2010 member program graduates are attending college.

Residential programs allow siblings to remain together where they may otherwise be separated. The programs promote greater stability for children, which would greatly benefit children from foster care.

While many private residential education programs provide valuable assistance for students, similar residential educational programs are lacking for children from foster care or for children with special needs.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. MARTIN KARP:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to explore for future years the possibility of Miami-Dade County Public Schools opening residential educational programs.