


MEMORANDUM

December 2, 2019

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools 

SUBJECT: STAFF FOLLOW-UP: SCHOOL BOARD MEETING OF JUNE 19, 2019, AGENDA ITEM H-12, SUPPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT'S EFFORTS TO OFFER SERVICES TO STUDENTS WITH AUTISM BY EXTENDING PROGRAMMING BEYOND THE CURRENT AGE LIMIT

At the School Board meeting of June 19, 2019, the Board approved Agenda Item H-12, proffered by School Board Vice Chair Dr. Martin Karp and co-sponsored by School Board Chair Ms. Perla Tabares and School Board Members Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Dr. Steve Gallon III, Ms. Lubby Navarro, Dr. Marta Pérez, and Ms. Mari Tere Rojas. This item requested that The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, support the Superintendent's efforts to offer services to students with autism by extending programming beyond the current age limit.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) offers a number of programs for students with autism over the age of 22 through the school district as well as through community and organization partnerships. Programs offered include:

Culinary Arts Program at JRE Lee

The Culinary Arts Program at JRE Lee, launched in 2013-2014, offers classes through the Miami Coral Park Adult Education Program and targets both M-DCPS students ages 18-22 and young adults. The classes are designed to enable students to gain basic baking and pastry-making skills for employment in the community. This program is individualized for each student and documented in an Individual Plan of Study (IPS).

TOPs at Robert Morgan Education Center & Technical College

Project TOPs (Transition to Postsecondary Institutions), established in 2015, is a collaborative partnership with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council to address the needs of students with developmental and intellectual disabilities in an inclusive post-secondary Career Technical Education (CTE) program. The program has been approved and receives funds as a Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program by the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities at the University of Central Florida.

TOPs students have the opportunity to earn at least one Occupational Completion Point and/or pass an Industry Certification Exam. Participants must be high school graduates ages 18-24 with an intellectual and/or developmental disability, and they must be willing to be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation. Participants receive support through direct in-class instruction and after-school sessions in programs focusing on 3D animation, commercial art technology, baking and pastry arts, and hospitality.

Project STRIVE

Project STRIVE is a post-secondary CTE program for youth with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities who have opted to defer their high school diploma. These programs provide students the opportunity to further acquire customized occupation-specific skills training in the culinary and technology education fields. These programs are individualized for each student in preparation for competitive employment and aligned to their post-secondary goals through the Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

M-DCPS APD Programs

M-DCPS was initially approved as the first school district in Florida to become an Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) provider in 2014. The District's application was subsequently renewed in 2017. There are two M-DCPS APD programs, one at Neva King Cooper Special Education Center and another at Ruth Owens Kruse Special Education Center. These programs are sustained through Medicaid reimbursement. The programs focus on life skills development and independent living skills.

Dan Marino Foundation Post-Secondary Program

The Dan Marino Foundation, Inc., Marino Campus offers programming that prepares young adults for careers in the computer technology and hospitality industries. Coursework prepares students for certification exams regulated by the following nationally recognized organizations: Microsoft, CompTIA, and the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI). This allows students to build the necessary social and employability skills to become independent by obtaining meaningful employment. Over 70% of graduates have secured gainful employment, which is a direct result of the individualized programming offered at Marino Campus. The program targets young adults ages 18-28 who have exited high school and have a documented disability.

FIU EMBRACE

The FIU EMBRACE Program targets young adults ages 18-26 who have exited high school, have a documented intellectual disability, and have initiated the Vocational Rehabilitation process. FIU EMBRACE is a two-year program designed to develop a well-rounded and self-sufficient young adult in an inclusive and supportive university community of learners who will be marketable for competitive, integrated, and paid employment and be able to live independently upon graduation. The program provides academic and social access to enable students to participate in university coursework and campus life. Independent living skills and employment preparation skills are also included in the program.

Plans for additional transition and post-secondary programs for students with disabilities beyond the age of 22 are ongoing. New initiatives under exploration include:

- Partnership with South Florida Autism Charter School to provide a new APD program;
- Program expansion to include employment skills development and internships with the Transportation and Food and Nutrition Departments;

- Work-Based Learning Experience (WBLE) Program through Vocational Rehabilitation; and
- Expansion of partnerships with Shake-A-Leg and Goodwill.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Ms. Marie Izquierdo, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Academics and Transformation, at 305 995-1451.

AMC:sr
M624

cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet
Dr. Magaly C. Abrahante
Ms. Ava Goldman
School Board Agenda Office