



Miami-Dade County School Board

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February 1, 2003

**Superintendent
of Schools**

Merrett R. Stierheim

The Honorable Jim Horne, Commissioner of Education
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

**RE: JOINT REQUEST TO INCREASE THE STATUTORILY-IMPOSED CHARTER
SCHOOL CAP FOR SELECT SCHOOLS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY**

Dear Commissioner Horne:

The Florida Legislature authorized the creation of charter schools in 1996, and the Miami-Dade County Public School system responded to this directive by establishing the first charter school in the State of Florida, the same year the law was enacted. The rapid pace at which the District has approved and opened charter schools –currently 25 charter schools in operation and 72 approved charter applications– demonstrates the District’s commitment to maximizing parental choice. Section 1002.33(13), Florida Statutes (2002), Charter Schools, establishes a limit of no more than 28 schools in each school district that has 100,000 or more students. Notwithstanding this limitation, a district school board or a charter applicant has the right to request an increase of the limit on the number of charter schools authorized to be established within a school district from the Florida Board of Education.

Therefore, on April 16, 2002, The School Board of Miami-Dade County approved board item A-2, to submit a request for waivers of the statutorily–imposed charter school cap on a case-by-case basis, contingent upon the applicant’s ability to address the statutorily-defined purpose of charter schools with weighted emphasis on the following three criteria:

- increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as academically low achieving;
- improve student learning through the use of innovative instructional approaches; and
- expand the capacity of the public school system by establishing charter schools in areas which the District has determined to be overcrowded and at sites which have been mutually agreed upon by both the applicant and the District.

Additionally, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) presented and received approval of this position at the State Board of Education meeting on April 23, 2002. While the District has no intention of depriving applicants of their statutorily-defined right to request a waiver directly from the Florida Board of Education, this joint effort is a proactive attempt for the District and the charter applicants to work collaboratively to address the needs of all stakeholders and concomitantly increase public school choice.

As such, in response to the enclosed waiver requests, M-DCPS has elected to request a waiver of the statutorily-imposed cap on behalf of the following schools:

1. Balere Language Academy
2. Children First Charter School
3. Coral Gables Charter Foundation
4. Doral Academy Charter Middle School
5. Florida School for Integrated Academics and Technologies
6. Mater Academy Charter Middle School
7. Nova Southeastern University Charter Academy of Excellence
8. Pinecrest Preparatory Academy Charter Middle School
9. Sabal Palm High School, Inc.

Since these schools remain optimistic that they will open in the 2003-2004 school year, we respectfully request that your consideration of this appeal occur promptly and that this request be included in the Florida Board of Education's Agenda for February 18, 2003.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this request to increase the statutorily-imposed cap for the aforementioned charter schools, please contact Ms. Mercedes Toural, Associate Superintendent for Education, at 305 995-1960.

Sincerely,



Merrett R. Stierheim
Superintendent of Schools

MRS/MT/MB/cm
L1667

Attachments

cc: School Board Members
School Board Attorney
Ms. Mercedes Toural
Mr. Michael Bell
Dr. Carlo Rodriguez



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

giving our students the world

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Waiver Request Applicants