

February 7, 2000

Dr. Marta Pérez, Member

**SUBJECT: DIRECT THE SUPERINTENDENT TO (1) REQUIRE 72 HOUR ADVANCE NOTICE IN WRITING TO BOARD MEMBERS OF ANY PROFESSIONAL SENIOR STAFF MEETINGS AT WHICH MEMBERS OF STAFF WILL BE DISCUSSING ITEMS TO BE PLACED ON THE SCHOOL BOARD PUBLIC AGENDAS, AND (2) THAT THE SUPERINTENDENT BE AUTHORIZED TO WAIVE THE 72 HOUR REQUIREMENT ONLY UPON WRITTEN CERTIFICATION, IMMEDIATELY PUBLISHED TO THE MEMBERS, THAT A MEETING CONVENED WITH LESS THAN 72 HOURS NOTICE WAS NECESSARY FOR THE PROPER ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Members of the Miami-Dade County, Florida, School Board, governing one of the largest School Districts in the nation, are required to be prepared to discuss and vote on a myriad of issues at each regularly scheduled meeting that often involve complex and detailed matters. In order to be as fully prepared as possible to make public policy decisions on issues affecting the District's administration, and the quality of education of our children, it is desirable to afford every opportunity available for the Members to obtain as much information as possible on which to base these decisions.

Clearly, there is no legal or other impediment to having Members of the Board attend and listen to thoughtful discussion and analysis that may occur at the staff level regarding items that require School Board approval. The presence of Members of the Board should not in any way interfere with the professional administration of these meetings, since Board Members will attend to listen and learn, and defer their comments or active participation on these matters to such time as the issue comes before the Board in a publicly noticed meeting pursuant to the provisions of the Sunshine Law.

Democratic systems of governance are based on the premise that all citizens, regardless of their background, education, or particular expertise, may seek elected office and participate in the political process. It would be naïve to think that any Member of the Board is an expert in each and every conceivable issue that may come before the Board during the Members term. That is precisely why the Board and every other public body employs staff professionals. The opportunity to attend these staff briefings will assist Members that wish to be fully informed on complex issues prior to making policy decisions.

**B-5**

The ability to attend these meetings, where agenda issues may be discussed, would also help to shorten the time of current Board meetings, since Members that choose to attend, may have a lesser need to ask questions of staff or solicit staff analysis and discussion on matters they have already heard and understood during the agenda briefing process.

These meetings will also further the intent of the Voting Rights Act and the concept of Single member Districts by providing each member of the Board the opportunity to be fully briefed on the issues of importance to their constituents in order to adequately, competently, and effectively represent their constituents.

Since the Superintendent or his/her designee must inform other members of staff of the time, date and place of meetings for which their attendance is required, this requirement should not impose any additional burden on staff.

There is good cause to vary from the agenda due to the omission of this item at the time the agenda was prepared for publication as well as the need to bring this matter for Board discussion prior to the next agenda preparation cycle.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
DR. MARTA PEREZ**

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

1. Provide Board members with written notice of the time, date and place of professional senior staff meetings at which agenda items will be discussed, at least 72 hours prior to said meeting; and
2. That the Superintendent, or his/her designee, be authorized to convene meetings with less than 72 hours notice only upon written certification, immediately published to the Board Members, that the timing of the meeting was necessary for the proper administration of the District's business. This certification should include relevant information on the time, date and place of the meeting.