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SENT ON BEHALF OF JOHN SCHUSTER, CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER,  
OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

OPINION

## Bond is a boon for students, teachers, community

**BY ALBERTO M. CARVALHO Miami-Dade County Public Schools**

This past week, I was in New York City when Miami-Dade County Public Schools won The Broad Prize for Urban Education, the nation's highest award for improved student performance and reducing achievement gaps among ethnic groups and between high- and low-income students.

This was the fifth time Miami-Dade County Public Schools had been nominated for this honor and the first time we have brought home the top prize. Our student achievement data are compelling, and based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, our school system continues to be one of the highest-performing urban school districts in the nation. I was very proud to bring home this award that the entire community can cherish and celebrate.

Sustained academic achievement requires investment in the infrastructure that is needed to support 21st Century learning. That is why I am requesting the public's support for Miami-Dade County Public Schools' bond referendum on Nov. 6. With your support the community will be helping to fund the modernization and construction of our public school facilities through the issuance of general obligation bonds.

This bond referendum is a win for students by providing every student, regardless of their ZIP code a quality, safe and technology-rich learning environment; a win for teachers by providing them with a quality teaching environment; and a win for our community by providing a much needed economic jolt. For these and other reasons, we believe the climate is right to ask voters to approve a \$1.2 billion General Obligation Bond. The need could not be greater, and the time could not be better.

The referendum is being placed before voters this year because we have a rare window of opportunity to do the most good for our students and our community. Interest rates are at an all-time low, which benefits borrowing now. Additionally, our community has been devastated by several years of the worst economy we have ever witnessed in our lifetimes, and the bond will create jobs, especially in the hard hit construction and technology industries.

The Washington Economic Group prepared a study that projects the creation of over 9,200 jobs during the initial three years of the bond and over 18,000 sustainable jobs over the life of the bond. One hundred percent of the funds will be reinvested in the local economy. We can renovate and upgrade our schools while having a minimal impact on the taxpayer.

Transparent and effective governance invites the community it serves to the decision table. As such, we have created a 21st Century Bond Oversight Committee made up of community representatives to ensure equity, efficiency, and transparency in the use of these funds, as well as equitable distribution of projects. The committee is composed of citizens representing each board member's district, the PTA/PTSA, other governmental entities, business organizations, community organizations, students, and others to provide transparency and instill confidence in the taxpayers of Miami-Dade that the proceeds of the bond program will be used in a timely manner and equitably distributed across the community and the investments made will support the local economy.

The committee, approved by the board on October 10th, will monitor, review, make recommendations, and inform the public on the planning, progress, and implementation of the bond program. To ensure that no member of this committee will have any vested interest in how the bond proceeds are spent beyond what is in the best interest of the community, appointees must not have any direct or indirect interest in any contracts with the school district or any financial interest in any of the projects to be funded through the bond program.

A detailed list of projects is available at <http://www.bondsfor schools.dadeschools.net>.

Over that last four years we have transformed our business practices, reduced taxes, increased reserves, and realigned resources in support of a single strategic goal of improving student achievement. We have reformed and improved procurement policies and procedures to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the bond program, as well as equitable economic opportunity. This same commitment will be brought to the administration of the bond program.

A promise made is a promise kept. We have promised to create new opportunities for our students to succeed and build a legacy of learning and a pathway to the future. Miami-Dade's schools are number one in the country. This recognition at the national level confirms the faith that our parents and citizens have in us. The author is the superintendent of Miami-Dade schools.



CARVALHO