

The School District of Palm Beach County Annual Grant Performance Report 2005/2006

Executive Summary

As recipients of the multi-year discretionary Voluntary Public School Choice Mentor Project, the School District of Palm Beach County has compiled the data for the annual performance report as mandated by Florida Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education. The Voluntary Public School Choice Mentor Project, which currently is operating in the Department of Choice Programs and School Choice within the School District of Palm Beach County, has demonstrated substantial progress toward meeting and exceeding many of the project performance measures in 2005/2006. In this school year, there were 169 choice programs (magnet schools, choice schools, career academies, and charter schools) available to all students district-wide in Palm Beach County. The School District of Palm Beach County added sixteen programs in 2005/2006, demonstrating an expansion. An identification of all the "Choice Options" available to students in the School District of Palm Beach County (and additional choice options available to students that are attending a school that did not make AYP for two or more consecutive years) reveals the following options were made available as part of the Choice Plan for 2005/2006: 1) Magnet Schools 2) Choice Schools 3) Career Academies 4) No Child Left Behind 5) McKay Scholarships 6) Opportunity Scholarships 7) Dual Enrollment 8) Advanced Placement 9) Home School 10) Florida Virtual School 11) Alternative Education 12) (SES) Supplemental Educational Services 13) Satellite Schools 14) Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship 15) School Within A School and 16) Charter Schools. A primary measure of the effectiveness of Choice Schools is the data concerning student gains. This year the Department of Choice Program and School Choice collected data from student FCAT scores for students in Choice Schools. A sample comparison study of current tenth graders in choice programs indicated that 92.4 % of the students showed gains in FCAT reading and 96.9% showed gains in FCAT math. Likewise, a comparison of middle school students showed that 78 % achieved gains in FCAT reading and 76% showed gains in FCAT math. Enrollment data figures show an increase of applications in Choice Applications. However, they do not meet benchmarks of ten percent. Qualitative data and anecdotal notes indicate that many families are recovering from storm damage as well as other affects from the storms that impede the choice application system. The Marketing Plan developed by the School District of Palm Beach County, again continues to be a strength with its quality socio-economic marketing methods and is currently under consideration for "Best Practices". There are over eleven quality strategies utilized in the SDPBC "Choice Marketing Plan" in addition to ethnic media advertisements and non-profit organization networks. The project objective to provide for all students with the ability to make an informed "choice" was achieved. The project objective to create partnerships, foster resource sharing and hands-on technical assistance indicates progress towards meeting or exceeding this target. Currently, the following partnerships are in place with the Choice Schools in the School District of Palm Beach County: Florida Atlantic

University, Palm Beach Community College, Palm Beach Atlantic University, Northwood College, New England Technical School, University of Central Florida, Johnson & Wales, Lynn University, Academy of Practical Nursing and Health Options, Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale, Keiser College, Keiser Career Institute and Florida Culinary School. There appears to be numerous memberships with non-profit educational reform entities, which have assisted the choice programs in evaluation, training, accreditation, and implementing quality innovative measures. These associations are: National Magnet Schools of America, National Career Academy Coalition, Florida Public School Choice Consortium, Association of Career and Technical Education, National Association of Bilingual Educators, National Association of Montessori Education, Creating Small Learning Communities, International Baccalaureate North America, Florida League of International Baccalaureate Schools, and Model Schools. As a requirement of the grant funding the VPSC Mentor project prepared parent surveys and mailed them to the families of students attending choice schools. The survey was sent to homes in three languages: English, Spanish and Creole. The questions were taken from a survey provided by the Florida State University Choice Center and further diagnosed by Apperson Digital Technology Services. Random sampling techniques were used in this endeavor. There were eight questions proposed on the survey and a majority of the responses returned favorable results. The School District of Palm Beach County has continued its role as a mentor to the Collier County School System. Specifically, the project has provided technical assistance with the implementation of their choice website, the preparation of a more centrally based choice application system, sharing of the SDPBC quality socio-economic marketing plan, and record keeping. VPSC Mentor District Project and its extensive experience and quality staff will help provide technical assistance to the School District of Collier County and will further provide quality services and choice expansion to the families of students attending the public school system in Palm Beach County.