Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Office of Program Evaluation
1500 Biscayne Boulevard
Miami, Florida 33132

EVALUATION OF
THE 2007 SUMMER DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL PROJECT
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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

In recent years, the summer school program of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) has primarily targeted students who are in need of academic remediation. Remedial classes have been offered to elementary students with deficient reading skills and secondary students with insufficient credits to graduate. The M-DCPS, however, altered this strategy, when it initiated the Summer Demonstration School Project (SDSP) in the 2006 summer school term.

The SDSP project has two basic goals: to increase the appeal of the summer school program, and to enhance the professional development of the M-DCPS teachers. With regard to the first goal, the demonstration schools offer classes that are designed to attract successful students who wish to participate in an enrichment program during the summer term. As such, these classes are distinct from the remedial classes that usually comprise the core of the summer school curriculum. The SDSP classes encompass features that emulate those of high performing schools. The classes, furthermore, are taught by teachers who have been carefully screened and trained by the SDSP project.

The teachers' training is crucial, since the SDSP project's second, and perhaps more important goal, is enhancing professional development. The ultimate goal of the project is to have the teachers who are trained at the demonstration schools serve as mentors to other teachers in the district. In this manner, the benefits of the project are extended beyond the immediate participants.

Demonstration schools represent a new approach in the professional development of teachers. These schools should not be confused with laboratory schools, which are devoted primarily to experimenting with untested materials and methods. Demonstration schools do not engage in such activities. On the contrary, demonstration schools are essentially showcases for the best practices in teaching according to the current research. Model lessons are presented for the benefit of both the students in the class and the visiting teachers who observe the class. For the latter, the observation of the class is followed by a collaborative examination of the dynamics of the lesson. This instructional approach, which has been likened to the medical-rounds method that is used to train doctors, has been used in some programs to train student teachers. However, the use of demonstration schools to train in-service teachers is a newly emerging concept. Consequently, it was gratifying that the initial implementation of the SDSP project in the 2006 summer school term was well received. This outcome, furthermore, prompted the M-DCPS to continue the project in the 2007 summer school term.

2006 SDSP Project

In the initial implementation of the SDSP project, the demonstration schools were designed to be distinct. However, aspects of their instructional programs were common across the schools. "Five design elements" were used to guide the development of the teaching and learning practices of the demonstration schools. These design elements include: (a) job-embedded

professional development, (b) quality instructional programs, (c) responsive teaching, (d) global citizenship, and (e) student development (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2006b). Each element merits a brief description.

Job-Embedded Professional Development – A demonstration school is a learning community, where professional development is an integral part of each teacher's daily activities.

Quality Instructional Program – A demonstration school endeavors to emulate the features of high performing schools. Accordingly, the school's curriculum is based on a "variety of research-based instructional programs and support services".

Responsive Teaching – In the spirit of a learning community, the teachers and administrators of a demonstration school work in a collaborative manner to improve instruction.

Global Citizenship – The instructional program of a demonstration school is designed to prepare the students to become global citizens.

Student Development – The development of the students is the primary focus of the instructional activities of a demonstration school. All the members of this learning community work collaboratively to "envision, plan and implement a coordinated strategy" that targets the "whole student".

A total of six sites were selected by the 2006 SDSP project to offer demonstration schools. Table 1 lists the schools and displays information about each. A review of the table reveals that there was one school in each of the six regions of the district. Each school, furthermore, had a unique, yet somewhat vague, curricular focus. This was intentional, however, since the appeal of the demonstration schools is not the subject matter of the classes but rather the instructional approach. This approach, as previously noted, emulates that of high performing schools. It encompasses such features as: inquiry-based learning, project-based activities, and an integrated curriculum.

The evaluation of the 2006 SDSP project yielded evidence that progress had been made in attaining the project's two basic goals of increasing the appeal of the summer school program, and enhancing the professional development of the M-DCPS teachers. With regard to the former, survey responses revealed that the students generally found the SDSP classes to be both different and more interesting than their regular classes. And, with regard to the latter, survey responses revealed that the teachers clearly felt that they had benefited professionally from their participation in the project. More importantly to the project's ultimate goal, the teachers reported using their SDSP training to mentor other teachers. In summary, the evaluation concluded that "the data reflected very favorably on the efficacy of the project's operation". As such, it was recommended that "the M-DCPS retain and expand the project in the future" (Gomez, 2007).

Table 1
2006 Demonstration Schools

Region	School	Grade Level	Teacher-Student Ratio	Curricular Focus
I	M.A. Milam K-8 Center	K-8	1:20	Integrated Curriculum
II	Madies Ives Community Elementary School	4-6	1:15	Exploration
III	Design & Architecture Senior High School (DASH)	6-10	1:20	Young Men's Preparatory Academy
IV	Maritime and Science Technology Senior High School (MAST)	6-10	1:20	Young Women's Preparatory Academy
V	John A. Ferguson Senior High School	9-12	1:20	Entrepreneurship Academy
VI	West Homestead Elementary School	PK-3	1:15	Early Learning Development

2007 SDSP Project

A succinct description of the demonstration schools of the 2007 SDSP project is provided by the following maxim, which appears in various project documents: "Demonstration schools are created as District exemplars of excellence in high quality teaching and learning and instructional leadership across the K-12 spectrum". Accordingly, the 2007 demonstration schools represent operational models that embody the instructional features associated with high performing schools. These models, furthermore, are a viable professional resource. Teachers and school administrators, who wish to emulate this instructional approach in their own schools, can draw both ideas and inspiration from the models.

A total of six sites were selected by the 2007 SDSP project to offer demonstration schools. This is the same number selected in 2006, but not the same schools. All the 2007 schools were new to the project. Table 2 lists these demonstration schools and displays information about each. A review of the table reveals that, once again like the 2006 project, the 2007 project consisted of one school in each of the six regions of the district. The teacher-student ratio, furthermore, remained unchanged from 2006 to 2007. However, with regard to the curricular focus, the 2006 and 2007 projects tend to differ. The 2007 curricular foci were fewer in number and more generic in scope than those of 2006. This, however, is of little consequence, since the appeal of the demonstration schools is not the subject matter of the classes. Rather, it is the instructional features that, as previously noted, emulate those of high performing schools.

These features are reflected in the "four common design elements" that unify the teaching and learning practices of the 2007 demonstration schools. The design elements are: (a) quality instructional programs, (b) responsive teaching, (c) research-based strategies, and (d) student development (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2007b). Each element merits a brief description.

Table 2
2007 Demonstration Schools

Region	School	Grade Level	Teacher-Student Ratio	Curricular Focus
I	Miami Coral City Senior High School	9-12	1:20	Language Arts/Social Studies/ Arts Integration
II	Greynolds Park Elementary School	PK-5	1:15	Cross Curricular Integration Mathematics/Science/Technology
III	Miami Springs Senior High School	9-12	1:20	Integration
IV	Maya Angelou Elementary School	PK-5	1:15	Cross Curricular Integration Language Arts/Social Studies /
V	Arvida Middle School	6-8	1:20	Arts Integration
VI	Cutler Ridge Middle School	6-8	1:20	Mathematics/Science/Technology Integration

<u>Quality Instructional Programs</u> – To develop and maintain a quality instructional program, a demonstration school creates a learning community "based on reflective practice and ongoing professional development". All the members of the community (i.e., the principal, teachers, students and parents) work collaboratively to improve the instructional program.

<u>Responsive Teaching</u> – The teachers in a demonstration school use "a rich repertoire of instructional strategies". The curriculum content is connected to larger themes and ideas to render it "less abstract and more relevant". And, the students are assisted in identifying their "unique learning styles" and applying them effectively "to become problem-solvers and active learners".

<u>Research-Based Strategies</u> – The teaching strategies employed in a demonstration school are "research-based and proven to increase student achievement".

<u>Student Development</u> – The development of the students is the primary focus of the instructional activities of a demonstration school. All members of the learning community "envision, plan and implement coordinated strategies...to focus cohesively on the whole student".

Beyond these common design elements in the teaching and learning practices of the demonstration schools, the 2007 schools are also guided by a set of stated objectives (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2007a). These objectives serve to further consolidate the instructional programs. They are:

- provide models of excellence in the implementation of effective school reform strategies;

- offer a comprehensive inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning;
- present a framework for the exploration of knowledge through trans-disciplinary themes; and
- provide a robust set of professional development experiences intended to develop the use of protocols that promote examination of educational practices. (p.1)

Professional development, as previously noted, is perhaps the most important goal of the SDSP project. Teachers selected for the 2007 project received eight days of pre-service training prior to the start of the summer school term. Additionally, they engaged in "daily collaborative professional development" during the six-week term, which spanned June 12 to July 24.

DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION

A demonstration school is essentially a showcase for the best practices in teaching according to the current research. Teachers for the school are carefully selected and trained to deliver model lessons, which are collaboratively examined by their peers. This novel approach to professional development was adopted by the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) in the summer of 2006, when it implemented the Summer Demonstration School Project (SDSP). The project, which was well received by both teachers and students, was subsequently offered again in the summer of 2007.

The SDSP project has two fundamental goals. The first is to expand the appeal of the district's summer school program. To this end, the demonstration schools offer enrichment classes that emulate the features of high performing schools. The second, and perhaps the more important goal, is to use the demonstration schools to train a cadre of teachers who can ultimately serve as mentors to colleagues in their home schools. To ascertain the project's success in attaining these two goals, the district's Office of Program Evaluation undertook respective evaluations of the project in 2006 and in 2007. The design of the latter is described in the subsequent sections.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation of the 2007 SDSP project examined a number of operational issues. However, the primary focus of the evaluation was the project's two fundamental goals: the expansion of the summer school program's appeal, and the enhancement of the professional development of teachers. The specific issues addressed by the evaluation were delineated by a series of questions. These questions are:

1. Have the instructional components of the demonstration schools proven to be effective?

2. Did the classes of the demonstration schools appeal to the students?

3. Did the participating teachers find the SDSP project to be a professionally rewarding experience?

4. Have the participating teachers endeavored to mentor their colleagues on the SDSP instructional approach?

5. Are there aspects of the SDSP project's operation that warrant improvement?

6. Should the district expand the SDSP project?

Sources of Data

Project documents comprised the initial source of data for the evaluation of the 2007 SDSP project. They were used in the identification of the demonstration schools and the description of the project's features, which appear in the Description of the Project. However, to address the aforementioned evaluation questions, it was necessary to venture beyond project documents. The primary sources of data for the evaluation questions were two groups of individuals with first-hand knowledge of the demonstration schools: the SDSP teachers and the participating students. Each group was targeted by a survey. Additionally, a number of the teachers were interviewed.

The administration of the Survey of Students utilized cluster sampling. Three classes were randomly selected in each of the six demonstration schools (see Table 2), with the exception of the two elementary schools: Greynolds Park and Maya Angelou. In these two schools, the grade 5 reading level of the survey instrument precluded sampling. Accordingly, only the grade 5 classes were targeted; they consisted of two in each school. The survey was administered in the final days of the summer school term. The survey instrument consists of ten items. Each item is a statement about the SDSP project, to which the student responds by indicating either "true" or "false". All the items are worded positively, so a favorable perception of the project tends to elicit more "true" responses. Conversely, an unfavorable perception tends to elicit more "false" responses. The items specifically address the appeal of the SDSP class (evaluation question 2), the operation of the SDSP project (evaluation question 5), and the future of the project (evaluation question 6). A copy of the Survey of Students appears in Appendix A.

The entire population of SDSP teachers was targeted by the Survey of Teachers. The survey was conducted in the fall term, when these teachers had returned to their home schools. The intent was to allow them sufficient time to both reflect on their experiences during the summer and to utilize some of their SDSP training. The survey instrument consists of a set of scaled items followed by a single completion item. The scaled items adhere to a Likert format. Specifically, each item consists of a statement about the SDSP project, to which the teachers indicate their degree of agreement by means of a four-point scale that ranges from "disagree" (1) to "agree" (4). All statements are positively worded, so a favorable perception of the SDSP project tends to elicit a greater degree of agreement. This is reflected in the higher numerical values of the responses. Conversely, an unfavorable perception of the project tends to elicit less agreement and lower numerical values of the responses. The scaled items of the survey instrument address the following issues: the effectiveness of the SDSP instructional components (evaluation questions 1), the professional development value of the SDSP project (evaluation question 3), the mentoring activities of the SDSP teachers (evaluation question 4), the improvement of the project's operation (evaluation question 5), and the future of the project (evaluation question 6). The completion item, which is the final item on the survey instrument, states: "If you wish to offer a comment or clarification, please do so". The function of this item is to allow the respondents to raise important issues that may have been overlooked in the instrument. A copy of the Survey of Teachers appears in Appendix B.

The final source of data is the Interview of Teachers. An interview format facilitates a more in-depth inquiry into the teachers' views of the SDSP project than would be afforded by a survey. Accordingly, a random sample of 10% of the SDSP teachers was targeted. The interviews were conducted in the teachers' home schools during the fall term. The interview addressed all six evaluation questions. A copy of the Interview of Teachers appears in Appendix C. Additionally Table 3 graphically summarizes the sources of data for the evaluation questions.

Table 3
Sources of Data for the Evaluation Questions

	Sources of Data			
Evaluation Questions	Project Documents	Survey of Students	Survey of Teachers	Interview of Teachers
1. Efficacy of SDSP instructional components	1		1	1
2. Appeal of SDSP classes		2		2
3. Value of SDSP professional development			3	3
4. Mentoring activities of SDSP teachers			4	4
5. Improvement of SDSP project	5	5	5	5
6. Future of SDSP project		6	6	6
Note. For a full text of the evaluation questions, see page 6. SDSP = Summer Demonstration School Project.				

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY OF STUDENTS

Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Office of Program Evaluation

SURVEY OF STUDENTS
2007 Summer Demonstration School Project

T F 1. Before the start of summer school, I had a good idea what the SDSP class/es would be like.

T F 2. It was easy to get an SDSP application form.

T F 3. It takes less than 30 minutes to travel from my house to this school.

T F 4. The number of students in this SDSP class is less than in my regular class/es last year.

T F 5. In this SDSP class, the teacher spends more time helping me than my regular teacher/s did last year.

T F 6. We do different things in this SDSP class than I did in my regular class/es last year.

T F 7. This SDSP class is more interesting than my regular class/es last year.

T F 8. I think I would learn more if my regular class/es were like this SDSP class.

T F 9. I would like to take more SDSP classes in the future.

T F 10. It would be a good idea if more schools offered SDSP classes.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY OF TEACHERS

Miami – Dade County Public Schools
Office of Program Evaluation

Code: ____

SURVEY OF TEACHERS
2007 Summer Demonstration School Project

Do not write in this area

____1. Prior to the April 5 application deadline, I was able to get ample information about the SDSP objectives and activities.

5

____2. Prior to the April 5 application deadline, I had no difficulty in obtaining an SDSP application form.

5

____3. My application to be an SDSP teacher proceeded rather smoothly.

5

____4. The SDSP pre-service professional development adequately prepared me for my role in the project.

5

____5. The SDSP in-service professional development conducted during the summer term adequately assisted me in fulfilling my role in the project.

5

____6. The facilities at my demonstration school satisfactorily accommodated the activities of the project.

5

____7. The available materials and supplies were sufficient to meet the needs of the project.

5

____8. The teacher-student ratios of the SDSP classes generally did not exceed the projected ratio (i.e., 1:15 for elementary schools, and 1:20 for secondary schools).

5

____9. I believe that the length of the summer term was sufficient to accomplish the objectives of the project.

5

___10. The project, in my opinion, was well supported by the school administration.

5

___11. A professional learning community was successfully established in my demonstration school.

1

Continue on the back.

INSTRUCTIONS					Do not write in this area
Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Not applicable/ Unable to respond	
4	3	2	1	0	

___12. The content of the SDSP curriculum emphasized trans-disciplinary themes. **1**

___13. To enhance the relevance of lessons, the SDSP teachers often linked the topics to universal themes or ideas. **1**

___14. The SDSP teachers used an inquiry-based approach to deliver instruction. **1**

___15. The SDSP teachers coordinated their instructional strategies to focus on the whole student. **1**

___16. The SDSP teachers assisted their students in identifying and effectively using their unique learning styles. **1**

___17. A basic strategy of the SDSP in-service training was the reflective examination of model lessons. **1**

___18. A fundamental goal of the SDSP in-service training was to impart effective school reform strategies. **1**

___19. The model lessons and instructional strategies developed by the SDSP project are a valuable professional resource. **1**

___20. The project exposed me to new ideas for improving my teaching practices. **3**

___21. Since the end of the summer term, I have successfully applied instructional strategies that I learned from the project. **3**

___22. I have used the knowledge that I acquired from the project to successfully mentor other teachers. **4**

___23. In my opinion, the project at my demonstration school was a success. **6**

___24. I generally feel that the project was a professionally rewarding experience. **3**

___25. I believe that the district should consider expanding the project. **6**

26. If you wish to offer a comment or clarification, please do so.

_____

_____

_____

_____

INSTRUCTIONS
• Thank you for your cooperation. Please return the completed survey to:

Dr. Joseph J. Gomez
9020, Annex 225
Program Evaluation

• Use the enclosed return envelope.

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APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW OF TEACHERS

INTERVIEW OF TEACHERS

2007 Summer Demonstration School Project

1. Have the instructional components and strategies of the demonstration school proven to be generally effective? Which component or strategy have you found to be most effective? Have you found any to be simply not feasible?

2. Did the classes of the demonstration school seem to appeal to the student? What aspect of the classes was most popular with the students?

3. Did you find your experiences in the demonstration school to be professionally rewarding? Is a demonstration school a comparatively better means of training in-service teachers?

4. Have you shared the knowledge you acquired at the demonstration school with your colleagues? Have they been receptive to these new ideas? Are you currently mentoring any colleague?

5. Are there aspects of the demonstration school project that could be improved? Do you have any suggestions?

6. What do you envision in the future of the demonstration school project? Should the project be expanded?