

Media Advisory



Miami-Dade County Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS RESPONDS TO THE CRISIS IN HAITI

MIAMI – Miami-Dade County Public Schools students, staff and supporters continue to respond with overwhelming generosity to assist people in Haiti following last week’s devastating earthquake.

“It’s truly impressive to see our people responding to the needs of our neighbors in Haiti,” said Superintendent of Schools Alberto M. Carvalho. “Their kindness and responsiveness in this time of need is truly awesome.”

Collection sites, which have been established at each public school, have received an abundance of medical and first-aid supplies, bottled water, and camping supplies—the items most in need to assist victims during the crisis in Haiti. As of today, 21 boxes of medical supplies, 187 boxes of non-perishable food, 1,000 cases of water, and five boxes of camping equipment have been collected by school sites to assist in the relief effort. Over the weekend, 40,000 pounds of water collected by the district was flown directly to the island for distribution.

The district also is receiving monetary donations through its website, www.dadeschools.net. The district also is accepting checks made out to “The Foundation for New Education Initiatives, Inc.,” with “Haiti Earthquake Relief” indicated in the memo section of the check. Checks should be mailed to 1450 N.E. 2nd Avenue, Room #776, Miami, Florida 33132.

School district administrators are making special arrangements to register newly arrived children for school upon their arrival at Miami International Airport, if the airport is designated as an intake center. Administrators also are addressing the possibility of providing immunizations to students immediately upon arrival at the airport, to expedite their start date at school. New students, who may not have paperwork or identification with them because of the disaster, will be placed in age-appropriate classes. Curriculum for the new students will focus on literacy and acculturation. As of Tuesday, Jan. 19, 60 new students have been enrolled.

Special teams are currently assigned to 15 schools that serve the Haitian-American population to do a dual purpose: welcoming and accommodating new students, as well as assisting with crisis counseling for those current students and staff, who may have been affected by the earthquake.

A Homestead hospital facility that is owned by the school district is being considered for use as a residential/educational/health facility, if the need arises. The building contains dozens of former patient rooms with individual restroom facilities, which could be easily adapted for use as intermediate-term living quarters for new arrivals.

Through a collaboration with local elected officials and community partners, the District has requested financial support from the federal government by means of a predetermined spending level that would address the educational, psychological and social needs of these students.

"The District's level of readiness can only be enhanced through the strategic collaboration of federal, state and local entities, both public and private," said Carvalho. "Our experiences following the Mariel Boatlift and Hurricane Andrew, as well as the nation's experience after Hurricane Katrina, have taught us that now is the time to finalize our plan of action. This is no longer a question of whether children will come to South Florida, but when they will come, and in what numbers."

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