



Memorandum

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To: Mr. Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent
Miami-Dade County Public Schools

From: Christopher Mazzella, Inspector General

Date: December 15, 2009

Subject: Criminal Disposition of the OIG's Investigation of John A. Ferguson Senior High School's 2006 and 2007 Retreats, Ref. IG08-04SB

The Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) investigation into the John A. Ferguson Senior High School (Ferguson SHS) retreats has resulted in a Settlement Agreement between the State Attorney's Office (SAO) and Dr. Donald Hoecherl, the former principal of Ferguson SHS. The OIG investigation uncovered Dr. Hoecherl's deliberate circumvention of School Board Rules and other internal procurement controls to improperly obtain funds to pay for school employee retreats. As discussed in the OIG final report issued on June 11, 2008, Dr. Hoecherl contracted directly with resort hotels and utilized pseudo vendors to create layered transactions in order to conceal the true use of over \$200,000 in school district funds. He then used the funds to pay for hotel lodging at resorts, alcoholic beverages and food for the employees of Ferguson SHS, as well as their friends and family.

As part of his settlement agreement with the SAO, Dr. Hoecherl does not admit to any criminal wrongdoing, but does agree to resign his employment with Miami-Dade County Public Schools—which he did on November 20, 2009. Dr. Hoecherl also agreed to pay restitution in the amount of \$20,272.50 for amounts associated with the 2006 and 2007 retreats, as well as the costs of the OIG investigation.

The previously issued OIG final report, and its attachments can be viewed online at <http://www.miamidadeig.org/SBreportsandreleased/Ferguson.pdf>. Given this settlement agreement, the OIG considers this matter closed.

cc: Dr. Solomon C. Stinson, Chairman
and Miami-Dade County School Board Members
Mr. Jose Montes de Oca, Chief Auditor, Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Mr. Walter J. Harvey, School Board Attorney