

# 2024

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# Annual REPORT

**OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL  
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



[www.MiamiDadeIG.org](http://www.MiamiDadeIG.org)



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## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR INSPECTOR GENERAL



I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for Miami-Dade County Public Schools for the fiscal year 2024. This report reflects our ongoing commitment to ensuring transparency, accountability, and the highest standards of integrity within our school district.

Throughout this year, our office has continued its mission to uphold public trust by conducting thorough investigations and reviews, and providing actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and safeguarding public resources. Our efforts have been guided by the principles of fairness, diligence, and a steadfast commitment to the educational mission of Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

The highlights of this report include a comprehensive overview of our key investigations and the impact of our recommendations. Noteworthy achievements include the successful resolution of several high-profile cases involving allegations of fraud, waste, financial mismanagement, coercion, and misconduct resulting in the implementation of new policies designed to prevent future occurrences. Our audit team is participating in the ongoing audit of board members' P-card usage which may identify additional opportunities for process improvements that will benefit our district's financial health and operational effectiveness.

We have also made significant strides in fostering a culture of ethical behavior and compliance within our schools. Through increased outreach efforts, we have empowered staff members at all levels to recognize and report potential issues, thereby reinforcing a collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of integrity.

As we look ahead, our office remains dedicated to refining our processes and expanding our outreach to further support the district's strategic goals. We will continue to engage proactively with stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, advisory board members, and the community members, to ensure that our work aligns with the evolving needs of Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all Board Members and especially Chairwoman Mari Tere Rojas and Superintendent Dr. Jose Dotres, and the entire district leadership for your ongoing support and collaboration. It is through our combined efforts that we can achieve our shared vision of a transparent, accountable, and high-performing educational environment for our students.

Thank you for your attention to this report. We look forward to continuing our work together to advance the excellence of Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Sincerely,

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## **I. ABOUT US**

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of the Inspector General (M-DCPS OIG), through independent oversight of school district affairs, detects, investigates, and prevents fraud, waste, mismanagement, misconduct, and abuse of power. The organization and administration of the M-DCPS OIG is independent to assure that no interference or influence external to the Office adversely affects the objectivity of the M-DCPS OIG.

## **MISSION**

Detecting, investigating, and preventing fraud, waste, mismanagement, and abuse of power within the school district.

## **INTER-LOCAL AGREEMENT**

The Inter-Local Agreement (ILA) between the School Board of Miami-Dade County and Miami-Dade County, initially executed in 2007, sets forth the responsibilities, functions, authority, and jurisdiction of the M-DCPS OIG. The current agreement expires on December 18, 2025.

The M-DCPS OIG promotes accountability, integrity, and efficiency through its efforts in conducting investigations, audits, and oversight activities of school district employees, contractors, projects and programs. All case assignments are conducted with the goal of improving M-DCPS's ability to provide the highest quality education.



## II. THE OIG EXECUTIVE TEAM



*(left to right) Hector Ortiz, Patra Liu, Felix Jimenez, Marie Perikles, James Schlotzhauer*

Inspector General Felix Jimenez is the head of the organization. His Executive Team includes Deputy Inspector General/General Counsel Patra Liu, Assistant Inspector General for Investigations Hector Ortiz, Deputy General Counsel Marie Perikles and Director of Data Analytics James Schlotzhauer.

Assistant Inspector General Hector Ortiz leads the Investigations Unit. When investigations of fraud, waste, and abuse of authority reveal criminal wrongdoing, the Assistant

Inspector General for Investigations coordinates with state and federal criminal prosecutors to shepherd OIG cases to a successful legal resolution.

Patra Liu oversees the Legal Unit with Deputy General Counsel Marie Perikles and three additional attorneys. The Legal Unit provides continuous support and guidance to all OIG personnel from the moment a complaint is received to case closure, which oftentimes involves the issuance of public reports and memoranda. OIG attorneys provide counsel on jurisdictional questions and help assess the strengths and weaknesses of OIG cases for potential civil, administrative, or criminal implications.

Deputy Inspector General Liu also manages the OIG's Contract Oversight and Audit Units. Their work includes active monitoring and random inspections of contracting and construction activities to ensure fairness in the procurement process and compliance with contract specifications. The Audit Unit consists of a team of certified professionals with a wide range of government and private sector experience. The Audit Unit frequently coordinates with the Investigations Unit and/or Contract Oversight Unit. All three units work together to advance the mission of the Office.

As the Director of Data Analytics, James Schlotzhauer has the primary responsibility to ensure the alignment, development, and integration of data analytics, business intelligence, and artificial intelligence necessary to support the mission, vision, strategies, objectives, and goals of the OIG. Mr. Schlotzhauer organizes and assembles resources necessary to address the current and future analytical needs of the OIG.

### III. WELCOME TO THE M-DCPS OIG TEAM



Special Agent (SA) Reldys Torres joined the Miami-Dade County Schools Office of the Inspector General on June 3, 2024. Prior to his new assignment, Reldys Torres served as a sworn Federal Law Enforcement Officer with a distinguished 23-year career as a U.S. Postal Inspector for the United States Postal Inspection Service. During his career he conducted numerous domestic and international white collar crime investigations, to include mail and wire fraud, child exploitation, multi-national money laundering and narcotic cases, identity theft cases, and international lottery scams against the elderly. Prior to his Federal Law Enforcement Career, Reldys Torres was a Florida State Probation and Parole Officer for the Florida Department of Corrections. His experience of over 25 years in Law Enforcement will enhance the ability of our office to provide impartial and effective results. Let us all Welcome Reldys Torres to Our Team.

### M-DCPS OIG TEAM



*(left to right) Archie Moore, Julie Mondragon, David Hernandez, Jose Gonzalez, Tracey Skwarek, Reldys Torres*

## IV. OPERATING BUDGET AND STAFFING



The School Board funds the M-DCPS OIG annually to provide inspector general services to the school district. All personnel costs are funded under an annual budget allocation. For the 2023 - 2024 fiscal year, the School Board approved a \$1,306,000 budget to cover operating needs, and personnel staffing.

The M-DCPS OIG is staffed with a supervisor, four special agents, and an administrative assistant. M-DCPS OIG employees are contracted managerial

exempt personnel and serve at the will of the Inspector General, who, by virtue of the ILA between the School Board and Miami-Dade County, is the County Inspector General who will serve as the Inspector General for the School Board.

The ILA also enables County OIG staff to provide services to the M-DCPS OIG on a reimbursement basis. OIG investigative analysts provide investigative and analytical support, including intelligence gathering, to the M-DCPS OIG upon request. OIG attorneys provide legal advice and guidance in support of M-DCPS OIG investigations and operations. The Inspector General and the Assistant Inspector General of Investigations directly oversee all operations of the M-DCPS OIG.

## V. COMPLAINT INTAKE AND DISPOSITION

The majority of cases opened each year stem from complaints submitted to the M-DCPS OIG by school district employees, vendors, parents, and other concerned citizens. Other cases result from ongoing investigations and audits, and some are self-initiated. We strive to provide a voice to all complainants. Complaints involving personnel matters and other similar issues, as well as matters beyond the M-DCPS OIG's jurisdiction, are referred to the appropriate parties. The M-DCPS OIG addresses every complaint, either through an investigation, audit, review, or referral.

The M-DCPS OIG receives complaints by mail, via our website, through the OIG fraud hotline, and in person. All complainants can be assured that investigators are trained to maintain the confidentiality of the information provided and ensure the confidentiality of the complainant's identity pursuant to applicable laws and policies. The M-DCPS OIG logs each complaint received, and each complaint undergoes a review process to determine jurisdiction, and the action warranted. Based on the subject matter and the specificity of the information received, some complaints will result in the M-DCPS OIG initiating an investigation, audit, or review. Other complaints may be determined to be more appropriately addressed by the M-DCPS administration

or by another governmental agency. In the case of most referrals, the receiving agency is requested to provide the M-DCPS OIG with its findings.

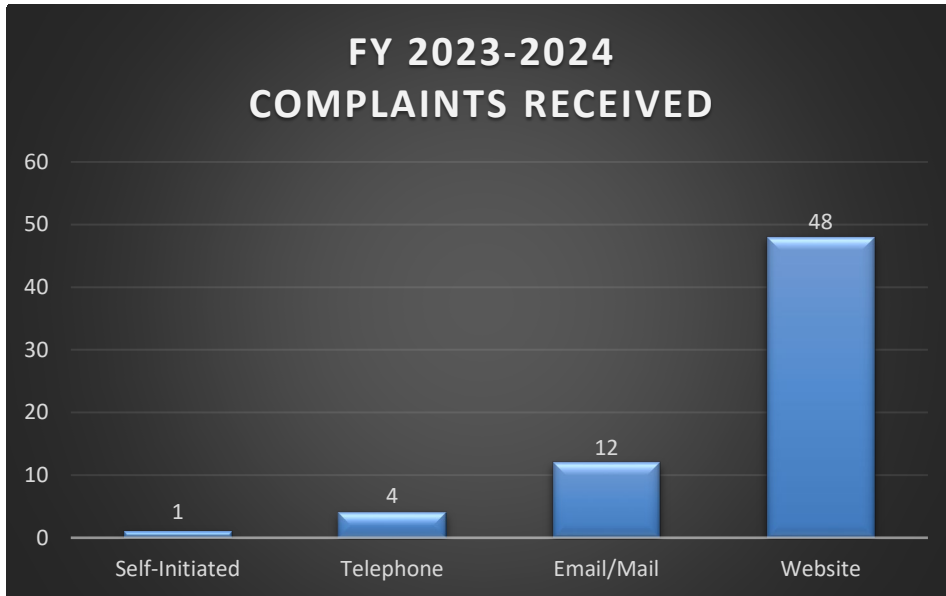
In accordance with Section 3(h) of the ILA, the M-DCPS OIG is the school district's designee for purposes of receiving Whistleblower Act disclosures pursuant to Florida Statutes, Section 112.3187(7). Whistleblower disclosures are those disclosures that allege violations or suspected violations of law, rule or regulation that endanger health and public safety or allegations of gross mismanagement, malfeasance, misfeasance, gross waste of public funds, or gross neglect of duty by persons in an agency or independent contractors.

Any individual who makes such a disclosure is entitled to have his/her identity kept confidential pursuant to state law. Except for those complaints received anonymously where the complainant's identity is unknown, complainants are advised of the disposition of their complaints.

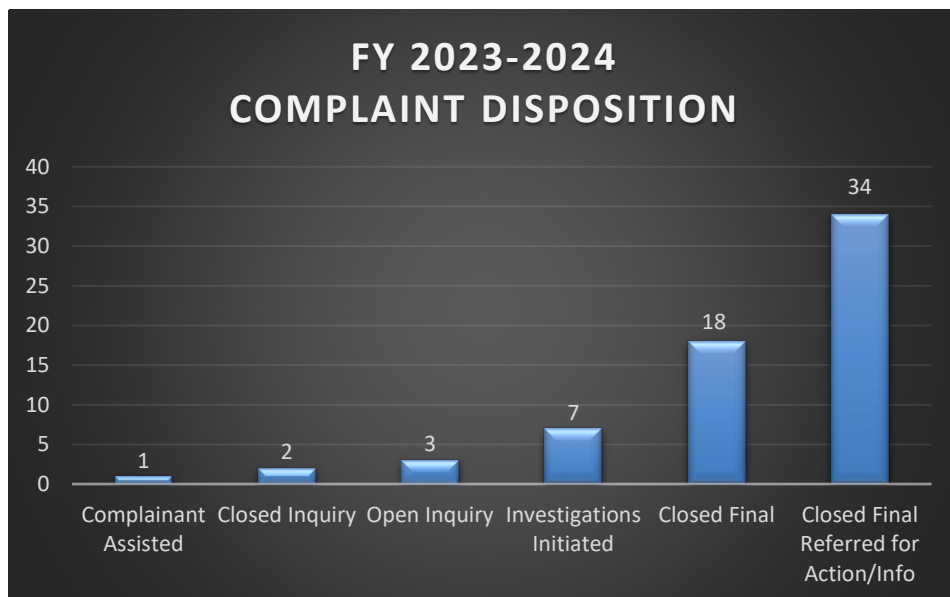




The Office received 65 complaints in Fiscal Year 2023-2024 - 74% of the complaints received were submitted through our website's report fraud page: [www.miamidadeig.org/inspector-general/fraud.page](http://www.miamidadeig.org/inspector-general/fraud.page). The remainder of the complaints were received through a variety of means as depicted in the chart below.



Each complaint is reviewed and evaluated by the Assistant Inspector General for Investigations, General Counsel, and, ultimately, the Inspector General. Of the 65 complaints received last year, 11% resulted in investigations. The remainder of the complaints were resolved in the manner depicted in the chart below.



## **VI. INVESTIGATIVE HIGHLIGHTS**

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) conducts criminal and administrative investigations of fraud, waste, financial mismanagement, abuse, and misconduct related to M-DCPS programs, operations, contracts, and employees and promote accountability, integrity, economy, and efficiency in government. OIG special agents have a wide variety of professional experience from prior positions with law enforcement and regulatory agencies. They have extensive training in white collar crime, financial fraud, and public corruption investigations. The M-DCPS OIG coordinates with the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office and other law enforcement authorities to leverage resources and fraud-fighting efforts. Our investigations often lead to criminal cases and/or administrative reports with recommendations and monetary recoveries.

During this past fiscal year, two criminal investigations resulted in two arrests. Numerous administrative investigations were completed pertaining to allegations of fraud, waste, financial mismanagement, coercion, and misconduct. The M-DCPS OIG also opened investigations during the year that remain ongoing. These cases will be reported, when completed, in subsequent annual reports. Summaries of our completed cases follow in the next few pages.

### **CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS**

#### **Arrest of former School Board Member**

Working jointly with the State Attorney's Office (SAO) Public Corruption Task Force, the M-DCPS OIG arrested a former School Board Member on two counts of Organized Scheme to Defraud and two counts of Grand Theft for allegedly stealing over \$100,000 in public tax dollars from the School District.

The investigation revealed the former School Board Member had been issued two credit cards – one for small purchases (commonly referred to as a P-Card) and one to be used for travel expenses (a Travel Card). Personal use of these credit cards is strictly prohibited.

The investigation found the P-Card was used for personal purchases including appliances, electronics, household furnishings, health and beauty products, and over 178 gift cards. The investigation further found the Travel Card had also been used for personal travel to purchase airline tickets and hotel stays for trips to Walt Disney World, Las Vegas, Nevada, and the Dominican Republic.

Subsequent to the arrest, School Board Chair, Ms. Mari Tere Rojas (with unanimous approval by the School Board and co-sponsored by all Board Members) and Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jose Dotres, initiated reforms regarding P-Card and Travel Card expenses. These included audits of current and previous School Board members, to include additional audit procedures for the School

Board Members Offices, the Office of the Superintendent, the Office of Management and Compliance Audits, and the Office of the General Counsel, and provide additional training to School Board Members and related staff as necessary. Additionally, a new SAP module for P-Cards was implemented, overhauling the previous process which was paper based. It is anticipated that a 2<sup>nd</sup> phase will address the reconciliation process for travel expenditures. This investigation is ongoing and pending trial.

## **Arrest of former M-DCPS Travel Management Services Vendor**

In a second joint investigation with the SAO's Public Corruption Task Force, a former travel management services vendor was arrested and charged with one count of bid tampering. The vendor was charged with rigging bids for student travel services by submitting fictitious bids purported to be from a competitor. This investigation is ongoing and pending trial.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATIONS**

### **Improper use of placeholders on the Master Schedule**

The OIG received a complaint alleging that a high school principal assigned Educational Transformation Coaches (coaches) to the master schedule for classes they were not teaching. It was also alleged that the principal overused the school's substitute teacher funds, which resulted in full-time teachers being unable to attend professional development opportunities because there were no funds left to hire substitute teachers to cover their absence. The OIG's investigation found that the coaches were placed on the master schedule as placeholders for classes without full-time teachers. The classes were taught by long term substitutes or Florida Virtual School teachers. The OIG found that the substitute teachers were paid out of Turnaround Schools Supplemental Services Allocation funds and not out of the substitute teacher fund as alleged. As such, the allegation involving a budgetary shortfall impacting professional development opportunities was determined to be unfounded.

During this investigation, the OIG discovered that after the coaches were removed from the master schedule, they were replaced by non-instructional personnel—a custodial worker and a food service worker. This finding was troubling and strongly suggested that policies and training needed to be strengthened regarding the creation and maintenance of a school's master schedule. The OIG's report of investigation included three recommendations regarding the building of the master schedule and the use of placeholders.

As a result of this investigation M-DCPS provided guidance to school site administrators on the use of placeholders. Furthermore, M-DCPS established a process where schools report on the number

of placeholders used and provide an attestation that no non-instructional employees were used in the master schedule. Additionally, M-DCPS revised the Master Schedule Guidelines to include the OIG recommendations on the use of placeholders and the prohibition of non-instructional staff in the master schedule, as well as provide training to principals, assistant principals, and their leadership teams on these revised guidelines.

## **Alleged Manipulation of Student Lottery Process at a Charter School**

An investigation was initiated after receiving an anonymous complaint alleging that a current and a former principal at a Miami charter school were overheard laughing during a charter school event about how they “rig” the entrance lotteries at their schools to ensure that “[Black students] do not get into their schools.” It was further alleged that these administrators stated that they “rearrange” the application numbers to make sure that their pre-selected students get in, and the applications for Black students are “kept out.”

All charter schools in Florida are public schools that operate under a “charter” or contract with the local school board but are governed by a separate governing body and operate under a management agreement with a private management company. The laws governing the creation and operation of charter schools are codified in Florida State Statutes. An application to operate a charter school is made to the district school board in the county over which the district school board has jurisdiction. The district school board decides whether to sponsor the charter school and shall monitor and review the charter school in its progress toward the goals established in the charter.

Students wanting to attend a charter school must submit an application. If the number of eligible students exceeds the capacity of the program, grade level, or building capacity, a random lottery selection of students will be conducted. Pursuant to Section 1002.33, Florida Statutes, a charter school may give enrollment preference to certain populations enumerated in the statute.

*“All applicants have an equal chance of being admitted through a random selection process. There are exceptions to the random selection process where enrollment preference is provided to certain student populations such as “students who siblings of a student enrolled in the charter school, or who are the children of a member of the governing board or employee of the charter school.”*

The allegations were determined to be unfounded. The OIG investigation revealed that the random lottery selections for potential incoming students at the charter schools in question were conducted by an independent audit firm, without involvement of the schools’ principals. This information was further corroborated through interviews of staff members at the identified schools.

The OIG did not uncover any evidence to support that the alleged derogatory statements were made. In reviewing the random student lottery process conducted at the charter school locations, the OIG confirmed that the lotteries were conducted by an independent audit firm. Applications for



students to enter the lottery were submitted via a third-party website. It was further determined that when the lottery was completed, the auditors sent a certified letter to the principals, with the names of the students selected for vacancies and the waiting list. To alter the numbers of selected students as alleged, the principals would have to do so during or after when the lottery takes place. The auditors' results would then not match the schools' results—this is not the case in this instance.

Based on the OIG investigation which consisted of the interviews of pertinent individuals identified in this case and the review of numerous records pertaining to the random lottery selection process, policies related to student selection for charter schools, student demographic data, and enrollment, the OIG concluded the allegations in this complaint were unfounded

## **Contract Oversight of an M-DCPS Solicitation Process**

M-DCPS OIG received a request from senior M-DCPS staff members to monitor the solicitation process of a \$980 Million Capital Projects program involving district-wide facilities upgrades, renovations, and new construction.

The OIG determined that all phases of the solicitation, including a bid protest were conducted in accordance with School Board policies and Florida Statutes. The contract was awarded and the Agreement for services was approved for a period of five years, with renewals at the School Board's option. The oversight of this contract resides with the M-DCPS Office of Facilities Design and Construction.

## **Allegations of Embezzlement**

An investigation was launched after receiving a complaint from the daughter of a retired M-DCPS employee alleging her father had embezzled millions of dollars while employed with M-DCPS. The complainant stated that her father worked for M-DCPS for thirty-five (35) years and retired as a maintenance supervisor. The complainant alleged that her father colluded with another M-DCPS employee to get a business owner a contract with M-DCPS and rigged the bids in favor of the vendor for kickbacks in money and materials.

The OIG investigation found that the complainant's father had been employed by M-DCPS and retired in 2005. Based on the limited information provided by the complainant and the age of the allegations, the OIG's inquiry was limited to purchasing and payment records going back thirteen (13) years. Numerous attempts to contact the complainant for additional information were unsuccessful. Based on the records reviewed and interviews of former co-workers the OIG was unable to find any information to substantiate the allegations.

## Missing School Funds

Complaints are received by the M-DCPS OIG via our website, in person, by mail, or fax or through our hotline. A complaint received via the OIG's website alleged Educational Excellence School Advisory Council (EESAC) funds were missing from the EESAC account of a high school. The complainant advised that during a review of the EESAC funds for the school, they noticed the sum of \$2,498.00, had been transferred from the EESAC account to purchase "furniture/fixtures." Neither the school's treasurer nor the EESAC committee were familiar with the transaction.

The OIG interviewed the complainant, the school's treasurer and other M-DCPS staff as well as reviewed relevant documents, including, but not limited to, vendor quotes, purchase orders, EESAC meeting minutes, invoices, receipts, including a spreadsheet describing the transaction, and bank statements. During its review of the EESAC meeting minutes, the OIG observed an approved agenda item identified as "Student activities request (2500) EESAC approved the 2500 be given for attendance medals/plaques and trophies for honor roll and subject honor/certificates."

Based on the records reviewed and the information obtained from the interviews, the OIG learned that the money had been properly approved through the EESAC committee for medals, plaques, trophies but was mislabeled on the school ledger as furniture and fixtures.

## VII. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

### Sentencing in GED Fraud Case

Roxanne Insignares, a former M-DCPS employee, one of three defendants, charged in a scheme to sell General Education Development (GED) certificates pled guilty and was sentenced on December 5, 2023. Ms. Insignares was sentenced to 364 days jail followed by a period of four (4) years' probation. Antonio Bouzan, also a former M-DCPS employee and Marta Avalos, not a school employee, previously pled guilty to charges stemming from the same joint investigation by the M-DCPS OIG and the SAO's Public Corruption Task Force. All three were involved in a scheme to sell GED certificates to individuals.

Ms. Insignares, the former Test Chair at Miami Lakes Educational Center and Technical College (MLTC) was responsible for the GED testing at that location. Mr. Bouzan was the GED Registrar at MLTC under Ms. Insignares. The pair charged from \$150 to \$2,800 in exchange for issuing GED certificates. The investigation identified 19 individuals who fraudulently received their GEDs. Of those individuals, 18 admitted to paying for their GED certificates, 1 individual denied paying, all 19 admitted not taking the test and receiving a GED certificate.

Ms. Insignares falsified records and submitted false information to the Department of Education, M-DCPS, and the GED Testing Service LLC/Pearson VUE (the testing company) to obtain those certificates. Mr. Bouzan, acted as a broker—soliciting individuals who needed GEDs, completing

their registrations for the test, and collecting the money. Marta Avalos, who worked for a non-profit agency driving individuals to various appointments including to obtain their GEDs, also acted as a broker. Ms. Avalos connected individuals seeking GEDs with Mr. Bouzan, shuttling the money and required paperwork, for a cut of the cash.

In January 2019, Ms. Insignares, Mr. Bouzan, and Ms. Avalos were arrested and charged with multiple counts of Organized Scheme to Defraud, and Cheating. Ms. Insignares and Mr. Bouzan, who were public servants as employees of M-DCPS, were charged with Unlawful Compensation for Official Behavior. As a public servant, Ms. Insignares was also charged with Official Misconduct for her falsification of documents.

Ms. Avalos was sentenced in March 2022, to 3 years of probation, 100 hours of community service, assessed fines, and costs of investigation. In January 2023, Mr. Bouzan was adjudicated guilty and sentenced to 2 years of house arrest followed by 3 years of probation, assessed fines, costs of investigation, and ordered to complete 100 hours of community service. Ms. Insignares plead guilty to the following charges: One (1) count of Organized Fraud; one (1) count of Cheating, one (1) count of Official Misconduct, and one (1) count of Unlawful Compensation and was sentenced to 364 days jail followed by a period of four (4) years' probation. She was also assessed fines, costs of investigation, and ordered to complete 100 hours of community service as a condition of probation.

Ms. Insignares' guilty plea and sentence closes this chapter that tarnished a process providing a practicable option for people who have not obtained a high school diploma. The OIG will remain vigilant in exposing behavior that is detrimental to preserving the integrity and public trust in M-DCPS.

## **Miami-Dade County Public Schools Driver Education Program**

This M-DCPS OIG investigation, which was previously reported in the 2022 annual report, substantiated various allegations that M-DCPS administrators knowingly submitted ineligible expenses for reimbursement from Miami-Dade County's Drivers Education Trust Fund, which was created to receive funds pursuant to the Dori Slosberg Act, Section 318.1215, Florida Statutes. The M-DCPS OIG determined that M-DCPS was overpaid a total of \$6,281,814.74, of ineligible expenses, which it claimed for FY 2011-12, FY 2012-13, FY 2013-14 and FY 2015-16. These reimbursements were deposited into the M-DCPS general funds account and were used to offset the ineligible expenses and not to enhance the Driver Education Program, as required.

From its inception, the State required the funds be used for direct educational expenses and not for administrative expenses. Furthermore, to receive any funds, the statute required that a minimum of 30 percent of a student's time be behind-the-wheel instruction.

The M-DCPS OIG investigation also revealed additional areas of concern, such as M-DCPS failing to provide Adaptive Driver Education services to disabled students since December 2015, in violation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Additionally, M-DCPS did not adequately provide

Driver Education opportunities for private school students, which was also required by Miami-Dade County Resolutions and the Interlocal Agreement between Miami-Dade County and M-DCPS.

The M-DCPS OIG in its 2021 Report of Investigation provided eight recommendations for both the School Board and Miami-Dade County's consideration. The school district accepted all of the recommendations. Since the report was published, the M-DCPS OIG has requested status reports as to the implementation of the recommendations.

We have reviewed the status reports as well as conducted unannounced site visits and are pleased that M-DCPS and Miami-Dade County have made progress on each recommendation. Specifically, we note the following actions taken by M-DCPS:

- Currently M-DCPS is operating **10** certified driver education ranges. An additional **3** ranges are pending certification, and another **2** ranges are pending construction.
- There are currently **41** drivers' education vehicles in use throughout M-DCPS. The existing fleet of properly fitted driver education vehicles range in age between 2020 and 2024.
- There are currently **12** teachers that are properly certified with the necessary credentials to provide behind-the-wheel instruction. There are another **11** teachers enrolled in the certification program.
- M-DCPS has offered access to the Driver Education Program to private school students, charter school students and M-DCPS students whose high schools do not offer driver education classes in compliance with the interlocal agreement with Miami-Dade County. These courses have been offered at **3** high school locations throughout M-DCPS with certified driver education ranges during the summer months of **2022, 2023 and 2024**.
- The Adaptive Driver Education services to disabled students currently has one adapted vehicle and multiple instructors with the proper teaching credentials.

M-DCPS continues to engage with Miami-Dade County's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on the eligibility of expenses that can count towards writing down the \$6.2 Million financial liability. We are pleased with the progress that has taken place between M-DCPS and OMB.

The M-DCPS OIG is fully committed to ensuring that the M-DCPS Driver Education Program provides meaningful behind-the-wheel instruction to the students of Miami-Dade County and that disbursements from the County's Driver Education Safety Trust Fund adhere to all applicable statutory requirements.



EDUCATION

## After overhaul of Miami schools' driver's ed program, this disabled student gets his license

BY CLARA-SOPHIA DALY

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 16, 2024 9:31 AM



Elijah Solomon, 19, and his mother Carlene Dill, 38, are photographed outside of their home on Wednesday, Sept. 4, 2024, in Miami Gardens, Fla. Solomon, who was born with limited use of his legs, attended a driver's education summer program at Hialeah-Miami Lakes Senior High School. MATIAS J. OCNER [mocner@miamiherald.com](mailto:mocner@miamiherald.com)

Source: Clara-Sophia Daly – The Miami Herald

## VIII. M-DCPS OIG SUPERVISORY SPECIAL AGENT RECEIVES AWARD FROM SOUTH FLORIDA INSPECTOR GENERAL COUNCIL

On February 1, 2024, Supervisory Special Agent (SSA) Jose Gonzalez, received a Special Achievement Award for a Complex Financial Crimes Investigation by the South Florida Inspectors General Council for his outstanding work on the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Driver Education Program investigation. The award ceremony was held at the U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Florida and the award was presented by First Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Davis. SSA Gonzalez was recognized for demonstrating outstanding dedication and commitment to public service and making a significant impact on the safety and well-being of the school children of Miami-Dade County and the South Florida community.



*(left to right) Michael Davis, Jose Gonzalez, Felix Jimenez, Hector Ortiz, Marie Perikles*

## IX. AUDIT AND BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Created by School Board Policy No. 6840, the Audit and Budget Advisory Committee (ABAC) serves as the principal advisory committee to assist the Board in fulfilling its fiduciary responsibilities on budgeting, financial reporting and accounting and business policies and practices. ABAC members (and their alternates) are appointed by each School Board Member, the Superintendent and the President of the PTA/PTSA. There are eleven ABAC members.

The ABAC's purpose is to review and make recommendations to the School Board and Superintendent on fiscal management matters presented to the committee. The ABAC also serves as the Board's principal agent in ensuring the independence of the school district's external and internal auditors. In addition to receiving and reviewing all reports issued by the District's Office of Management and Compliance Audits, the ABAC, pursuant to Board policy, is charged with receiving and reviewing reports issued by the OIG and monitoring the corrective action taken by the District in response to the OIG's recommendations. The OIG's annual report is also presented to the ABAC.

## X. ETHICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE



The OIG attends all Ethics Advisory Committee (EAC) meetings where we present our investigative reports, reviews, and annual reports. Comprised of seven prominent community members, Chairman Donald Slesnick,

Esq.; Mr. Frank Silva, Esq.; Dr. Laura Kohn Wood; Dr. Ursula Wright; Ms. Sharon Watson, Hon. Jerald Bagley and Dr. Carmen Concepcion. The EAC is regularly attended by one or more board members (or a staff delegate), and a representative from the School Board Attorney's Office.

With regard to terms of membership, Policy 0158 provides that: "The members of the Ethics Advisory Committee shall serve terms of four (4) years each. Upon expiration of said term, any member may be re-appointed to additional four (4) year terms." With respect to quorum, the Policy 0158 states that: "A minimum of four (4) voting members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum. A quorum must be present before a vote is taken on any matter appearing before the Committee."

The OIG looks forward to the continued relationship with the EAC and supports its role in helping to ensure ethical governance.

Daily, public school administrators are required to make business decisions which will impact the quality of their educational institution(s) and the lives of students and their families. Those



decisions will be founded on the administrator’s leadership skills along with an ethical value system which is governed by rules, ordinances, statutes, and their personal moral code of conduct. In July, EAC Chairman Slesnick, IG Jimenez, and M-DCPS Deputy General Counsel Luis Garcia participated in a panel discussion at the **Dade Association of School Administrators 2024 Annual Conference** titled *Ethical Conduct: The Foundation of Good Governance*, discussing the challenging ethical environment in which attendees will operate in the coming academic term.



(left to right) Panel members Donald Slesnick, Felix Jimenez, Luis Garcia



(left to right) Luis Garcia, Felix Jimenez, Chairwoman Mari-Tere Rojas, DASA President Dr. Heather Tyler, Donald Slesnick, DASA Board Member Anthony Balboa, former School Board member Dr. Lawrence Feldman



# XI. PROVIDING OVERSIGHT TO THE 3<sup>RD</sup> LARGEST SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE NATION

