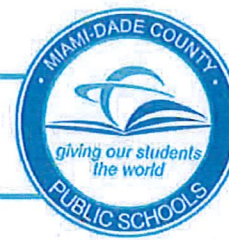




Mary T. Cagle
Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General for Miami-Dade County Public Schools



TO: The Honorable Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair,
and Members, Miami-Dade School Board

Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools, M-DCPS

FROM: Mary T. Cagle, Inspector General

DATE: January 24, 2019

SUBJECT: Arrest of Roxanne Insignares, Antonio Bouzan, and Marta Avalos
for GED Fraud

Roxanne Insignares and Antonio Bouzan, both Miami-Dade County Schools (M-DCPS) employees since 1991 and 1987, respectively, were arrested today. In addition, Marta Avalos, who is not a school employee, was also arrested. All three were involved in a scheme to issue GED certificates that were unearned, while charging large fees to enrich themselves. Each faces several felony charges as a result of the joint investigation by the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office Public Corruption Task Force.

The investigation revealed that Insignares was responsible for the GED test location at the Miami Lakes Educational Center and Technical College ("MLTC") and Bouzan was a GED Registrar under Insignares. Insignares and Bouzan received cash payments ranging in amounts from \$150 to \$2,800 in exchange for issuing GED certificates. 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. The investigation identified Bouzan and Marta Avalos as the "brokers" who collected cash from the fraudulent GED recipients.

This investigation stems directly from our earlier investigation into the North Miami Adult Education Center and the arrest of its principal. The OIG is grateful for the cooperation by M-DCPS staff during the course of this investigation. Attached is a press release from the SAO with additional information about today's arrest and the criminal charges.

cc: Chief Edwin Lopez, Miami-Dade Schools Police Department
Walter J. Harvey, School Board Attorney, M-DCPS
Maria T. Gonzalez, Chief Auditor, M-DCPS
Daisy Gonzalez-Diego, Chief Communications Officer, M-DCPS



**KATHERINE FERNANDEZ RUNDLE
STATE ATTORNEY**



**ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**THREE INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED IN ORGANIZED SCHEME TO
SELL GED CERTIFICATES**

Miami - January 24, 2019

As the result of a joint collaborative investigation by the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office Public Corruption Task Force (PC Task Force) and the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of the Inspector General (MDCPS - OIG), three individuals have been arrested in an organized scheme to defraud by selling GED certificates to individuals willing to pay up to almost \$3,000 from test brokers and/or test applicants in exchange for GED certificates.

Those arrested and the offenses they are charged with:

Roxanne Insignares – Former Test Chair at Miami Lakes Educational Center and Technical College

- 1 Count - Organized Scheme to Defraud, 2nd Degree Felony
- 18 Counts - Official Misconduct, 3rd Degree Felony
- 18 Counts - Cheating, 3rd Degree Felony
- 1 Count - Unlawful Compensation/Reward for Official Behavior, 2nd Degree Felony

Antonio Bouzan – Secretary/Treasurer at Orchard Villa Elementary School

- 1 Count - Organized Scheme to Defraud, 2nd Degree Felony
- 6 Counts - Cheating, 3rd Degree Felony
- 1 Count - Unlawful Compensation/Reward for Official Behavior, 2nd Degree Felony

Marta Avalos -Test Broker

- 1 Count - Organized Scheme to Defraud, 2nd Degree Felony
- 6 Counts - Cheating, 3rd Degree Felony

“The alleged brokering and sale of GED certificates by an organized criminal circle, two of whom were employees of the MDCPS, is a blatant betrayal of trust,” commented State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. “Those in

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charge of making sure that educational standards are met to award GED certificates are entrusted with making sure that those receiving certificates have passed the required examination of educational foundation. To cheat the system and put money in their pockets unlawfully while performing their official duties is not only illegal, but has the potential to put our entire community at risk.”

During an unrelated investigation by the PC Task Force and MDCPS - OIG, the scheme to sell GED Certificates to individuals who did not take or pass the required test was discovered. Between 2012 and 2016, Insignares, who was responsible for the GED testing location at the Miami Lakes Educational Center and Technical College (MLTC), and Bouzan, who served as GED registrar at MLTC, received cash payments ranging from \$150 to \$2800 each in exchange for a GED certificate.

Insignares falsified records and submitted fraudulent information to the Department of Education and MDCPS. Bouzan and Avalos were identified in the investigation as “test brokers” who negotiated the sales of the GED certificates obtained by Insignares.

Eighteen of 19 GED certificate recipients interviewed admitted to paying for their GED certificate. Those 18 individuals stated that they paid in cash and were requested to provide personal information including date of birth, social security number, a copy of their driver’s license, and photos of them wearing different clothing.

Mary Cagle, the Inspector General for Miami-Dade County, commented: “According to the GED Testing Service, 95 percent of colleges and universities accept a GED diploma for admissions, and the U.S. Census Bureau reports that high school graduates and GED diploma recipients earn higher wages than high school dropouts. These defendants, motivated by sheer greed, corrupted and tarnished a process that provides a powerful option for people who have not obtained a high school diploma. The Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of the Inspector General (OIG) will continue its investigative efforts, in conjunction with the State Attorney’s Office, to ferret out criminal activity in regard to not only GED, but other testing services administered by Miami-Dade Schools. The OIG will work with the School Administration to implement safeguards to prevent this from happening again.”

Bond amounts were set for each defendant as follows:

- Insignares – \$210,000
- Bouzan - \$60,000
- Avalos - \$35,000

A copy of the redacted Arrest Warrant is attached to this email.

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