

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Board Member

SUBJECT: RESTRICTION OF DATA TRANSMISSION DEVICES

COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, EFFICIENCY AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

LINK TO

STRATEGIC PLAN: IMPROVE SAFETY AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Safety is our number one transportation priority. An estimated 62,000 M-DCPS students are transported to and from school every day. Thousands of M-DCPS students are transported to and from field trip destinations and athletic competitions on a daily basis. Additionally, hundreds of M-DCPS employees regularly travel in School Board-owned vehicles.

As the use of mobile communications and other data transmission devices has increased exponentially, so has the number of traffic accidents caused by drivers using such devices. In fact, studies have shown that drivers using cell phones failed to stop at stop signs ten times more often than drivers not using cell phones. Texting while driving increased the risk of a safety-critical driving event for commercial truckers by 23.2 times. In fact, federal research reports that using data transmission devices while driving is 38% more dangerous due to distractibility than driving while impaired.

The alarming increase in traffic accidents caused by these "driving distractions" has gained the attention of transportation safety advocates as well as federal, state and local community leaders around the United States. Twenty-one states and Washington, D.C., ban teen drivers from using both hand-held and hands-free cell phones while driving, while school bus drivers are prohibited in seventeen states and Washington, D.C. Nine states and Washington, D.C., prohibit the use of hand-held cell phones by drivers 18 years and older. Eighteen states and Washington, D.C., ban all drivers from using cell phones for text messaging while driving, nine states ban teen drivers specifically, and one state bans school bus drivers specifically. Florida does not currently have any similar prohibitions.

Current School Board Rule 6Gx13-3E-1.10, *Transportation-Specific Procedures*, which incorporates the *M-DCPS Department of Transportation Handbook for School Bus Drivers, Aides and Operations Staff*, prohibits school bus drivers from using cell phones while operating Miami-Dade County Public Schools buses. This item seeks to expand that restriction to include operation of any data transmission device while operating a School Board owned and approved school bus or other motor vehicle transporting students. The item also seeks to restrict other School Board employees who operate School Board vehicles to the use of data transmission devices that are being used hands-free. School police would be exempt from these restrictions and exceptions would be made for all employees when responding to health and safety emergencies. Violation of these rules would subject the employee to disciplinary action.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. LAWRENCE FELDMAN:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to initiate rulemaking proceedings in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act to amend existing School Board Rules and/or to promulgate new rules that would:

1. Prohibit school bus drivers from using any data transmission device while operating a School Board vehicle and to provide an exception for certain emergencies;
2. Prohibit the use of data transmission devices that are not hands-free by all other employees, except School Police, while operating School Board owned vehicles, and providing an exception for certain emergencies; and
3. Provide that any employee who violates these rules will be subject to disciplinary action.