

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Board Member

SUBJECT: DIRECT THE SUPERINTENDENT TO CONDUCT A PROCESS REVIEW OF INCONSISTENT DISTRICT POLICIES RELATING TO SCHOOL-SITE CONTRACTS WITH VENDORS

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: STUDENT, PARENT, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In light of recent budget cuts, schools increasingly rely on fundraising opportunities and outside sales to supplement their programs and better meet the needs of their students and staff. During the past several years, this reliance, exacerbated by deteriorating financial conditions, has given school site administrators cause to evaluate long-standing and archaic business practices dictated by current school board policies, procedures, and rules. Alongside their overburdened office/clerical staff, these administrators also confirmed that current policies oftentimes cause undue financial hardships and limit accessibility to services for families who are now, more than ever before, undergoing their own severe budget constraints.

A look at current practices reveals that school pictures can serve as the source for one of a schools' greatest approved outside revenue generators. During the taking of school pictures where the general student body is photographed (e.g. fall pictures which generate student IDs, yearbook, grade book program, library program, security software, cumulative record files, and numerous other functions within each school), photography companies and/or vendors at that particular school site must deposit 40% of the gross sales generated into the school's internal funds. This business practice motivates schools to encourage participation, thus providing additional funds to support student learning.

However, due to some policies that govern internal funds and school site decisions for these same school picture events, parents and students purchasing school pictures must pay in cash (most schools' individual policies also exclude checks as an option) and receipts must be generated through school treasurers. These school treasurers are tasked with and accountable for collecting funds, issuing receipts, depositing monies, and accounting for sales. Moreover, these general responsibilities are time-consuming and burdensome events in addition to their actual school-related duties. Unfortunately, the unintended negative consequences of these specific practices limit options and present further undue hardships for cash-strapped families and school communities. Families are often unable to participate because they simply do not have access to cash funds during the picture money collection time frame or they are limited in their options because they cannot use other forms of payment such as credit cards, debit cards, or on-line payment. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is currently one of very few districts in the country still implementing specific archaic practices and restrictions for schools pictures, thus severely limiting the school's ability to capture the full capacity or potential of a 40%

fund raising effort that would significantly enhance the school's ability to supplement programs and services for students and staff.

Additionally, several conflicting issues arise from these policies, which treat the sales of school pictures differently than other school products sold to students such as class rings, yearbooks, and graduation announcements. One such conflict occurs as the above-mentioned items are allowed to be sold directly by the vendors to students either at the school or on a website and thus these like products are not under the same restricted internal fund rules as the selling of 'school pictures'. Additionally, there is no revenue sharing opportunities made available to school sites from the sales of these products, i.e. class rings, announcements, yearbooks, which could provide for an additional revenue stream.

Under the strong and consistent leadership of this Board and Superintendent, M-DCPS has led school districts across the nation in accolades received for efficiency in financial and auditing management. As a result of progressive and aggressive strategic reviews of our processes, policies, and business systems, we have developed and initiated some the most forward-thinking fiscal efficiencies and accountability standards in the country. M-DCPS is again in a position to revisit additional outdated business practices and bring forth a set of policy recommendations that will benefit all stakeholders: students, staff, parents, community, and administration, all in the best interests of those we serve, our students.

It is the intent of this item that a review of current policies and practices related to the sales of school and student products, as outlined in this item, be conducted with the purpose of bringing forth recommendations to the Board that addresses increasing accessibility to products through providing more flexible student payment options, allowing vendor collections and receipt distributions while maintaining approved accountability standards and protocols, and exploring revenue sharing opportunities for above mentioned products that can benefit school sites.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

DR. LAWRENCE S. FELDMAN: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to conduct a review of current policies, rules and practices related to the sales of student sold products, such as school pictures, student class rings, graduation announcements, and yearbooks, and bring forth recommendations to the School Board for the April 2013 School Board Meeting.

These recommendations should address, but not be necessarily limited to:

1. Increasing accessibility to student sold products through providing more flexible payment options;
2. Exploring the feasibility of allowing school picture vendor payment collection, receipting, distributing and reporting while maintaining strict accountability standards and protocols; and
3. Exploring revenue sharing opportunities for all other student-sold products that can benefit school sites.