

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

Co-Sponsors: Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair
Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall
Ms. Susie V. Castillo
Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman
Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas

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SUBJECT: PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ACCESS

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED, & EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is committed to policies and practices that promote and support professional, transparent, and efficient access to public information, pursuant to the provisions outlined in Chapters 119 and 286 of the Florida Statutes, as well as School Board Policies 8310 and 9120. Each cites practices and provisions that promote professional, transparent, and efficient access to public records, as well as laws and policies that support the public's *"right of access to public meetings and records."*

Consistent with Florida's history of Open Government, the School Board has consistently supported the public's right of access to School Board Meetings, workshops and committee meetings, as well as related school and district-related events. It has similarly supported the public's right to public records, as allowed under Chapter 119. In doing so, along with its legal and statutory obligation, the School Board has a duty to continue to review, define, and revise its practices, policies, and procedures regarding access to public records and participation at meetings.

Although School Board policies are framed and driven by law, the administration and implementation of these policies are guided by practices and procedures, as stipulated in School Board Policy 8310, and are delegated to the Superintendent. Pursuant to School Board Policy 8310, *"the Superintendent has designated the Office of Public Relations to be responsible for handling public records request and the department shall designate a person or persons to coordinate requests."*

In addition to complying with provisions outlined in Chapters 119 and 286 of the Florida Statutes, the School Board *"shall inform the public on matters regarding District policies, finances, programs, personnel, and operations...and the Superintendent shall implement an information program designed to notify the general public of the achievements and needs of the schools."* Many of these functions are also developed and performed by the Office of Public Relations, which is also responsible for announcements to parents and the general public, news releases, and responses to the media.

As the digital information age continues to expand, new, innovative and increasingly efficient ways to both respond to public records request and inform the public about the work of the School Board and its members, achievements of the school district, and needs of the schools should continuously be explored.

For example, although M-DCPS televises live meetings on WLRN, many school districts across the nation, devoid of their own television station or license, utilize services and technology platforms that allow school boards and districts to post videos and audio files of meetings online so that the public can observe deliberations on its own time, without having to attend meetings in person. Some districts even use technology platforms on which the public can submit feedback to guide policymaking—*in real time*. These technology platforms also provide for not only meeting notices and agendas to be placed online, but also to provide historical links to meetings and corresponding footage in which the items and video/audio footage are integrated and placed alongside each other. Presently, the District does not provide for such integrated access and related historical footage, save for those that may be requested and provided on a disk. Current no-cost or low-cost technology platforms provide for a more efficient and sustainable enhancement to this matter. Thus, this is an opportune time to research, assess, evaluate, and explore the adoption and utilization of such technology to not only expand public access and engagement in School Board and related meetings, but as well as the public's ability to request, receive, and/or access public records.

This item seeks to direct the Superintendent, in consultation with the School Board Attorney, to review policies, practices, and procedures that address and comply with Chapters 119 and 286 of the Florida Statutes governing access to public records and school board meetings, workshops, and school and district activities, and to research, assess, evaluate, and explore the adoption and utilization of technologies to expand public access to School Board and related meetings, and to request, receive, and/or access public records.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney for legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida,
direct the Superintendent to:

1. review, in consultation with the School Board Attorney, policies, practices, and procedures that address and comply with Chapters 119 and 286 of the Florida Statutes governing access to public records and attendance and participation at school board meetings, workshops, and school and district related activities;
2. provide, in consultation and upon verification by the Chief Auditor, a framework for the current procedures and related timelines for submitting, receiving, reviewing, and responding to public information requests;
3. research and review best practices throughout the state for the submission, receipt, review, and response to public information requests;

4. explore new ways to inform the public about the work of the School Board and its members, achievements of the school district, and needs of the schools and students;
5. make policy recommendations or revisions, where appropriate;
6. develop and implement new and/or revised practices and procedures for the submission, receipt, review, and response to public information requests;
7. research, develop, and implement new and/or revised practices and procedures that contemplates and integrates technologies to expand public access to School Board and related meetings to the public, such as online links available after the School Board meeting has occurred; and
8. provide an update to the School Board at a Committee Meeting or Board Workshop, inclusive of any proposed changes, no later than the School Board Meeting of April 17, 2019.