

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

SUBJECT: CIVICS EDUCATION

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS

The debate over the teaching of civics education in the United States has dramatically increased during the past five years. Recently, the *Gallup Organization* conveyed in a report that in 2018, approximately 74% of school superintendents were concerned for preparing involved citizens, a surprising surge from the 50% found in the same survey a year or three years earlier. The quality of civics education has been a concern of those interested in the health of our system of government and the well-being of the citizenry. For much of the nation's history, our leaders have viewed civics education as a means of comprehending and appreciating the country's democratic values and ideals. During the past decade, low levels of youth voting and non-proficiency student knowledge and understanding of democratic principles have elicited efforts to increase the quality of time spent teaching civics education and have ignited a movement to create common standards in the social studies.

The State of Florida and Miami-Dade County Public Schools have consistently led the nation in understanding the academic and social needs of our students and have incorporated in statute and in Board policy requirements to ensure that our democratic values and ideals are instilled in our students. It is important to note the following:

As per Florida Statutes § 1003.4156, general requirements for middle grades promotion, in order for a student to be promoted to high school from eighth grade, the student must successfully complete the following social studies requirements in civics education, plus other requirements, as outlined in Miami-Dade County Public Schools Student Progression Plan, Board Policy 5410:

“Social Sciences: Three middle grades or higher-level courses.

Civics Course Requirement: At least a one-semester civics education course that includes the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments; the structures and functions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government; and the meaning and significance of historic documents, such as the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States. Middle grades students must pass the Civics course in order to be promoted to grade 9. Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, each student's performance on the statewide, standardized EOC assessment in civics education constitutes 30% of the student's final course grade.

Civics course requirement for incoming transfer students: A middle grades student who transfers into the state's public school system from out of country, out of state, a private school, or a home education program after the beginning of the second term of grade 8 is not required to meet the civics education requirement for promotion from the middle grades if the student's transcript documents passage of three courses in social sciences or two year-long courses in social sciences that include coverage of civics education."

Furthermore, Miami-Dade County Public Schools Department of Social Studies offers a variety of activities for our students such as Project Citizen, Mock Trials, We the People, among many others to enhance student's knowledge and understanding of how democracy works. Democratic principles are also embedded throughout the curriculum and in other social studies courses offered as requirements for graduation in middle school and high school.

At the same time, even though Miami-Dade County Public Schools is a leader in civic education, this agenda item seeks to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to review the current offerings and all social studies projects to determine if the time has come to enhance the program, not only at the middle grades and high school level, but also at the elementary level.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:

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

1. review current civics education offerings in Miami-Dade County Public Schools;
2. evaluate and consider, to the extent feasible and appropriate to:
 - a. expand the *Project Citizen* program to include third and fourth grade students;
 - b. expand the *We The People* program to all high school students;
 - c. develop and establish the Citizenship Professional Development Summer Institute during the Summer of 2019;
 - d. reach out to municipal and County governments and develop and implement a program for M-DCPS students to see firsthand how local government works;
 - e. develop and establish a Citizenship Awareness Campaign during the 2019-2020 school year; and
3. provide a report to the Board by May 3, 2019.