

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: MONITORING SOCIAL MEDIA THREATS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has recently launched its statewide *"It's No Joke Campaign"* to increase consciousness of the consequences associated with making statements of any kind, whether verbal, written, or on social media, inferring an intention that may harm others. As stated in the Superintendent's memorandum of October 3, 2019, "this campaign complements the District's ongoing efforts to promote responsible decision-making, pro-social behaviors, and social media accountability." Furthermore, at this School Board Meeting, Agenda Item H-6, proffered by Board Member Lubby Navarro, requests the Board's endorsement of *"It's No Joke Campaign."* It should also be noted that at the School Board Meeting of September 5, 2018, the Board approved Agenda Item H-4, Revised, proffered by the maker of this item, which authorized the Superintendent of Schools to explore the feasibility of implementing the *Consequences Aren't Minor* program designed by Miami-Dade County Public Defender Carlos J. Martinez.

School districts throughout the nation are now monitoring student activity by tracking mentions of keywords related to violence, suicide threats, and cyber bullying on students' public social media accounts, among others. Monitoring the posts that students share online in social and other forums on the Internet has allowed schools and school districts to prevent devastating situations from happening, even save a life. At the same time it is important to determine what schools should monitor to correctly identify and report potentially dangerous situations that need to be handled immediately and what kind of training should schools provide their staff to effectively deal and report problems discovered by monitoring social media.

While the Board has diligently been proactive in endorsing campaigns, supporting programs, and increasing awareness among parents, students, teachers, and all stakeholders, the question that perhaps needs to be asked at this time is not *should schools or school districts monitor students' social media* but rather *how should schools or school districts do this?*

Monitoring social media is NOT the same as controlling or patrolling social media. The practice of social media monitoring itself is based on paying attention to the public usage of precise keywords and phrases online. For school districts monitoring social media, identified keywords and appropriate monitoring could alert to hypothetically harmful instances of bullying among students, dangerous cases of depression and suicide, child predators, inappropriate relations with faculty, and other forms of abuse or violence. It is not about hacking into private emails or gaining access private messages in students' social media accounts; it is about preventing a tragedy.

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,

1. direct the School Board Attorney to review and determine if there may be any legal issues related to the monitoring of social media threads and report to the Board by January 8, 2020; and
2. direct the Superintendent of Schools to assess current local and state initiatives to determine if there is a need for additional enhancement in our efforts to successfully monitor social media threads in Miami-Dade County Public Schools and provide a report to the Board, pursuant to Florida law, by January 31, 2020.