

Ms. Susie V. Castillo, Board Member

**SUBJECT: THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY FLORIDA
CREATE A DISTRICTWIDE DISTANCE LEARNING AND
REMOTE WORK POLICY**

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) quickly shifted educating our students from school site classes to distance learning. Simultaneously, our teachers and employees shifted to working from home or remote working. The need for this immediate change in how the District educates our students and how employees work remotely, was accomplished without a districtwide Distance Learning and Remote Work Policy. One of the critical components of this policy is Cyber Security.

Users and passwords can be the weakest link in Cyber Security. Cyber Security is the protection of computer systems and networks from the theft of or damage to hardware, software, or electronic data as well as from disruption or misdirection of services provided. Miami-Dade County Public Schools has an extensive Cyber Security plan which is continuously updated to include new and evolving cyber threats. This planning is critically important and is reflected in the hundreds of school districts across the country that have experienced disturbing and dangerous incidents of cyber-attacks.

On Thursday, September 3rd, 2020, we learned that an M-DCPS student was arrested for perpetrating at least 8 of the cyber-attacks that overwhelmed our M-DCPS e-learning system. The District was a victim of DDOS, Denial of Service attacks, which flood the network with more data than it can handle. According to industry experts, these types of attacks are among the most common and malicious cyber tactics. Thanks to our District's strong firewalls, thus far we have been spared any sensitive personal information having been compromised. Last week's response is evident that our employees and students need a stronger grasp and understanding of how to protect themselves and our school District from cyber-attacks. This incident made it clear that the District's cyber security and safeguard measures need strengthening.

As stated in the Council of Great City Schools Cyber Security in Today's Environment workshop, the first recommendation is: "Investing in professional development focused on network security and cybersecurity." As we continue to assess and evaluate what occurred, the need for our employees to receive annual education is imperative. It is incumbent upon M-DCPS to include annual and continuous up-to-date know how on how to recognize and mitigate cyberthreat. By making our employees able to identify and eliminate cyber threats, we are strengthening the most vulnerable link.

Multi-factor Authentication is an authentication method in which a computer user is granted access only after successfully presenting two or more factors of authentication. In other words, Multi-factor Authentication validates the user's identity. On July 25th, 2018 School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas put forth a policy item H9 which addressed Cybersecurity in Miami Dade County Public Schools. The administration's response to the unanimously passed board item stated among other things was recommended was that "The use of multi-factor authentication was being considered". This recommendation has not yet been implemented. Recognizing there is no 100% failsafe methods to prevent cyberattacks, implementing multiple layers of security is a vital approach in protecting the Districts assets. Therefore, if one layer is compromised, subsequent layers are able to minimize cyber-attacks.

This item directs the Superintendent to create a Districtwide Distance Learning and Remote Work Policy, incorporating annual cyber security training, and implementation of a multi-factor authentication method in this policy.

Good cause exists to vary from the published agenda because issues concerning the District-wide Cyber Attack last week have been raised since the agenda was published, and such issues are of immediate and significant public importance under a Districtwide distance learning and remote work policy. Report back to the Board by October 14, 2020 at the Personnel, Student, School, and Community Support Committee meeting.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. SUSIE V. CASTILLO:**

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

1. create a Districtwide Distance Learning and Remote Work Policy;
2. incorporate annual employee cyber training into this policy;
3. implement a multi-factor authentication method to provide one more layer of protection from cyber-attacks; and
4. report back to the Board by October 14, 2020 at the Personnel, Student, School, and Community Support Committee meeting.