

Dr. Marta Pérez, Board Member

SUBJECT: CYBERBULLYING

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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

Cyberbullying, the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person, has become an alarming phenomenon due to the increased use of technology by school-aged children. As a result, children now face a hostile environment not only at school where they are physically exposed to their tormentors, but also at home when they enter the virtual world. Facebook and other social media platforms provide wonderful communication tools that are enjoyed by many. Sadly, it has also become a platform for cyberbullying, as some children may post hurtful and cruel messages and create "hate" pages that target specific individuals.

As a school district, we have responsibly addressed cyberbullying by enacting policies prohibiting its use, imposing sanctions for violations, and continuously engaging in a process of awareness and training so that our students and employees can feel safe at school and at work; nevertheless, access to the internet once children leave school is beyond our control.

As such, we should research the initiatives underway to address and prevent cyberbullying. We should also reach out to organizations such as the National Association of School Superintendents and the National School Boards Association to explore opportunities for collaboration in heightening public awareness and seeking preventative solutions to cyberbullying through technological controls.

Increased public awareness regarding the problem of cyberbullying and encouraging parental and community involvement is key to the success of this effort. Parents need to recognize the signs of cyberbullying, be familiar with safety measures to prevent misuse of the internet, and become better educated on what takes place in the virtual world. To this end, a public awareness campaign that includes a series of workshops to educate parents can offer solid guidelines that can protect our children. Moreover, an expansion of our anti-bullying curriculum to include specific curricular activities to prevent cyberbullying through social responsibility, fostering respect for peers and internet safety would also serve to raise awareness and provide an effective preventative strategy to combat cyberbullying.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. MARTA PÉREZ:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to research national initiatives to prevent cyberbullying and to consider District participation in these efforts.