

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Vice Chair

Co-Sponsor: Dr. Marta Pérez, Board Member

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SUBJECT: WATER BOTTLE REFILL STATIONS

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL SERVICES AND STUDENT AND SCHOOL SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: SCHOOL/DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

According to a new study conducted by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and published in the American Journal of Public Health more than half of children and teens in the United States are not getting adequate hydration. Study researchers examined data from 2009 to 2012 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, a study of the health of U.S. children and adults conducted each year. The study also found racial and gender disparities in hydration levels, with minority youngsters at 34 percent and boys at 76 percent more likely to be inadequately hydrated.

According to the lead author of the study, research suggests that even mild levels of dehydration are enough to impact cognitive functioning and mood in kids. The impact of dehydration on the brain and the ability to learn, in addition to other long term health-related concerns, are worrisome. This concern is heightened particularly in South Florida where climate conditions can exacerbate dehydration levels. In fact, daily fluid intake recommendations are subjective, and depend on a number of factors, including age, gender, weight, activity level, and amount of time spent outside in *hot weather*.

The issue of inadequate hydration among children is both a personal and public health concern. According to medical experts and health practitioners, schools can do more to improve access to water and make drinking it seem more appealing. Many college campuses and school systems throughout the nation have begun providing water bottle refill stations throughout their campuses to encourage students to drink water, while supporting ecologically sound practices that reduce the number of discarded plastic water bottles, currently making up 2 million tons of U.S. landfills alone. In fact, national movements like "Take Back the Tap", aimed at creating an economically and environmentally viable future, have surged at campuses and remind us that we can remain hydrated in a more cost-effective and environmentally-friendly manner.

Water bottle refill stations are currently in use in several public and private schools in Miami-Dade. These stations can be newly installed or existing water fountains can be retro-fitted to accommodate refilling bottles. Simple accessibility to water instantly promotes consumption and use as schools throughout the nation have found. Recent research found children's water intake increased by three times after accessible and attractive water dispensers were installed in some New York City public schools.

Encouraging and increasing water intake supports the healthy initiatives Miami-Dade County Public Schools has initiated through actions aimed at decreasing access to soda, high-sugar content drinks and keeping children hydrated. In addition, the undeniable benefit of fostering a sustainable culture in an environmentally-minded learning environment cannot be understated and can contribute to decreased use of single-use plastic water bottles, 80 percent of which become litter in our landfills and take over 1,000 years to bio-degrade. This item seeks to authorize the Superintendent to explore the feasibility of installing and/or retrofitting existing water fountains that provide for and encourage water bottle refilling along with and report to the Board by the October 2016 Board meeting.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. LAWRENCE S. FELDMAN:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County Florida, authorize the Superintendent to explore the feasibility of installing and/or retrofitting existing water fountains that provide for and encourage water bottle refilling, develop a promotional campaign or curricular component to promote increasing student water consumption and report findings to the Board by the December 2015 School Board meeting.

