

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Vice Chair

SUBJECT: SANDY HOOK PROMISE

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, EVALUATION AND TECHNOLOGY

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

A tragic continuing spate of school shootings, some statistics show that school violence has maintained a steady rate or even decreased. Still, hundreds of guns come into schools every year and tragic events stemming from that reality have heavily influenced the American psyche and our educational landscape. Gun violence is a multifaceted and complex problem which, the American Psychological Association (APA) maintains, requires evidence-based, multifaceted solutions, including preventative measures. Although there is limited ability to make accurate predictions of violence, preventative measures such as public campaigns can have a strong impact by promoting awareness and identifying risk factors. According to the APA, a *primary or universal prevention* campaign consists of an effort to promote healthy development in the general population; an example would be a curriculum to teach all children social skills to resist negative peer influences and resolve conflicts peacefully. *Secondary prevention* (also called selective prevention) involves assistance for individuals who are at increased risk for violence; mentoring programs and conflict-mediation services are examples of such assistance.

Both primary and secondary preventative programs lend themselves to implementation in schools as educational tools and often support positive and affirming objectives that aim to empower students. One such preventative program specifically aimed at protecting children from gun violence is *Sandy Hook Promise*. At the invitation of prominent community leaders, this non-profit organization, led by several family members who lost loved ones at Sandy Hook Elementary on December 14, 2012, was invited to speak to influential civic and education figureheads in Miami-Dade County with the goal of sharing their mission and programs aimed at violence prevention. Sandy Hook Promise has developed research-based mental health and wellness programs that can be implemented as primary and secondary preventative campaigns. Specifically, four programs (Youth Mental Health First Aid Training, Say Something, Safety Assessment & Intervention, and Start With Hello) are designed for school implementation and offer resources and training for educators, counselors, and students at no cost; Sandy Hook Promise has made the commitment to work with schools to offset 100% of the training cost in order to reach and impact as many lives as possible.

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One program in particular, “Say Something”, which echoes the objective of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) involvement in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s “See Something, Say Something” campaign, initiated in September 2014, encourages citizens to report suspicious behavior and activity. It is important to note, M-DCPS is the first public school district in the nation to engage in the “If you see Something, Say Something” campaign initiative and The Miami-Dade Schools Police are to be commended for their progressive and proactive engagement in a community-based campaign. The Sandy Hook Promise “Say Something” campaign offers additional no-cost resources to support the shared objective of both national programs and includes: Research-based, flexible, and easily implemented lessons, planning guides, in-person or digital training, school eligibility for \$10,000 implementation award, wristbands and stickers. These resources are used to prepare for and implement the national “Say Something” campaign kick-off week from October 19-23, 2015.

It is the intent of this item to authorize the Superintendent to review and determine if additional no-cost training and curricular resources can be realized through involvement in the Sandy Hook Promise to support the shared goal of both campaigns. Additionally, this item seeks to direct the superintendent to determine the feasibility of involvement in the other no-cost primary and secondary preventative programs that further facilitate training and resources.

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President Obama said, following the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy, “We won’t be able to stop every violent act, but if there is even one thing that we can do to prevent any of these events, we have a deep obligation, all of us, to try.” We know that in a community context, the degree to which children have access to adequate positive resources, have prosocial and connected relationships with others, and feel safe in their environment can significantly affect their risk for involvement in violent behaviors. Sandy Hook Promise adopts a comprehensive approach to address those goals and strives to meet the obligation to keep our students safe.

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

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to review Sandy Hook Promise materials and training opportunities to determine feasibility of program implementation at no cost to the district and report back to the board no later than the December 2015 School Board meeting.