

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Board Member

SUBJECT: DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, EVALUATION AND TECHNOLOGY

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

As more and more students of all ages interact digitally on various levels of content with one another, as well as with those within and outside of their communities and sphere of influence, the concept of Digital Citizenship becomes increasingly necessary and consciously relevant. Digital Citizenship is a broad topic relating to the safe and ethical use of various digital tools or media. An ever-increasing and constantly updated skill set is needed to be a functional part of a global society, which naturally extends into the daily use of online collaboration and communication. Digital Citizenship includes the awareness of every aspect of technology use such as: plagiarizing information, passive and aggressive cyberbullying, reporting issues of safety, being acutely aware of one's digital footprint, etc. To effectively and realistically address this evolving human digital interaction, students, parents and guardians must be empowered consistently and strategically with the knowledge of their rights and responsibilities online and how they can avoid the pitfalls that often lead to negative and sometimes fatal consequences.

REVISED

With the onset of the District's Bring your Own Device initiative and the intentional work towards reducing the digital divide between all students throughout Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), the purposeful, ongoing and fully sustainable training in digital citizenship education and student/parent awareness becomes increasingly urgent. As national leaders in creating the 21st Century classroom, M-DCPS is to be commended for taking a leadership position in transparent and responsible distribution of technology acquisition and instructional/curricular implementation. Additionally, its concurrent development of related policies is a foundation upon which further responsive and student/parent needs can be devised. School Board Policy 7540.03, *Student Responsible Use of Technology, Social Media, and District Network Systems*, outlines the expectations for students to be digital citizens and identifies the basis upon which they can become responsible users. It addresses areas such as: transmission of materials that are in violation of local, state and federal laws; access to inappropriate sites or materials including explicit text and files; cyber-bullying, etc. This policy also provides for a written agreement to be signed annually or upon enrollment by all student users, or their parents if they are minors, in which they will abide by the terms and conditions of the policy and its administrative procedures and guidelines. With completion of the above and through the realization of objectives outlined in the M-DCPS Vision 20/20 Strategic Plan, the initial Digital Citizenship Awareness Campaign successfully launched in 2015.

REVISED

Unfortunately, some students increasingly engage, consciously or unconsciously, in troubling online behaviors that jeopardize their safety, well-being, and futures, as well as that of their families and friends. Even with the policies and practices in place, we have seen disaster strike far too many times both nationally and in our local communities resulting in the lives of our students disrupted, and to our dismay and horror, sometimes even extinguished. It has become alarmingly more apparent that students and their parents/guardians must be better informed and equipped with knowledge of the consequences of such behaviors. There must be a clear understanding by students and their families that when their digital footprint is compromised, at stake are things of value, such as: rejection from college admissions, long-term employer scrutinization, fiscal loss, and personal intimidation and/or harm from others.

ADDED

This item commends the District on its thoughtful development of related policies such as the *Student Responsible Use of Technology, Social Media, and District Network Systems* and the Digital Citizenship Awareness Campaign and authorizes expansion of the program to include parents and guardians. An expanded campaign shall serve to fully educate and remind all stakeholders of both long-term and immediate risks and consequences of inappropriate behavior, while assisting parents and guardians in further understanding the multiplicity of topics available to them and related to: managing settings on applications such as Whatsapp, Snapchat, and Instagram; adjusting control features on smartphones and home broadband; utilizing safety modes on sites such as Google and YouTube; and, most importantly, speaking with their children about relevant topics such as cyber-bullying and sexting. This item also seeks to strengthen the fidelity of the implementation of the *Digital Citizenship Awareness Campaign* at all school sites through the exploration of participation in existing certification programs currently offered by non-profit organizations at no cost to the district or students and their families, as well as, implementing an extended certification through the Parent Academy and Dade County Council PTSAs.

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The greater force of this expanded community of learners may, through this educational program, serve as a deterrent to those negative behaviors now seen particularly in social media. Perhaps with more expansive and inclusionary community engagement in Digital Citizenship and possible participation in no-cost certification programs, our students and their families will take heed to the devastating aftermath of distributing suggestive pictures, making accusations, and promoting taunts, ridicule, and threats to others.

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

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

- a) expand a deeply powerful and deliberate Digital Citizenship Awareness Campaign to educate all students, parents, and guardians of their rights, responsibilities, and available resources as digital citizens as outlined in School Board Policy 7540.03, *The Code of Student Conduct* and the M-DCPS Vision 20/20 Strategic Plan to begin with the 2016-17 school year; and
- b) explore for sustainability and long-term consistency available reputable, non-profit, no-cost Digital Citizenship school certification programs; determine the feasibility of an implementation process at all school sites as applicable, and report back to the School Board at its July 2016 School Board Meeting.

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