Office of School Board Members   June 15, 2017
Board Meeting of June 21, 2017

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

Co-Sponsor: Ms. Susie Castillo, Board Member

SUBJECT: **DIGITAL ADDICTION**

COMMITTEE: **ACADEMICS, EVALUATION, AND TECHNOLOGY**

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

The adverse side-effects of overusing technology have in the last few years attracted
increasing attention among educators, psychologists, and pediatricians. Uncontrolled
use of technological devices may impact upon the developmental, social, mental, and
physical well-being of students and may result in symptoms similar to other possible
behavioral addiction.

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A digital addict refers to an individual who spontaneously uses digital technology, which
would manifest as another form of addiction if that technology is not as easily available
to them. It can be used to define a person whose collaboration with technology is on the
verge of excessive, threatening to engage their attention above all else and
subsequently having a negative impact on the well-being of the user.

Recent studies have shown that children's technology use has greatly increased over
the past two decades. Children as young as one year of age are using technology, such
as tablets, iPhones, and computers. Although these devices can be good learning tools
as they teach children how to use technologies, they can also harm them in numerous
ways. Researchers have found that the use of these devices can be a foundation or
contribute to a child's obesity because children spend so much time on their devices.
Furthermore, children in the future may experience having poorer muscle tone because
of being arched over while using the devices. With increased time spent in front of the
screen, children spend less time playing sports, exercising, or participating in other
activities, such as reading or engaging with other children. Additionally, educators are
concerned that children and young adults are facing different challenges as writing skills
are being impacted by new symbols meant to deliver a message with less words.

Though there are many notable sources claiming that the negatives outweigh the
positives in children's technology use, it should also be noted that the effects of social
video games have been linked with a child's ability to feel empathy making them more
persuaded to help others. The use of technology by children can also contribute to the
general development of motors skills. By playing interactive games and knowing how to
navigate through a screen using buttons, children are able to learn how to synchronize
their brains with their fingers.

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Adults can also be addicted to the new technologies. How many times do our employees check their work emails while on vacation, during weekends and holidays, or while attending a social event, or even while driving? The inclination to reach for our devices is part of a world in which the regular person spends many hours a day using his or her iPhone or tablet. And yes, at times we feel like we cannot live our lives without having instant access to texting, social media, or the internet.

There are mainly three different types of technology addiction. Internet addiction, phone addiction, and social media addiction.

Internet addiction may include constant emailing, games, videos, and endless browsing. Losing track of time and feeling the need to impulsively check the computer may also be signs of possible internet and technology addiction.

Phone addiction can be more than an obsession. It is a dependence well-defined by extreme use which may have the tendency to negatively impact all aspects of life. It may also impact possible health and behavioral issues. How often do we feel anxious or irritable without our phones? How often do we turn to our phones when we are bored or in an uncomfortable social situation?

Social media addiction is a compulsive and unwarranted use of social media with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, among others. Checking the iPhone or a smartphone disproportionately for social media, broadcasting, or feeling in a low mood when access is not available, may be possible signs of social media addiction.

This agenda item seeks to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to review and analyze the feasibility of establishing a digital addiction support program for students and employees. The program may be available through professional development activities for counselors and employees. It also seeks to determine if the concept can be implemented within existing resources or if additional resources may be necessary. The report may include the impact the devices may have on behavior, vision, and social interaction. **REVISED**

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MARIA TERESA ROJAS:**   That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to:

1) review and analyze the feasibility of establishing a digital addiction support program for students and employees; **Revised**
2) determine if the concept can be implemented within existing resources or if additional funds may be necessary; and
3) provide a report to the Board by September 6, 2017.