

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL ISOLATION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

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

**LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS, AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS**

Social isolation is the overwhelming feeling of being left out, lonely, and treated like you are invisible. It is an increasing epidemic in the United States and in schools. Young people who are isolated can become victims of bullying, violence, and/or depression. As a result, many pull away from society, struggle with learning and social development, and/or choose to hurt themselves or others.

There has been a great deal of interest in socially isolated children of all ages, but an important topic of the meaning continues to be discussed. Some have hypothesized the problem of isolation as social withdrawal. Others have offered the concept of isolation as low levels of peer acceptance or high levels of peer rejection. Additional considerations have distinguished types of social withdrawals in early childhood, one based on social fear and anxiety and one based on the lack of a strong motivation to engage in social interaction.

Recent research shows that a large percentage of high school students report feeling lonely sometimes and their experiences are closely linked to the development of increasing expectations about social relationships and friendships. Adolescents who suffer from loneliness are likely to feel depressed and encounter social skills deficits.

This agenda item seeks to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to research possible social isolation professional development programs offered throughout the United States that can be implemented in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, particularly those that may be offered at no-cost and are easy to implement.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY**

**MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to:

1. research possible social isolation professional development programs offered throughout the United States that may be implemented in Miami-Dade County Public Schools, particularly those that may be offered at no-cost; and
2. report back to the Board by October 11, 2017.