

Ms. Susie V. Castillo, Board Member

Co-Sponsors: Ms. Lubby Navarro, Board Member }
Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member } Added

SUBJECT: WATER ON EVERY PLATE

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL SERVICES AND STUDENT AND SCHOOL SUPPORT

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

Consumption of water is associated with a number of health benefits including the prevention of obesity, a reduced number of dental cavities, proper hydration, and improved cognitive function. As a participant of the National School Lunch Program, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) is required by federal regulations to make potable water available to children at no charge in the place where meals are served in our schools. According to MDCPS' Food and Nutrition Procedures, schools can implement this requirement by providing students access to 1) a water fountain in the cafeteria or immediately adjacent to the cafeteria 2) a faucet that allows students to fill their own bottles or cups with drinking water or 3) water pitchers and cups on lunch tables.

Although federal meal program regulations require potable water be made available, water is not considered part of the reimbursable meal and there is no separate funding provided for drinking water. Many schools rely on water fountains to meet the federal requirement for water accessibility, a practice which has proven to not be effective in assuring students have water available to them during meals. For example, in elementary schools where students must often ask for permission to go to the water fountain or students must wait in line to get water, taking time out of their lunch time. Moreover, students often do not have cups or containers in which to hold their water to take back to their seats to have while eating. In terms of practicality, water fountains are may not be serving to meet the obligation we have to have water with every meal.

Currently, bottled water is sold separately in school cafeterias because water is not included in federal meal reimbursements. It is recommended that as a district, we explore the feasibility of providing our students drinking water on every plate during meals as part of the National School Lunch Program, assuring we are achieving our goals through financially sound decisions.

This item has been reviewed and approved as to form and legal sufficiency by the School Board Attorney. } Added

ACTION PROPOSED BY MS. SUSIE V. CASTILLO:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida direct the Superintendent to explore the feasibility of providing our students drinking water on every plate during meals as part of the National School Lunch Program. } Revised

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