

Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Board Member

SUBJECT: DIGITAL DIVIDE ANALYSIS

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS

Despite the abundance of internet availability and the level of connectivity through mobile devices, thousands of low-income students depend on free public access for connectivity when they are not on school grounds. In very low-income communities, free public access to the internet is either unavailable or at a location that is too far to access available internet services. Furthermore, the nearest location for free public access may be a coffee shop or fast food restaurant, which does not necessarily provide an environment that is most conducive to student learning.

There are a number of home learning programs and initiatives intended to foster continuity in learning while students are away from the classroom. Although there are initiatives aimed at closing the achievement gap and opening access, many students find themselves left out of the digital age because of a lack of resources. Through various initiatives, the Board and the Superintendent have provided a limited number of computers and devices to allow for low-income students to access the internet at school, and off school grounds. Despite these efforts, the Board should continue to review available resources and analyze issues concerning the “digital divide,” or the gap between communities that have access to modern information and communications technology, and those that don't or have restricted access.

This item seeks to direct the Superintendent to review and analyze the ratio of computers, devices and internet access available to Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) students on and off school grounds, specifically in low-income and high-poverty schools, present the findings to the Board, and review the potential establishment of additional partnerships that can enhance access to a device and the internet when students are at home. Representatives of the major internet providers, students and parents may be consulted to provide information related to community access to devices and connectivity. In addition, the item requests that the Superintendent develop a plan of action based on these findings and recommendations and present it at the September 5, 2018 Board meeting. This item has been reviewed by the School Board Attorney's Office and approved for legal sufficiency.

H-6
(Withdrawn - - 07/19/2018)

ACTION PROPOSED BY

DR. DOROTHY BENDROSS-MINDINGALL:

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

1. review the accessibility of connectivity in low-income and high-poverty communities;
2. review the accessibility of computer devices to MDCPS students in low-income and high-poverty schools;
3. and explore the feasibility of identifying additional opportunities, resources and partnerships that can be offered to MDCPS students' families to bridge any digital divide and enhance their access to a device and to the internet when students are not in school; and
4. report the findings regarding this review, and, if feasible, develop a plan of action to increase the availability of computer devices and internet access for MDCPS students who attend schools with low-income and high poverty levels at the September 5, 2018 Board meeting.