

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Board Member

SUBJECT: LEARN TO SWIM PROGRAM UPDATE AND FEASIBILITY REPORT

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED, AND EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS

For 43 years, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has provided students with water safety and swimming lessons through its Learn to Swim program. This District has long recognized the grim statistics making Florida a leading state in the drowning deaths of children ages 1-4 and second highest in preventable children's deaths under the age of 12. Addressing this alarming trend and recognizing concerns from the community has also been a priority for The School Board of Miami-Dade County. My office brought forth agenda item H-13 at the June 2010 School Board meeting recognizing Miami Children's Hospital (MCH) Summer Splash Safety and Drowning Prevention Day; agenda item H-6 Water Safety, proffered by School Board Member Dr. Marta Perez at the July 2014 School Board Meeting, was another well-received item which served as a springboard for a renewed approach to the Learn to Swim program, seeking partnerships with local governments and organizations and initiating the iSwim public information campaign; and, most recently, the School Board recognized the month of May 2018 as Water Safety Month through agenda item B-7, also proffered by School Board Member Dr. Marta Perez, at the April 2018 School Board meeting.

The Board and District's collective efforts and concern does not end with policy, recognitions and community awareness campaigns, but also extends to professional development and legislative advocacy. I was proud to lead a discussion on drown proofing at the District's Physical Education and Health Literary Training in September 2009, speak on the district's efforts to prevent drownings at the MCH Summer Splash Safety and Drowning Prevention Day in June 2010, and support the YMCA of South Florida's Water Safety Community Event in May 2016. Along with many of my colleagues, I engaged in advocacy efforts to support language in 2016's Florida Senate Bill 704 and House Bill 535 redefining portable pools used exclusively for providing swimming lessons or related instruction sponsored or provided by a school district. Since the passage of these bills, portable pools may not be regulated as a public pool, which has further facilitated the use of our Learn to Swim program's pool inventory.

Currently, the Learn to Swim program features a water safety curriculum inclusive of the Water Habits Are Learned Early (W.H.A.L.E.) Tales program, sponsored by the American Red Cross and accessible to teachers district-wide. Another facet of the Learn to Swim Program relies on five portable pools and their corresponding instructors. These pools are scheduled for selected schools where students receive direct instruction during survival swimming lessons delivered on site by certified instructors. Prior to the 2014-15 school year, the District noted its commitment to equity and access through informed decision making and strategic planning, requesting data from the Medical Examiner's Office to procure zip codes where the highest number of drownings of elementary school aged children had occurred.

This item seeks to request an update to inform the Board of the status of the Learn to Swim Program and iSwim initiative inclusive of historical data, insight, and methodology relative to the program's strategic implementation and expansion since 2014 and for the upcoming school years. It also seeks to authorize the Superintendent to conduct a feasibility report addressing the further expansion of the Learn to Swim program and services to students, specifically the survival swimming lesson component, with the goal of increasing the M-DCPS inventory of portable pools and corresponding instructors through business sponsorships, local and national organizations' support, grant opportunities, etc., and report back to the Board by the December 19, 2018 School Board meeting.

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

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

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

- (1) provide an update to the Board to inform of the status of the Learn to Swim Program and iSwim initiative, inclusive of historical data, insight, and methodology and relative to the program's strategic implementation and expansion since 2014 and for the upcoming school years; and
- (2) conduct a feasibility review to consider the further expansion of the Learn to Swim program and services to students, specifically the survival swimming lesson component, with the goal of increasing the M-DCPS inventory of portable pools and corresponding instructors through business sponsorships, local and national organizations' support, grant opportunities, etc., to be presented to the Board by the December 19, 2018 School Board meeting.