

Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, School Board Member

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SUBJECT: STUDENT BUS BOARDING AND EXITING NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

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

On January 25, 2017, the Miami-Dade County School Board unanimously co-sponsored and approved Agenda Item H8 Transportation Safety, which authorized a two-fold feasibility study on the implementation of a student bus boarding and exiting tracking system featuring real time reporting to District and parents/guardians on all Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Global Positioning Systems (GPS) monitored busses at the time and sought to explore the feasibility of installing GPS monitoring systems and student tracking systems on all remaining non-monitored M-DCPS busses and all future purchased busses. Staff Follow Up reported on March 13, 2017 that 2/3 of busses at the time were already outfitted with GPS and that remaining busses would have equipment installed during the 2017-18 school year. This School Operation's initiative and the School Board and District leadership behind its implementation is to be commended for extending safety and security features beyond the classroom walls and into the school busses where over 50,000 of our students are transported daily.

The Staff Follow Up Memorandum also noted that School Operations collaborated with the School Board Attorney's Office and that, based on the opinion provided by the Attorney's Office, particularly as it related to additional incurred liability, staff would explore possible alternatives that would meet the intent of a student bus boarding and exiting tracking system while safeguarding the District and its employees from increased liability. To date, the School Board has not received follow up exploring substantive alternatives that meet the intent of the item.

Since the passage of the aforementioned item, Houston Independent School District (HISD), the 7th largest in the nation, has implemented student bus badging in an effort to improve student security. Parents receive text messages alerting them of time and location when their child swipes their pass to board and exit the bus. The HSID School District and Board made a well-informed decision to invest in the technology that would both help increase efficiencies in routing and planning, but also improve safety and provide an enhanced customer service experience for their parents.

**Revised
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A student bus boarding and exiting notification system can offer security features in the case of a crisis or emergency, such as providing an accurate and updated passenger manifest. However, just as important, is the day-to-day capacity to offer school administrators and parents/guardians the ability to know when and where their children boarded and exited the bus. Particularly for younger students, with varying drop off points due to two household scenarios, or varying routines depending on the day of the week, as well as for substitute bus drivers, drop-off can be confusing.

A notification system allows parents/guardians and administrators to quickly track drop-off time and location for confused or missing students who mistakenly exit the bus, thus reducing tension and anxiety when a student is identified as missing from their regular stop. This component is a safety feature that offers piece of mind to all those vested in student safety.

From enhanced security systems with feeds to central agencies to identification verification systems that use databases to inform school site officials of a visitor's possible criminal record, students in M-DCPS schools are already benefiting from the increased scrutiny and consideration given to their safety. The thoughtful and purposeful response to security concerns and parental anxieties has helped to allay fears in the post-Marjory Stoneman Douglass educational landscape and many community members have expressed relief in the concerted effort to make safety and communication to parents a priority.

This item seeks to allow the School Board an opportunity to evaluate, review and ultimately weigh the benefits of a bus boarding and exiting notification system against the risks of liability in an open and transparent manner. Additionally, it seeks to allow for the School Board to review the implementation of wireless camera systems and panic alarm buttons on each bus to enhance security and safety. Secured footage obtained from incidents on school busses can assist School Police and school site administrators effectively investigate incidents and reports.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
LAWRENCE FELDMAN:**

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

1. conduct a review of bus boarding and exiting student notification systems to consider the implementation of said systems featuring real time reporting to District/School Police and parents/guardians on all Miami-Dade County Public Schools and contracted busses, in addition to providing wireless camera systems and panic alarm buttons on each bus to enhance security and safety; and
2. provide the School Board with the review, to include, but not be limited to costs, grant and funding opportunities, possible liabilities, expected benefits and outcomes, conceivable implementation/pilot schedules, etc. for the School Board's consideration and recommendation prior to the July 24, 2019 School Board meeting.

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