

Ms. Lucia Baez-Geller, School Board Member

SUBJECT: SENIORS FOR SENIORS

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) slogan “Giving our students the world” challenges us to go beyond the classroom, and to provide our students with experiences where they could gain empathy, wisdom, kindness, and other values that matter.

South Florida is fortunate to have one of the largest senior citizen populations. During the pandemic, senior citizens have faced growing health problems, personal losses, and isolation due to fewer activities and visitors. Our high school students, especially our high school seniors have also been dealing with the stress of the pandemic, including feelings of isolation. Intergenerational outreach has always been important and now the need is greater today.

The purpose of this agenda item is to encourage our high school seniors to seek ways to establish relationships and, where needed, aid our community’s seniors as they struggle during the pandemic. There are many ways to provide valuable assistance to our community’s seniors though proper guidance. Community service or visits may not be permissible in the manner they were in the past, but other ways to help seniors have emerged. Students may be able to shop, run errands, engage in phone or online conversations, tutor about new technologies such as Zoom, or provide some other level of support.

M-DCPS has recognized and emphasized the importance of students helping people who require assistance. From kindergarten through 12th grade, students have heard the message clearly through various District initiatives that service to others is key to one’s overall development and personal growth. A meaningful relationship would be where one gives and receives.

The senior citizens in Miami-Dade have wisdom and some amazing stories and experiences to share that could benefit our students. A student might hear about how it was to live and escape from a communist country or learn about financial hardships that seniors dealt with in the past and how they prevailed. Some may share their stories about serving in our country’s armed forces. Miami’s older adult population boasts diversity in life experiences, which could provide tremendous educational benefits for students. Another benefit includes accumulating community service hours. While not required for graduation, service hours are instrumental when applying for scholarships, admission to honors programs, acceptances into universities, and certain jobs in the marketplace. When reversing our slogan “Giving our students the world,” we realize it’s just as important “to give the world our students.”

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney for legal sufficiency.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

MS. LUCIA BAEZ-GELLER: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to:

1. establish a 'Seniors for Seniors' program to bring together high school seniors and senior citizens for the purposes of supporting and learning from one another, while providing community service opportunities for high school seniors, and
2. allow for the 'Seniors for Seniors' program to fulfill community service hours, and
3. provide an update by the School Board meeting of March 17, 2021.