

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: STUDENT REGRESSION AND LEARNING LOSS IN THE EARLY GRADES – PREKINDERGARTEN, KINDERGARTEN, FIRST GRADE, SECOND GRADE, AND THIRD GRADE**

**COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: RELEVANT, RIGOROUS AND INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS**

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a considerable shift in the delivery of education, moving all teaching remotely in just a few days. This shift caused many teachers to face challenges in preparing and delivering quality content remotely during this pandemic. As teachers shifted their content delivery, they also shifted their pedagogical practices to support learning. Miami-Dade County Public School teachers have accomplished the remarkable task of shifting the teaching and learning process by teaching online, face-to-face, or in a dual-modality format. At the same time, due to time constraints, anxieties due to the pandemic, and other issues, there are existing concerns surrounding summer learning loss; increased worry about the additional time students have spent out of school; how much instruction is provided in the distance learning format; student regression and learning loss in the early grades; how children are processing emotional and social responses, sustaining attention, and utilizing memory effectively during these very difficult times. These issues simply cannot be ignored. There are also growing equity questions given the prominent role of technology as a key educational resource for families learning from a distance.

Disruptions to everyday life have meant that many young children were at home and were unable to attend early childhood education classes and are therefore now entirely dependent on their parents and/or guardians for nurturing care and to meet all of their developmental needs (physical, emotional, social, and cognitive). We know that optimal brain development requires a stimulating and enriching environment, adequate nutrition, learning opportunities, and social interaction with attentive caregivers. Under the current pandemic context, access to these opportunities may have likely been restricted, compromising the healthy developmental and learning trajectory of many young children.

It is fair to say that we have also witnessed an increase in very positive and responsive nurturing care provided to children as parents and/or guardians have had to spend increasing amounts of time in the home and have had to be less engaged in work and social activities outside the home.

Difficult conditions, negative interactions, and lack of educational opportunities during the early years can lead to irreversible outcomes, which can affect a child's potential for the remainder of his or her life.

A child's early years are the foundation for his or her future development, providing a strong and defining base for lifelong learning and learning abilities, including cognitive and social development. Well-established research continues to highlight the significance of early childhood education as an indispensable building block of a child's future success, especially in the early grades.

This School Board has been a strong advocate for all children during the COVID-19 pandemic and the continuous concerns about learning loss have been well documented. In fact, at the School Board meeting of October 21, 2020, Board Member Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall proffered Agenda Item H-15, *Academic Accountability at Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)*; Board Member Dr. Lubby Navarro proffered Agenda Item H-7 at the Board meeting of February 10, 2021, *Expansion of Summer School Programs to Mitigate Negative Impact on Student Learning Caused by the Pandemic*; and at the same meeting of February 10, 2021, Vice Chair Dr. Steve Gallon III presented Agenda Item H-21, *Closing the Achievement Gap in Miami-Dade County Public Schools*. All these Board actions are associated and connected to the delivery of instructional development and student learning.

As schools have reopened in Miami-Dade County, students have certainly presented a wide variety of academic, social, and emotional needs. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) needs to mindfully adjust the instructional delivery systems and practices to successfully meet the needs of our unique student population, especially our early learners.

Mitigating the negative impact of COVID-19 on young children will require strategic multi-sectoral approaches and the synergy of interventions in health, instruction, protection, participation, and early education. Some questions that we should ask may include the following:

- What is the percentage of students that are performing below grade level in Prekindergarten through third grade?
- What data do we have about the efficacy of distance learning as a substitute for in-person instruction?
- What data do we have available about behaviors that can lead to long-term effects, including a variety of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, adjustment disorders, etc., as well as interpersonal, social, and physical difficulties?
- How is M-DCPS addressing the critical components of a comprehensive early childhood program in Prekindergarten through third grade that includes children's social, emotional, physical, and academic needs?
- What resources will have to be allocated to ensure that early learners are given the opportunity to advance?

Therefore, this agenda item seeks to direct the Superintendent of Schools to present a report to the School Board at the Academics, Innovation, Evaluation & Technology Committee on May 12, 2021, with data on Prekindergarten through third grade students' progress. The report should include the number of students who are performing below grade level; provide a list of interventions and best practices to be implemented with those students falling below grade level; and develop a comprehensive plan to address the instructional, social, emotional, and physical needs of M-DCPS Prekindergarten through third grade students to ensure academic success by the time students finish third grade.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent of Schools to present a report to the School Board at the Academics, Innovation, Evaluation & Technology Committee on May 12, 2021, with data on Prekindergarten through third grade students' progress. The report should include the number of students who are performing below grade level; provide a list of interventions and best practices to be implemented with those students falling below grade level; and develop a comprehensive plan to address the instructional, social, emotional, and physical, needs of M-DCPS Prekindergarten through third grade students to ensure academic success by the time students finish third grade.