

Ms. Lucia Baez-Geller, Board Member

Co-Sponsors: Ms. Monica Colucci, Vice Chair } A
 Ms. Mary Blanco } d
 Dr. Steve Gallon III } e
 Ms. Luisa Santos } d

SUBJECT: RECOGNIZING NO ONE EATS ALONE DAY ON FEBRUARY 16, 2024 ACROSS MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: SAFE, HEALTHY, & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

In 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 created a “new normal” of social distancing for families across the country. As a result of these measures, students experienced an extended period of social isolation, suffering from a lack of social interaction and communication, which has profound long-term impacts both mentally and physically. While social isolation and loneliness were prevalent in the population prior to COVID-19, the pandemic exacerbated an already serious problem.

Dr. Vivek Murthy, 19th Surgeon General of the United States, argues that loneliness is a public health concern, and a primary contributor to many issues, including depression, anxiety, violence, and addiction. Loneliness affects how students experience school; about 46% of students report feeling or seeing social isolation during the week.

To combat this, Beyond Differences, a nonprofit organization, established National No One Eats Alone (NOEA) Day. NOEA is a free program that empowers students and beyond to create a culture of belonging and help disrupt social isolation in the lunchroom. Through the initiative, students are encouraged to sit with others and make new friends, as well as play games and participate in group activities, rather than being on their phones.

The first NOEA Day was established in 2012 in Northern California at a handful of schools. Today, over 9,000 schools across 50 states, and even internationally, participate in NOEA Day, reaching over 4,500,000 students. Last year, there were approximately 70 schools signed up for the program in Miami-Dade County. This year, Miami-Dade County Public Schools is once again partnering with Beyond Differences to bring No One Eats Alone Day to all schools on February 16, 2024.

This item seeks to bring awareness to social isolation and to encourage a culture of belonging for all students by recognizing February 16, 2024, as No One Eats Alone Day across Miami-Dade County Public Schools and supporting all informational campaigns that promote the initiative.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the Office of the General Counsel as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. LUCIA BAEZ-GELLER:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, recognize February 16, 2024, as No One Eats Alone Day across Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and support all informational campaigns that promote the initiative.