

Ms. Lucia Baez-Geller, Board Member

SUBJECT: INCREASING STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

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

The Miami-Dade County School Board is committed to transparency and accessibility and recognizes the importance of public input from all stakeholders. As key stakeholders, students play a crucial role in the educational system. The School Board is dedicated to guaranteeing students the right to be heard and engage in decision-making processes.

This item aims to explore the feasibility of implementing procedures that will contribute to student engagement and involvement at School Board meetings. This will not only give students the right to be heard, but it will further the district's mission of fostering civic engagement and encouraging responsible and active citizens. It will also provide students with the ability to engage and provide input to decisions that significantly influence their own education.

These action steps include, but are not limited to:

Making Direct Input Accessible: To address issues raised by students, the district should explore implementing a more accessible communication system for students to submit their questions, comments and/or concerns directly to the Student Advisor. Many students do not know how to reach the student advisor, or they are unaware they could reach out to provide input. To assist in obtaining greater representation of student input by establishing a more robust and innovative system that would enable varying student groups to share their perspectives, including but not limited to student athletes, students with disabilities students, newcomers & transfers, and students of various academic achievement levels, the student advisor and the district can streamline the process of collecting feedback.

Virtual Participation Options: According to the Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence, including students or their perspectives in governing bodies actively engages students in the education system and provides a point a view that is often underrepresented. Assistant Professor, Jonathan Collins, in his study, titled, "Does the Meeting Style Matter? The Effects of Exposure to Participatory and Deliberative Schools Meetings," found that more participatory and deliberative school board meetings might elicit a more representative group and therefore end up with policies that better serve all student's needs. Virtual participation options for students to participate in School Board meetings promotes inclusivity and participation. In addition, establishing innovative strategies for distributing School Board agenda items to schools, teachers, and students, could potentially augment district wide awareness and encourage civic engagement.

Excused Absences and Community Service Hours: The district should explore a system of granting excused absences if students must miss class to commute and attend School Board meetings. The district should also explore granting certified community service hours for attendance, incentivizing and encouraging students' civic engagement.

1 Monthly Student Town Hall Forums or School Site Focus Groups: The district should explore establishing a monthly forum in each district, or school site focus groups, providing students with a platform to address district staff directly and an opportunity to voice concerns regarding issues that impact the student body.

These changes will reaffirm the School Board's commitment to empowering students and encouraging the development of leadership skills and civic responsibility. This item aims to direct the Superintendent explore the feasibility of implementing the specified protocols and procedures (including direct input, transportation assistance, excused absences and community service hours, and town hall forums) that protect student interests and allow students to become active participants within the school system.

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

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

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

1. explore the feasibility of developing and implementing the specified protocols and procedures to support an increase in student engagement and participation throughout the school system, including:
 - a. making direct input more accessible to students using innovative platforms;
 - b. virtual participation options for students, making meetings more accessible;
 - c. making students more aware of School Board agenda items;
 - d. excused absences and/or community service hours for participation in School Board related activities;
 - e. quarterly town hall forums or school site focus groups; and
 - f. recognition programs for students who regularly participate in School Board related activities.
2. Report back to the Board no later than the Board meeting of May 15, 2024.