

MEMORANDUM

September 8, 2020

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools 

SUBJECT: STAFF FOLLOW-UP: SCHOOL BOARD MEETING OF JANUARY 15, 2020, AGENDA ITEM H-10, CLEAN AND BE SEEN: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HYGIENE AND ATTENDANCE

At the School Board meeting of January 15, 2020, the Board approved Agenda Item H-10, proffered by School Board Member Dr. Martin Karp and co-sponsored by School Board Chair Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman, School Board Vice Chair Dr. Steve Gallon III, and School Board Members Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Ms. Susie V. Castillo, Dr. Marta Pérez, and Ms. Mari Tere Rojas. This item requested that the Superintendent explore through a partnership, donation or grant the possibility of installing laundry appliances at pilot school and/or off-campus sites where chronic absenteeism persists; review current processes for implementation and management of existing programs around the country where laundry appliances are installed; analyze data on absenteeism prior to the installation of such machines to that of attendance rates after installation; and determine whether a limited number of sites should experiment in this effort to lower chronic absenteeism.

As a follow-up to this item, staff researched existing programs in New Jersey, Kentucky, Missouri, and Colorado that provide for laundry appliances in schools. Several years ago, Communities in Schools (which is no longer in Miami) secured funding in the amount of \$10,000 for a similar project at Miami Edison and Homestead Senior High Schools. Homestead Middle School also received a washer and dryer from the City of Homestead. Unfortunately, the full implementation of the projects was not feasible for several reasons, including: installation costs for electrical and plumbing services that exceeded grant funding; building infrastructure limitations; increased utility costs; liability for detergent allergies; maintenance costs of machines; and additional staffing costs associated with scheduling usage of the equipment. While there is a limited number of adult/vocational centers within the District that have washers and dryers, they are utilized for specific classes (i.e., washing and drying of towels utilized by cosmetology programs).

In lieu of seeking grants and donations of laundry appliances to be installed at school sites, staff recommends establishing partnerships with local community-based organizations that can assist families with laundry needs and seeking donations to provide families of students with chronic absenteeism with gift cards or tokens in partnership with neighborhood laundry facilities.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ms. Iraida R. Mendez-Cartaya, Associate Superintendent, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants Administration, and Community Engagement, at 305 995-1497.

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cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet
Region Superintendents
Dr. Linda Amica-Roberts
Ms. Melissa Latus
Ms. Lisa Thurber
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