


MEMORANDUM

March 13, 2019

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 NOVEMBER 20, 2018, AGENDA ITEM H-12, DRIVER'S EDUCATION

At the School Board meeting of November 20, 2018, the Board approved Agenda Item H-12, proffered by School Board Vice Chair Dr. Martin Karp and co-sponsored by School Board Chair Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman and School Board Members Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Ms. Susie V. Castillo, Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Ms. Lubby Navarro, Dr. Marta Pérez, and Ms. Mari Tere Rojas. This item authorized the Superintendent to: 1) review and evaluate the driver's education program within Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) including the condition of the vehicles used for this program and whether car purchases and/or leases are necessary; 2) determine if schools have certified driver's education teachers; 3) verify whether all external funds the district receives for driver's education is compliant with all requirements; and 4) provide a response by the March 2019 School Board meeting.

A review of our driver's education program has revealed that approximately 3,500 students in 36 District schools enrolled in this half-credit elective course for the 2018-2019 school year. This course is offered via virtual instruction, classroom instruction, behind-the-wheel training, or a combination of these. Courses are taught by certified teachers, most of whom have physical education and driver's education certification.

There are over 1,000 students Districtwide that are participating in a driver's education course that includes behind-the-wheel training. Four high schools (John A. Ferguson Senior High School, Hialeah-Miami Lakes Senior High School, Miami Beach Senior High School, and North Miami Beach Senior High School) currently have vehicles and certified personnel to deliver this type of curriculum. Miami Killian Senior High School has vehicles to offer behind-the-wheel training and will resume doing so pending the school's driver's education teacher earning the required skills credential from the State of Florida in April 2019.

Driver's education vehicles in the District are 1997 to 1999 Ford Escorts or Dodge Neons. Below is information regarding the condition of these vehicles at the aforementioned schools.

- John A. Ferguson Senior High School has five vehicles, one of which is awaiting repair.
- Hialeah-Miami Lakes Senior High School has four vehicles, one of which is currently awaiting assessment for potential repair.
- Miami Beach Senior High School has one vehicle, which is currently awaiting assessment for potential repair.
- Miami Killian Senior High School has four vehicles, all of which are operable.
- North Miami Beach Senior High School has twelve vehicles. Eight of these have been deemed irreparable, and the remaining four are currently being assessed for potential repair.

The District's Transportation Department has provided cost information on new vehicles and recommends the purchase of 2018 Nissan Sentras at \$16,500 each as well as 2019 Chevrolet Malibus or Ford Fusions at approximately \$17,000 each. Each vehicle would also need to be retrofitted with a safety passenger-side brake pedal for the instructor at a cost of approximately \$1,000. Based on these estimates, it would cost approximately \$180,000 to provide two vehicles at each of the five schools that are currently equipped to offer behind-the-wheel training. To expand behind-the-wheel training across the District, an estimated \$36,000 per school would be required to provide two vehicles to those schools that do not currently offer it as part of their driver's education program.

In order to be eligible for reimbursement through the Driver's Education Safety Trust Fund, entities and their expenditures must meet the following criteria:

- The entity requesting reimbursement must be a public-school system or a not-for-profit private school, located in Miami-Dade County, that offers the opportunity to learn to drive;
- A minimum of 30% of a student's time in the program must be behind-the-wheel training;
- The program must be offered to private as well as public-school students in Miami-Dade County;
- Funds will be used for direct educational expenses and must not be used for administrative/overhead expenses; and
- The grantee(s) must agree to provide appropriate accountability/reporting.

Per the Driver's Education Safety Trust Fund, the District can only bill the County for the costs associated with the schools that have operable cars. A recent driver's education interest survey of students in grades 8-10 revealed a high level of interest in receiving behind-the-wheel training. Given the expressed level of interest among students and the opportunity for future reimbursement from the County for implementing behind-the-wheel training in our schools, the District is currently in conversations with the County government regarding additional funding flexibility for the purchase of driver's education vehicles. The initial investment to acquire new vehicles, coupled with the existing reimbursement program, will enable us to continue offering and potentially expand behind-the-wheel training to students enrolled in our driver's education courses.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Ms. Marie Izquierdo, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Academics and Transformation, at 305 995-1451, or Ms. Lisette M. Alves, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Academics, at 305 995-4202.

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cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet
Ms. Lisette M. Alves
Ms. Melba Brito
School Board Agenda Office