

Ms. Susie V. Castillo, Board Member

SUBJECT: CLEAR BACKPACKS PROGRAM

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In light of the recent events at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, it is imperative that Miami-Dade County Public Schools take concrete steps toward helping to improve security at our school sites. To that end, and given the number of students that attend our schools, it would be beneficial to give our parents the option of choosing to implement policy in their school which would make it mandatory for student backpacks be of a clear material. This would allow for substantially improved visibility for security monitors, teachers, administrators, and other adults in our school sites when it comes to unauthorized items students may be in possession of on campus. With the purpose of serving as an additional layer of security, increased visibility provided by clear backpacks in many cases could be a deterrent to those seeking to harm others.

School districts large and small across the country have implemented different policies regarding the regulation of school backpacks. The reasons prompting them to implement these policies have been diverse in some cases but have all coincided in a deliberate intent to help improve school-site safety. Similarly, the National Football League (NFL) has also implemented a 'clear-bags only' policy for games at stadiums across the country in an effort to help enhance public safety.

This item calls upon the Superintendent to initiate rulemaking proceedings to amend Board Policy 5511, *Dress Code and School Uniforms* to provide language that would give schools the option to participate in a mandatory clear backpack program, similar to what is in policy now with mandatory uniform programs. The Educational Excellence School Advisory Committee (EESAC) at each school would determine that a vote should be taken during the spring of any given year as to whether a school should establish a mandatory clear backpack program or not. Voting shall occur on a specific, advertised date(s) that do not conflict with testing dates to be effective the following school year. At least fifty percent (50%) plus one (1) of the parents in that school who vote must vote in favor of establishing a mandatory clear backpack program for it to be implemented. This vote will stand for a minimum of three (3) school years, at which time the EESAC may determine if a subsequent vote is warranted. For the purpose of implementing this program as soon as possible, this item also authorizes the Superintendent to give schools the option to participate in the mandatory clear backpack program before the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year to be implemented in the 2018-2019 school year.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MS. SUSIE V. CASTILLO:**

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

- 1) Initiate rulemaking procedures to amend Board Policy 5511, *Dress Code and School Uniforms* to add language that would provide schools the option to participate in a mandatory clear backpack program including:
 - a) The EESAC at each school determines that a vote should be taken during the spring of any given year as to whether a school should establish a mandatory clear backpack program or not.
 - b) Voting shall occur on a specific, advertised date(s) that do not conflict with testing dates to be effective the following school year.
 - c) At least fifty (50%) plus one (1) of the parents in that school who vote must vote in favor of establishing a mandatory clear backpack program for it to be implemented.
 - d) This vote will stand for a minimum of three (3) school years, at which time the EESAC may determine if a subsequent vote is warranted.
- 2) Provide schools the option to participate in a mandatory clear backpack program before the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year to be implemented in the 2018-2019 school year.