


# MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Dan Gelber and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager 

DATE: August 19, 2020

SUBJECT: Response to Miami-Dade Public Schools' decision to start school year on-line

Several weeks ago, MDCPS Superintendent Alberto Carvalho announced that the public schools would start remotely on August 31, 2020 and would continue remotely at least through September 2020. We are all aware that this poses a challenge for working parents who must balance home schooling of their children with their obligations at work. In response, a couple of cities (e.g. Miami Springs) are contemplating creating public spaces in municipal facilities where working parents can drop off their school age children to engage in their virtual learning under the supervision of municipal employees.

When I learned of these efforts by some cities, I reached out to my staff to see if this was something we should and could implement. Our Parks staff would be the obvious team that would implement such a plan. They raised several concerns. First, such a plan is similar to our summer camp program this past summer, where we had small groups of children (9 or less) assigned to one counselor. Despite our best efforts, we ultimately terminated the summer program when too many individuals tested positive for COVID-19. There is no reason to believe that we would achieve a different result under this new initiative. If it is not safe for the children to go back into classroom, there is no reason to believe it is any safer for the kids or staff to have virtual classrooms in Parks facilities or other municipal buildings.

There are also logistical issues. If we were to attempt such a program with strict social distancing, the capacity would be very small (probably under 75 students), meaning that most of our resident students would not be able to participate. Furthermore, the demands on our Wi-Fi system from such on-line learning might lead to inconsistent connectivity.

Based on the foregoing, we do not recommend creating a drop off program for students that have to take classes on-line. Frankly, the school system is much better situated to provide such a service with respect to both space capacity and Wi-Fi connectivity. MDCPS have obviously concluded that it is safer for both students and employees to start the year virtually. I think we should likewise be guided by such rational.

We here at the City of Miami Beach continue to recognize the many challenges this presents for our staffs and working parents. I have encouraged our Department Directors, whenever and wherever possible, to be flexible and continue to allow for alternate schedules and telecommuting. It is my sincere hope that everyone in the private sector can continue to do the same. This is a time to continue to do all that we can do collectively, as a community, to stop the spread of this virus.