

June 8, 2000

Dr. Robert B. Ingram, Member

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION TO PROVIDE ALL TEACHERS AND OTHER SCHOOL-SITE STAFF WITH IN-SERVICE TRAINING ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION TO BE HELD DURING BEGINNING TEACHER ORIENTATION AND AT TWO OTHER INTERVALS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR, AND TO PROVIDE ANGER MANAGEMENT TRAINING SESSIONS, FOR ALL MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS STUDENTS, AT TWO INTERVALS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

The disturbing reality of school violence issues poses a dangerous threat to public health in general and to teachers, staff, and students in particular. The proliferation of weapons in schools, aggressive behavior of students, overcrowded classrooms, and exponential increases in juvenile crime all contribute to the vulnerability and fear of school-site professionals. The extent of the problem was epitomized nationally last year by the Columbine, Colorado massacre; recently, this issue was brought to the fore locally by the shooting of a teacher in Lake Worth, Florida. Despite the continuing debate about best practices for preventive and reactive measures, one concept is indisputable: teachers cannot teach and students cannot learn if the environment is one of fear.

I believe that we can empower teachers and staff members with strategies for protecting themselves from threatening or violent acts. To this end, I recommend that all beginning teachers receive in-service training on school violence prevention as part of the teacher orientation program. Further, all school-site staff, at the elementary, middle, and senior high school levels, should participate in two in-service sessions on violence prevention during the school year. These sessions will empower professionals with the tools they require to prevent the escalation of violence and to deal knowledgeably and objectively with students who threaten or exhibit violent behavior. Staff has produced an excellent pamphlet, entitled *Safety Tips for Teachers*, together with a video; both will be utilized as part of these in-service training sessions.

As an educator with years of law enforcement experience, I share the view of my colleagues: preventive measures are the most beneficial and most cost-effective means of dealing with the grim reality of violence. To that end, the pamphlet, *Safety Tips for Teachers*, offers brief and to-the-point instructions. The suggestions are drawn from research as well as from reviews of past incidents of battery on staff members. The video offers a perspective from veteran educators together with the views of students. During the in-service sessions, I believe that all attendees can benefit from the best practices of district, region, and school-site staff who are experienced with the challenges inherent in resolving potentially violent and/or threatening incidents. There can be little doubt that the convening of new and veteran educators in an in-service forum will work also to dispel a range of fears and questions regarding unruly students.

However, I also believe that we can empower elementary, middle, and senior high school students with safe and therapeutic strategies for dealing with anger management. We must take the responsibility for alerting children to the inherent dangers on acting or reacting to situations before taking the time to think about the consequences. Students must be taught that violence solves little and that true power and leadership emanate from nonviolent behaviors and strategies. Accordingly, all students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools should be required to attend two sessions annually in anger management.

Many batteries on staff members and students can be avoided. I fully realize that every situation is unique. However, I do believe that certain strategies can work across a range of situations to protect the safety and well-being of staff members and students.

There is no place for violence in the educational community. I sincerely hope that in-service training, for new and veteran teachers and staff, as well as anger management training for children, will address some generic situations which can result in threatening and/or violent behaviors. Sadly, school violence continues to plague the nation. Until students and staff can construct knowledge in an atmosphere of learning and ethical behavior, it is incumbent upon all of us to empower staff with tools for promoting and maintaining the safety of colleagues and students.

No local funds are required.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. INGRAM:**

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

1. to provide all teachers and school-site staff with in-service training on school violence prevention, to be held during beginning teacher orientation and at two other intervals during the school year; and
2. to provide anger management training sessions, for all Miami-Dade County Public Schools students, at two intervals during the school year.

No local funds are required.

RBI/NJP:mjc