

SUBJECT: SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: SCHOOL/DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Each day over 345,000 students enter our school buildings to learn. Parents, teachers, students and administrators expect schools to be safe havens, as they should be. We make every effort to fortify our schools and implement safety and security protocols because the lives of our students and staff are a paramount priority. As a result, our schools are well prepared to respond to any emergency. A random act of violence however, is not predictable and therefore, constant vigilance is the key to maintaining the security of our schools. As such, in violence prevention, reliance on the important roles of security cameras, ID screening, police and security staff is not enough.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools has been proactive in its efforts to prevent youth violence. Several years ago we partnered with the American Psychiatric Foundation to provide mental health/early identification training, known as *Typical or Troubled*. This training is provided to the faculties of all public middle and high schools in Miami-Dade to help adults differentiate between typical teen behavior and behavior which may really be a cry for help so that appropriate interventions can be provided to children in distress. In addition, school-site student services teams (school counselors, health technicians and screeners, school social workers and psychologists) implement a number of other programs designed to assist adolescents with social and emotional issues including, peer to peer intervention and conflict resolution.

Violence prevention is a society's shared responsibility. As a school system, we are also doing our part to eliminate the culture of silence within our community. We have partnered with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in adopting the *If You See Something, Say Something* initiative which encourages the community to report suspicious behavior and activity, particularly in or around schools to law enforcement personnel or other responsible adults. Alerting authorities to a potential danger or threat could save lives.

A-2
GOOD CAUSE

It is critical that we continually evaluate our district policies and procedures to ensure that current best practices to address and prevent school violence are being implemented. Therefore, this item requests approval to initiate the rulemaking process to amend the existing Board Policy 8405, *School Safety*, to continue the examination of the District's prevention, crisis intervention and communications strategies in all schools. This includes collaborating with community partners such as emergency responders and area hospitals to review and revise emergency response plans for each school, crisis training and professional development for principals and other designated school staff, and communications protocols to keep parents and the community informed in the event of an emergency situation. The amended policy will reference best practices regarding school safety and any other changes deemed necessary or desirable.

It is our obligation, as well as that of the community at-large to create an envelope of safety around our schools where children and those who serve them feel secure in their environment.

This Item does not appear on the published agenda. Good cause exists to vary from the published agenda because of the occurrence of a number of recent acts of violence in the community involving young people, necessitating this response, after publication.

RECOMMEND:

That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to review current policy and procedures and initiate rulemaking proceedings pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act to amend Policy 8405, *School Safety*, as appropriate.