

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT:                    AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS TO REVIEW CURRENT PRACTICES, PROCEDURES, AND POLICIES RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND PROGRAM AWARENESS FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (M-DCPS)**

**COMMITTEE:               PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

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

Mental health challenges in children and young adults may create major barriers to social interaction, learning, and academic progress. Mental health is critical to a child's overall well-being just like physical health is and the two are deeply connected with one another. Mental health conditions can impede a student's ability to thrive in school, on sports teams, at home, at work, and in greater society.

Every student deserves and can achieve an outstanding education. The potential impact that school-parent-community partnerships holds in promoting health and wellness is well documented in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS).

Addressing mental health needs in school is critically important. Being able to recognize and support students' mental health in schools matters because mental health problems are common and often develop during childhood and adolescence. Early detection, timely evaluations, and professional achievable intervention strategies do work and they can help improve resilience and the ability to succeed in school and in life. If appropriate and timely services are put in place to support a young person's mental health needs, these services often maximize success and minimize negative impacts to students.

Because educators and school employees spend so much time with students, particularly observing them in social and educational situations, in school, in the classroom, on a school bus, in the cafeteria, in the playground or physical education field, teachers and school support personnel can provide invaluable help identifying possible mental health issues. Being able to recognize the signs and symptoms of the most common mental health disorders can help teachers and the school administration identify potential problems more quickly and work with parents and the school staff to help students get the help they need.

Additionally, the journey leading teachers and school employees to emotional burnout is multifaceted and influenced by both how teachers and employees deal with stress and how stress shows up in the classroom, in schools, and in central and region offices. Professional stress that sometimes overwhelms teachers and school employees is often times defined as a person having emotional exhaustion, feeling disconnected from others and his/her work, and difficulty feeling accomplished in his/her job.

Teachers feel the stress of making sure their students' academic needs are being met every single day as new requirements appear to emerge annually; they feel the stress of new testing requirements, of school budget cuts, of concerns related to safety and security in schools, of the impact of social media, and students who come to school with many social and emotional needs. Furthermore, teachers are cognizant of the lack of respect for the profession; they have families to attend to, and they have to deal with economic problems facing most educators today.

This agenda item seeks authorization from the School Board for the Superintendent of Schools to review current practices, procedures, and policies related to mental health services, including evaluation procedures and timelines, among others; and program awareness, including student courses and professional development for teachers and employees in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Like many physical health conditions, early detection of mental health conditions is the best way to ensure that students, teachers, and school employees will be able to feel supported and assisted in dealing with this health concern. Furthermore, students will be able to reach their full potential once appropriate and achievable mental health strategies are implemented maximizing their emotional needs.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY**

**MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to review current practices, procedures, and policies related to mental health services, including evaluation procedures and timelines, program awareness, and professional development, and report back to the Board by June 20, 2018.