

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF STUDENT ARREST DATA

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is committed to the learning and life-long development and welfare of its students. In doing so, it is also committed to and have adopted policies, programs, and practices to ensure their security, safety, and well-being during school and at school-related events. As a part of these efforts, the School Board authorizes the Superintendent to establish District security services, including School Police, which is governed by provisions outlined in *School Board Policy 8480-School Police*, as well as standard operating procedures and policies established and adopted by the department.

The issue of school safety and security has been elevated since the tragic event at Marjory Stoneman Douglas Senior High School on February 14, 2018. This tragedy has led to numerous state legislative and local policy reforms and provisions, including resources and requirements for school police and/or armed staff on school campuses throughout the state.

Although the presence of increased police officers on school campuses appears to be a noble, well-intended strategy to improve student and school safety and security, the unintended consequence of engaging police officers in school-related matters often results in referring students for school discipline related issues to law enforcement.

Referrals, which are more common than arrests, are broadly defined as any time a student is reported to any law enforcement agency or official “regardless of whether official action is taken.” Referrals can include citations, court referrals, and, in some cases, arrests. In these instances where police officers are present and active at school sites, absent appropriate training and/or related experience in working with school-aged children and youth, the proclivity to engage law enforcement in school-related issues is amplified. Such amplification is even more pronounced in schools located in communities of high poverty and with high numbers of students of color.

Further, many civil rights advocates say students of color often bear the brunt of overly punitive local policies and state laws that can lead to arrests for relatively minor misbehavior, such as vandalism or classroom arguments. Such advocates also contend that the presence of police in schools makes arrests and referrals more likely, with results that can derail students’ lives. “A routine school disciplinary infraction should land a student in the principal’s office, not in a police precinct,” former Attorney General Eric Holder once said. A common-sense approach to balancing school safety and security with appropriate, restorative practices in addressing student discipline would concur.

Recently, the issue of student arrests in M-DCPS has become a focal point of discussion and public discourse and in some cases, even discord among certain sectors of the community. The focus and discussion were around the reported disparity in student arrests in schools among students of color. More specifically, the data reported closely mirrored prior civil rights data collected by the U.S. Department of Education which showed that black students were arrested at school at disproportionately high levels, as compared to any other racial or ethnic group.

As M-DCPS remains committed to both an ethos and practice of fairness, equality, and equity in the education of its students and administration and operation of its schools and departments, a review of data, policies, and practices relating to student arrests is prudent.

This item seeks to direct the Superintendent to: review summative annual student arrest data; establish a formative process for ongoing monitoring of student arrests; explore the need and feasibility of implicit bias and related training for police officers and personnel working in schools, where appropriate; provide and review student arrest data to the Diversity Equity and Equity Advisory Committee, pursuant to School Board Policy 9142; and to initiate rulemaking procedures requiring student arrest data to be reported to the School Board on an annual basis.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

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

1. review summative annual student arrest data;
2. establish a formative process for ongoing monitoring of student arrests;
3. explore and determine the need and feasibility for implicit bias and related training for police officers and personnel working in schools, and provide, where appropriate;
4. provide and review student arrest data to the Diversity Equity and Equity Advisory Committee, pursuant to School Board Policy 9142;
5. continue to work with community stakeholder groups and organizations such as the Florida Department of Justice Circuit Advisory Board for Circuit 11 to review student arrests and develop strategies and approaches to address root causes and solutions; and
6. initiate rulemaking procedures outlining a process for collecting and monitoring student arrest data and requiring such student arrest data to be reported to the School Board on an annual basis.