

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

SUBJECT: COMPETITIVE CHEERLEADING

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is committed to students' participation in interscholastic sports as well as extracurricular activities. In doing so, it recognizes both as mainstays of school districts, schools, and more important, the learning and life experiences of students. In fact, research has shown that activities and athletics, specifically at the high school level, provides a vehicle that improves students' citizenship, sportsmanship, self-discipline, physical and emotional wellness, and their grade point averages.

In the development, implementation, and enforcement of policies governing high school athletics, M-DCPS works very closely with the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA), the governing body of high school athletics in the state of Florida. For nearly a century, the FHSAA – through the cooperative efforts of its member schools – has provided opportunities for high school students in Florida to participate on a fair and equitable basis in interscholastic athletic programs that produce vital educational benefits.

One salient provision outlined in FHSAA's rules and regulations is reflected in FHSAA By-Law 2.8, *Competitive Equity* which promotes the "*opportunity for equity in competition to assure that individual student-athletes and school teams will not be prevented unfairly from achieving the benefits possible through participation in interscholastic athletics.*" One widely known benefit is the exposure of students to increased opportunities for athletic scholarships for higher education. It is also known that such increased opportunities come from competing at the highest level and on the largest stage. In high school such represents the pinnacle of success for high school competitive sports.

As with the FHSAA, M-DCPS is committed to policies and practices that support and promote the same spirit of fair and equitable participation and competition. This spirit should also extend to such sports provided to students in schools throughout the District. One such extension should be the offering of competitive cheerleading as a sport.

According to *The New York Times*, there are approximately 4 million cheerleaders nationwide, with an estimated 1.5 million involved in all-star cheerleading outside of their high schools. In 2004-2005 (most recent known available), the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) ranked spirit squads as ninth in popularity with 84,416 girls participating at their high school. It ranks 10th for girls in school sponsorship with 3,482 schools offering spirit, which includes dance, drill and pom squads, in addition to cheerleading. An additional 2,115 boys in 504 schools are also involved in spirit programs.

Although competitive cheerleading is already recognized as a sport throughout the nation and in Florida pursuant to FHSAA Policy 3.5.5, Miami-Dade County Public Schools has been noted as the only district in South Florida that does not recognize competitive cheerleading as a sport---reportedly joining Brevard County as one of the only school districts not to offer competitive cheerleading as a sport.

In addition to long-term benefits that may be afforded such as increased pathways and platforms for both male and female students to earn scholarships for higher education and to further expand and support the intent and requirements of Title IX, immediate, short-term benefits would be realized in offering competitive cheerleading as a sport in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Such benefits include but are not limited to:

- ✓ increased school spirit;
- ✓ increased presence in greater Miami communities;
- ✓ provision of additional access to participate in the UCA (Universal Cheerleading Association) or NCA (National Cheerleaders Association) skills camps; and
- ✓ development of leadership opportunities throughout neighboring communities.

Clearly, the provision of competitive cheerleading as a sport will provide tremendous benefits and increased opportunities for students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

This item seeks to direct the Superintendent to implement and take appropriate action to establish cheerleading as a competitive sport in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. In addition, to establish a process and platform, such as a Task Force inclusive of relevant school leaders, athletic directors, cheerleading sponsors, parents, and students that will further discuss and provide relevant insight, information, and perspective on offering cheerleading as a competitive sport.

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 directs the Superintendent to:

1. to establish a process and platform, such as a Task Force inclusive of relevant school leaders, athletic directors, cheerleading sponsors, parents, GMAC Representatives, and students to further discuss and provide relevant insight, information, and perspective on the establishment of cheerleading as a competitive sport;
2. take appropriate action to establish cheerleading as a competitive sport in Miami-Dade County Public Schools for the 2020-2021 school year;
3. initiate rulemaking to establish and/or amend School Board Policy, where necessary; and
4. provide an update to the School Board regarding planned 2020-2021 implementation no later than the School Board Meeting of March 2020.

