

Dr. Martin Karp, Board Member

SUBJECT: VIRTUAL REALITY AND COMBATING BULLYING AND OTHER BEHAVIORS THAT PLACE STUDENTS AT RISK

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION AND TECHNOLOGY

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Not a single day goes by without the filing of a complaint, the publishing of an article, or the airing of a story about bullying on a local, state or national level.

Meanwhile, virtual reality technology is beginning to have a far reaching impact in the field of education, and there is new virtual reality programming specifically designed to combat bullying that can be embedded into the school curriculum. Through virtual reality, students can actually experience “how it feels” to be bullied.

Currently 49 states have anti-bullying legislation. Nevertheless, nearly half of all children in grades 4-12 reported being bullied in school at least once in the past month. In the same time frame, nearly one third of students admitted to bullying others.

Addressing this issue builds upon initiatives introduced by District staff and Agenda item B-5 approved at the School Board meeting of May 10, 2006, which requested the adoption of a comprehensive district-wide bullying and violence implementation plan.

Virtual reality is known for creating and re-creating real-life scenarios. Providing our students opportunities with social–emotional learning experiences for the purposes of reducing incidences of bullying can perhaps be life altering while changing a school culture that for too long has included the negative consequences associated with bullying.

Our District should explore the possibility of incorporating virtual reality technology that has been effective in combating bullying. Using printed materials and following a curriculum can be helpful in reducing incidences of bullying, but it is clear that such measures have not made enough of a difference. Being placed into the situation may ultimately be what is needed for students to change their behaviors.

Concomitantly, the District can explore using virtual reality technology with scenarios where dialog, behaviors or actions can lead to students being placed in dangerous situations and becoming vulnerable to sexual abuse and molestation, internet solicitation, and human trafficking.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. MARTIN KARP:**

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

1. Explore virtual reality curriculum options that are designed to reduce bullying and determine whether implementation of such options is beneficial in our District; and
2. Research whether virtual reality curriculum is available to combat sexual abuse and molestation, internet solicitation, and human trafficking, and determine the viability of introducing such programs in our schools; and
3. Provide a response by the June 2020 School Board meeting.