

Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Board Member

Co-Sponsors: Dr. Steve Gallon III, Vice Chair
 Ms. Susie V. Castillo
 Dr. Martin Karp
 Dr. Marta Pérez
 Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas

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SUBJECT: STUDENT-ATHLETE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS INITIATIVES

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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

With mental health awareness at the forefront, resources have been made available to address student mental health. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) Department of Mental Health Services, for example, was established in July 2018 to enhance the coordination of District and community resources in an effort to deliver evidence-based mental health care for students. Last year, Board Member Maria Teresa Rojas brought forth a Board Item, co-sponsored by her fellow Board Members, endorsing Mental Health Awareness Month in May and reiterating that MDCPS “joins the mental health community to reaffirm [MDCPS’] commitment to building [MDCPS’] understanding of mental illness and ensuring those who are struggling know that they are not alone.” Furthermore, students in sixth grade and above will now receive mental health education annually.

More recently, reports of mental health issues affecting student athletes, in particular have surfaced. As the American Psychological Association noted in a feature publication, athletes, such as “football players have the same mental health problems as everyone else, but they also face some unique challenges, such as the confusion, depression, aggression, dementia and other symptoms [...] caused by repeated head injuries.” (Clay, Rebecca A. “A new NFL playbook: Enhancing mental health.” *American Psychological Association* Jan. 2017: 22. Print.) Professional athletes, including NBA players Justise Winslow, DeMar DeRozan and Kevin Love, have come forward publicly and shared their stories of depression and anxiety. Their perspective undoubtedly helps maintain an open conversation on what may otherwise be considered a sensitive topic among athletes. As our community prepares to host Super Bowl LIV this month, it is an appropriate time to consider specific mental health issues affecting student-athletes.

MDCPS values all students, including those who proudly represent their schools through participation in competitive sports. In order to assure MDCPS student athletes have unique resources available to them so they are equipped to succeed, certain mental health awareness initiatives that specifically address student-athlete mental health issues should be in place. MDCPS student-athletes, and those who work with them, may benefit from local and customized resources, such as mental health awareness campaigns, forums or events with participation from community partners to discuss salient issues, mental health awareness training for student athletes, coaches and families, and mentorship programs.

The purpose of this item is to request that the Superintendent explore and review the feasibility of addressing mental health issues specific to MDCPS student-athletes, by: (1) customizing mental health awareness campaigns; (2) organizing forums or events with participation from community partners to discuss salient issues and available resources; (3) developing a taskforce with participation from community stakeholders, such as mental health professionals, educators and athletic directors and/or obtaining responses to a survey regarding student-athlete mental health from coaches and athletic directors; (4) providing mental health awareness training for student-athletes' coaches, athletic directors and families that identify risk factors and signs associated with mental illness; and (5) establishing mentorship programs, and report back to the Board in advance of Mental Health Awareness Month in May.

This item does not appear on the published Agenda. There exists good cause to vary from the published Agenda as specific reports of mental health issues affecting student-athletes have recently surfaced and participation from community partners in any initiatives is desirable as soon as possible.

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

ACTION PROPOSED BY

DR. DOROTHY BENDROSS-MINDINGALL:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to explore mental health issues specific to M-DCPS student-athletes, by:

1. customizing mental health awareness campaigns to student-athletes;
2. organizing forums or events with participation from community partners to discuss salient issues and available resources;
3. developing a taskforce with participation from community stakeholders, such as mental health professionals, educators and athletic directors and/or obtaining responses to a survey regarding student-athlete mental health from coaches and athletic directors;
4. providing mental health awareness training for student-athletes' coaches, athletic directors and families that identify risk factors and signs associated with mental illness; and
5. establishing mentorship programs, and report back to the Board at the February 12, 2020 School Board Meeting.