

Roger C. Cuevas, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO APPROVE THE DADE STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE/MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND MIAMI-METRO ACTION PLAN TRUST AND FOUNDATION PREARREST DIVERSION PILOT PROGRAM, FOR 100 STUDENTS, AND TO GRANT PERMISSION FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION

**STRATEGIC PLANNING GOALS: II - STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT/PREPARATION FOR POST SECONDARY EXPERIENCES
IX - COMMUNITY/HOME/PARENT/SCHOOL/ BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS**

Authorization is sought to approve the Dade State Attorney's Office (SAO)/Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) and Miami-Metro Action Plan Trust and Foundation (M-MAP) Prearrest Diversion Pilot Program for 100 students who are first-time misdemeanor, non-violent offenders with no previous arrest history. This joint project was researched and written by experts in law enforcement and education and is designed to offer a viable and therapeutic alternative to arrest for children who commit offenses on school grounds during regular school hours. Its primary objective is to steer first-time offenders away from involvement with the juvenile justice system. The pilot program is supportive of the prearrest diversion concept established by new Section 985.3065, Florida Statutes, effective July 1, 1999.

Under this program, eligible students will be diverted, at the discretion of police officers from the M-DCPS Division of School Police (who will seek input also from school site principals), to the Teen Court Program, wherein they will participate in simulated court proceedings at one of three targeted senior high school facilities: Miami Carol City Senior; Coral Reef Senior; and Miami Senior High schools. Participants in Teen Court, a program of the M-MAP Trust and Foundation, will learn the dynamics of court proceedings, as well as the legal, fiscal and ethical impact of their actions. Curricular aims of this program also include lessons on accountability, responsibility and fairness.

Eligible M-DCPS students must be between the ages of ten and twelve and they must be first-time misdemeanor, non-violent offenders. Participation in the program is contingent also upon the following student/parent commitments:

- Students must admit to their offense and agree to participate in some community service activity as sanctions for their actions;

- Students must complete the program;
- Parental consent is required; and
- The prearrest diversion agency is willing to accept the student.

It is anticipated that this prearrest diversion program will alleviate an overburdened court system while concomitantly providing an educational alternative to first-time offenders. The Teen Court Program is a field-tested and pedagogically sound program which offers insight into the court system as it engages juveniles in "real life" situations. There can be little doubt that programming which enables students to accept responsibility for their own behaviors should be fostered and replicated, particularly with regard to at-risk youngsters.

There is no cost to the district for the implementation of the prearrest diversion pilot program.

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

1. approve the Dade State Attorney's Office/Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Metro-Miami Action Plan Trust and Foundation (M-MAP) Prearrest Diversion Pilot Program for 100 students;
2. grant permission for its implementation; and
3. allow M-MAP to utilize the above-mentioned schools and waive the facility cost.

There is no cost to the district for the implementation of this pilot program.