

December 9, 2003

Paul R. Philip, Chief of Staff

**SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS OF PROCEDURES FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT REGARDING THE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS AND BACKGROUND CHECKS ON SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS AND RESEARCH PERSONNEL**

**COMMITTEE: EDUCATION AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS**

The issue of background checks on school volunteers has been reviewed and discussed by staff. In addition, a workshop was held for the School Board on November 12, 2003 to provide background information for the School Board, School Police, Human Resources, ITS, the School Volunteer Office, the School Board Attorney, and ACCESS Operations have been involved in this process, along with national and state research into current practices. Additionally the Florida Department of Law Enforcement has had extensive conversations with School Police on the issue.

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The recommendations from staff were reached based on the following considerations:

- The safety and well-being of our students;
- The desire to continue to encourage community involvement which is a stated benchmark in 21<sup>st</sup> Century educational programming;
- The effective use of funding;
- The ability to efficiently implement program components.

The administrative policy recommendations are as follows:

1. Revise the current School Volunteer Program Registration Form (FM-1764 Rev. 08-03) as follows:
  - Revise language on #14 regarding arrest record to include juvenile record and the requirement of a detailed explanation of any record and a copy of a final disposition from the clerk of the court where applicable.
  - Add a statement to the signature that they understand that this is an official document and that the information is truthful and that providing false information is punishable as a misdemeanor crime. Also, the signature will state that they have read the policies and procedures of the district and understand them.
  - A statement will be added to indicate that any volunteer with a criminal record can not be placed until cleared by Human Resources and Professional Standards.

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2. Revise the School Volunteer Program Policies and Guidelines to include:
  - Photo identification, such as driver's license or other official document, is required to register.
  - Revise the statement to indicate that they must refrain from giving students gifts of any kind without the teacher's approval.
  - Revise the volunteer "welcome letter" to include a statement that the safety of our students is paramount.
  - Reference to School Board Rules 6Gx13-4A-1.21, Responsibilities and Duties and 6Gx13-4-1.09, Employee-Student Relationships.
3. Establish the revised School Volunteer Policies and Guidelines as Board Rule.
4. Establish a **Certified Volunteer** status in the district. This position would provide additional support to schools in managing their volunteer program at the school site. The Certified Volunteer would be an annual status conferred on volunteers who wish to serve in this capacity. A Certified Volunteer must agree to a fingerprint check and to complete a training on Managing and Organizing the Volunteer Program. Their role would be to assist the staff member assigned to the School Volunteer Program at school sites. Principals have the discretion to accept or decline any volunteer assistance.
5. Principals will be required to document that they have provided and discussed the School Volunteer Policies and Guidelines with ALL staff members, and that all volunteers receive these policies and guidelines.

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Additionally, the recommendations on background checks are as follows:

1. In order to provide the most accurate information available nationally, the district will now be providing background checks through digital fingerprints through the Office of Human Resources.
2. It is recommended that the following types of volunteers will be required successfully complete a background check:
  - Any certified volunteer.
  - Those individuals who self-report on #14.
  - Any individual a principal requests for separate review.
  - Any volunteer serving as a mentor, Listener, or Oyente.
  - Any overnight chaperone.
  - Any volunteer coach.
3. All research students will be required to document and pay for a fingerprint check.
4. Organizations that wish to place volunteers in the schools will be required to provide documentation and pay for their fingerprint checks, except for adult speakers or individuals with specific curriculum expertise who volunteer on a limited basis to demonstrate or instruct their craft in an educational setting under the direct supervision of an instructional or administrative Miami-Dade County Public Schools staff member supervising student contact.

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Once background checks are executed, the Office of Human Resources will instruct the School Volunteer Office as to the disposition of each potential volunteer. Trained administrative staff using the guidelines established for employees will review those with records. Denial of service will be provided by the Office of Human Resources and/or the Office of Professional Standards transmitted to schools and the individuals in the same manner as employees.

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The estimated current potential numbers for the district to check are approximately 1,000 volunteers. Based on that estimate, the following costs will need to be undertaken:

Office of Human Resources:	1.5 Fingerprint technicians 1.5 clerks 1 Administrator	\$250,000
1,000 fingerprint checks x \$60		60,000
School Volunteer Office	1 clerk	40,000
Approximate costs:	Total:	\$350,000

In addition, accessible space needs to be found for Human Resources staff handling fingerprint checks.

This would be effective immediately, with all current volunteers who have been checked through the state law enforcement system being required to be re-checked through fingerprints by a determined date or be terminated. The program will be evaluated by staff as to numbers of volunteers affected and the disposition of their placement, and the overall impact of the new procedures. A report will be sent to the Board by August 2004.

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**RECOMMENDED:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida:

- 1) approve the implementation of procedures for the school district regarding the Policies and Guidelines for School Volunteers and background checks on school volunteers and research personnel;
- 2) direct the Superintendent to increase appropriations up to \$350,000 from the Board's contingency;
- 3) direct the Board Attorney to initiate rulemaking procedures.

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