

Dr. Martin Karp, Board Member

SUBJECT: SCHOOL CAFETERIA ENVIRONMENT

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: STUDENT, PARENT, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Managing the school cafeteria environment is a universal school issue that many school districts and individual schools around the nation struggle with including schools in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Any opportunity to evaluate and improve upon the supervision and the environment in cafeterias where elementary school students are served should be welcomed.

Many parents have expressed concerns regarding the degree of supervision to assist all young students. For example, kindergarteners may ask for help opening and inserting straws or to be taken to the restroom. Those supervising and assisting students also contend with the issue of time given that students often have fewer than 30 minutes to get in and out of line and eat. Many times there is not enough staff to assist young children.

In some school cafeterias, silent lunches are implemented or very rule oriented models are used in lunchrooms in order to ensure everything is under control and to maintain decorum, especially when there is less supervision. Although these methods sometimes improve student behavior, it does not provide for positive experiences and the socialization children need.

It can be easily argued that children have more structure in the classroom today due to increased accountability measures. Meanwhile, there is less time for socialization. The cafeteria is one place where less structure is possible allowing students to stretch and talk without having to eliminate some protocol to ensure a safe environment.

An evaluation of the current environment and protocol should be conducted to see where improvements can be made.

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

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

1. Evaluate current levels of supervision and the environment for elementary grades in school cafeterias; and,
2. Explore ways to improve upon the supervision and environment for elementary grades in school cafeterias and examine the feasibility of such efforts; and,
3. Provide a response by the March 2015 School Board meeting.