

Dr. Marta Pérez, Board Member

SUBJECT: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BOARD MEETINGS

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, EVALUATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

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

In support of transparency our school system shares information freely with all stakeholders and complies with federal laws, state statutes, and Board policies that address freedom of speech. Florida's Government in the Sunshine law addresses the ability of speakers to participate in public meetings, while First Amendment rights address protected speech.

Consistent with its prior practice, District staff routinely contact persons who sign up to speak at the Board's monthly meetings in an effort to address and possibly resolve any issues and problems the individual may have. While this may be a benevolent attempt to correct problems that may be identified by these individuals and save them a lengthy trip to the Board meeting, this practice may be misinterpreted by these potential speakers, who may also view this practice as an attempt to deter them from speaking on matters they wish to address with the Board.

In addition, public speakers may be unfamiliar with the Board's policies on decorum at Board meetings, which prohibit speakers from, among other things, "discussing their own pending court cases and filed claims or complaints against the District or District personnel." School Board Policy 0169.1(E). This lack of understanding of longstanding Board policies on public participation at Board meetings sometimes leads to, at a minimum, public confusion, and at worst, to a disruption of the orderly progress of Board meetings.

For these reasons, it is requested that the Board consider providing a brief statement to the public during the commencement of the Board's public hearing that would properly inform the public of what is not considered protected speech, the Board's decorum policies, and provide an admonition against violation of these policies.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. MARTA PÉREZ:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, consider providing a statement to the public during the commencement of the Board's public hearing that would adequately inform the public of what is not considered protected speech, the Board's decorum policies, and provide an admonition against violation of these policies.