

Mr. Danny Espino, Vice Chair

SUBJECT: ENHANCING THE CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: SAFE, HEALTHY, & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The District's Code of Student Conduct is a crucial framework for fostering a safe and conducive learning environment for all students. It outlines the guidelines and consequences for student behavior, promoting positive conduct, and ensuring the well-being of the school community. Recent incidents have brought to light a concerning trend where students use their cell phones to film acts of violence on school premises and subsequently post these videos on social media platforms. Such behavior undermines the principles of respect and empathy and poses severe threats to the safety and well-being of the students involved. To address this issue effectively, it is essential to review the Code of Student Conduct and determine whether additional measures are needed to discourage such actions and reinforce the importance of responsible digital citizenship.

The advent of smartphones and social media has provided students with a powerful tool for instant communication and self-expression. However, the misuse of technology by students has led to an alarming rise in the filming and dissemination of violent incidents on school grounds. This troubling practice perpetuates a harmful culture of violence and inflicts emotional distress on victims, making them feel further victimized by the public exposure of their traumatic experiences. Moreover, these videos, which tend to go "viral" can perpetuate fear and insecurity among the student body, hindering the learning environment and diverting attention from academics to online sensationalism.

Filming acts of violence using cell phones also has far-reaching consequences beyond immediate physical harm. It creates a hostile atmosphere, encourages desensitization to violence, and might incite copycat behavior. As such the act of sharing filmed instances of bullying or acts of violence against another student for the purposes of distribution online or otherwise could be considered a Level III type of behavior, as currently defined in the current Code of Student Conduct for being an act that "endanger[s] health and safety...and/or cause[s] serious disruptions to the learning environment." Additionally, the widespread sharing of these videos can lead to cyberbullying, shaming, and the stigmatization of victims, exacerbating their emotional trauma and undermining their ability to recover and reintegrate into the school community. This disturbing trend necessitates swift and robust action to reinforce the District's commitment to the safety and well-being of its students.

To address this issue effectively, this item seeks to ask the Superintendent of Schools to consider these issues while reviewing the Code of Student Conduct through the District's annual process and amended the Code of Student Conduct as needed. First, whether a clear and comprehensive clause should be added explicitly prohibiting the filming of acts of violence on school premises and sharing those filmed acts of violence digitally or posting online, emphasizing the serious consequences for violators. Secondly, whether progressive disciplinary actions, including counseling, intervention

programs, mandatory community service, and suspension, would ensure appropriate consequences for students found in violation. Additionally, establishing workshops and educational sessions on responsible digital citizenship would emphasize the importance of empathy, respect, and the potential harm caused by sharing inappropriate content online. To encourage reporting, the enhancement of a confidential reporting mechanism for students and staff would foster a culture of accountability and trust. Lastly, involving parents and guardians in discussions about responsible cell phone use and encouraging them to monitor their children's online activities would promote a safer digital environment.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the General Counsel's Office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MR. DANNY ESPINO:**

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

1. Through the District's annual review process of the Code of Student Conduct, consider in consultation with the General Counsel, amendments thereto, if deemed appropriate and lawful an explicit prohibition on filming acts of violence on school premises and distributing those videos digitally or through posting them online, when such acts cause harm to students or disrupt the educational environment;
2. Consistent with any changes to the Code of Student, establish workshops and educational sessions on responsible digital citizenship and on any amendments to the Code of Student Conduct contemplated by this item;
3. Explore the feasibility of enhancing the confidential reporting mechanisms for students and staff to foster a culture of accountability and trust and of developing a campaign to educate parents and guardians about responsible cell phone use and how to better monitor their children's online activities to promote a safer digital environment.
4. Report back to the Board following the annual review of the Code of Student Conduct.