

Ms. Mary Blanco, Board Member

**SUBJECT: REVIEW POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING
EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING AND REVISIT TRAINING AND
PRACTICES REGARDING EMPLOYEES' INTERACTION WITH
STUDENTS**

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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

Creating a safe environment for our students and demonstrating our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of professionalism among our faculty and staff is of utmost importance. Section 1012.32, Florida Statutes, requires that: "To be eligible for appointment in any position in any district school system, a person must be of good moral character . . . Instructional and noninstructional personnel who are hired or contracted to fill positions that require direct contact with students in any district school system or university lab school must, upon employment or engagement to provide services, undergo background screening. . ."

In accordance with Board Policies 1121.01, 3121.01 and 4121.01 *Employment Standards and Fingerprinting*, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) conducts employment history checks of each candidate's previous employer(s), reviews each affidavit of separation from previous employers, and screens instructional personnel and school administrators through the use of educator screening tools. M-DCPS also conducts background checks, which include criminal background fingerprinting and drug tests for all potential employees before they are officially hired.

The primary purpose of a thorough background check is to identify any red flags or potential risks that may compromise the safety of students. While ensuring that individuals with a history of misconduct, violence, or criminal behavior are not hired as school employees is crucial for maintaining a secure learning environment, it is also important to have the capacity to identify any past incidents or patterns of inappropriate behavior, so that the District can make informed decisions about whether a candidate is suitable for employment.

M-DCPS also offers professional development/training, including Title IX and Sexual Harassment Training, in defining inappropriate behavior. Recent incidents regarding accusations related to faculty and staff allegedly engaging in inappropriate conduct with students warrant a need for a thorough evaluation and self-reflection of our current procedures. By taking proactive and reflective measures, M-DCPS demonstrates a commitment to maintaining a safe learning environment for students and ensure that schools continue to be places where students feel secure and protected. By offering continuous training we can ensure that there are clear guidelines and expectations regarding appropriate and inappropriate behavior and raise awareness in the schools to identify and potentially report misconduct.

In addition, expanding the partnerships and dialogue among the State Attorney's Office, M-DCPS Police, and the Miami Dade County Police Department, specifically the Special Victims' Bureau, Sexual Predator and Offender Unit, can provide critical information and strategies for preventing and recognizing potential misconduct.

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

ACTION PROPOSED BY

MARY BLANCO:

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

1. Review, examine and analyze current hiring practices by conducting a comprehensive review of the existing employment screening and hiring process, determine whether there are opportunities for improvement, with a particular emphasis on the background references and previous employment screening processes;
2. Review and re-examine communication protocols for faculty and staff to ensure that employees' interactions with students are appropriate, efficacious and professional;
3. Review and re-examine protocols to ensure that employees, parents and students are aware of the proper channels for reporting any concerns or suspicions related to inappropriate conduct or relationships;
4. Revisit current professional development opportunities and if determined feasible and appropriate, enhance or create training sessions for all faculty and staff members, as well as parents and students, on appropriate, professional employee-student interaction. If determined feasible and appropriate, this training should include clear guidelines on recognizing and reporting any behavior that may be considered inappropriate or indicative of potential employee misconduct;
5. Revisit the collaborations and dialogue among the State Attorney's Office, M-DCPS police and Miami Dade County Police from the Special Victims' Bureau, Sexual Predator, and Offender Unit to provide ongoing input and assistance concerning matters involving employee misconduct;
6. Provide a report to the Board at the Personnel, Student, School & Community Committee Meeting on April 10, 2024.