

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

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REVISOR
AT DAIS
BY
BOARD
ACTION

SUBJECT: REVIEW AND IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOL SAFETY

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

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

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) remains committed to ensuring the safety and security of its schools, employees, community members, and most important, its students. This has been and must always remain a priority of the School Board, Superintendent, and school and district staff. M-DCPS is one of a minority of school districts in the State of Florida, that has elected to hire, commission, employ and retain its own sworn law enforcement officers in-house, and place them at schools in a collaborative partnership with school administrators and school employees. This commitment has been shared by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) and its members employed with the M-DCPS Police Department and municipalities throughout the county.

The issue of school safety and security was initially amplified and elevated in the State of Florida and again throughout the nation following the tragedy that took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018. Consequently, the district, state, and nation increased proactivity in the provision of attention, resource, and strategy to improve school security and student safety.

As a part of this effort, on March 9, 2018, Governor Rick Scott signed into law the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act (MSDHSPS). This law, among other initiatives, requirements, and strategies, provided an initial \$400 million investment to keep students safe in school and enhance the provision of support to address mental health. One critical component was the requirement that a safe-school officer be present at each school in the state, and that all safe-school officers must be sworn law enforcement officers. In addition to the initial investment of \$400 million, provisions outlined in Section 42 of the MSDHSPS further stated that beginning the 2018-2019 school year, *“the sum of \$97,500,000 in recurring funds is appropriated to the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Education in the Aid to Local Governments Grants and Aids---Florida Education Finance Program category for the safe schools allocation. These funds were in addition to the safe schools allocation funds appropriated in the Florida Education Finance Program in the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 General Appropriations Act.”*

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The provision of these additional resources represented a tremendous enhancement to improving school safety and security at schools in Miami-Dade County and around the state. To meet these new MSDHSPS requirements, M-DCPS more than doubled the hiring of additional new safe-school officers within a 4-year period. Since 2018, M-DCPS has hired more than 354 sworn officers to work in schools throughout the district. This rapidly expanded the presence of school officers at all schools---requiring the immediate hiring, training, equipping, and assignment of law enforcement personnel at schools---including elementary schools---which historically did not have school resource officers assigned. In this relatively short time span, M-DCPS has now become one of the largest school-based police departments in the country. The hiring of these additional officers was also followed by the appointment of 108 new principals, as well as over 100 new assistant principals.

The explicit work of a school principal and school resource officer though distinct, should understand intersection and integration in an educational setting. Doing so, requires understanding that school safety is an integral part to teaching, learning, and successful school operations and should serve as the fulcrum of collaborative efforts. These distinctions, however, should be guided by an understanding and agreement of the lines of demarcation between education and law enforcement.

As with educational professionals in an educational setting, along with ensuring school safety, another goal related to the provision of safe school officers in schools was to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community by investing in healthy, positive relationships with students, staff, families and the community. In fact, healthy programs champion the NASRO (National Association of School Resource Officers) "*Triad Model*" of school-based policing which categorizes the role of a School Resource Officer in three interrelated concepts: mentor, educator, law enforcement officer. These roles are listed in order of importance as they provide an appropriate framework for School Resource Officers to prioritize their work with students. They also underscore what is most valuable to SRO programs.

Even though the goals of a School Resource Officer program align well with the strategy of most principals and building administrators, there is a significant amount of communication, collaboration, coordination, and calibration that must occur between school administrators and SROs in their building to ensure strategic and partnership success and effectiveness. A critical element which provides an opportunity for improvement in the safety and security of schools, was the daily collaboration and coordination among school administrators and safe school officers. Such collaboration will ensure that the educational work of school leaders and law enforcement work of school resource officers are strategically aligned and mutually supported.

A healthy relationship between school site administrators and the officers is requisite to ensuring the safety and security of students, staff, and members of the community. As is the case in any relationship, one must do the work of building trust and respect to ensure positive outcomes of the partnership. Thus, the Board, Superintendent, District, school site administrators, and law enforcement partners, as well as other relevant stakeholders, must be intentional and deliberate in their examination, reflection, assessment, and improvement of partnerships around school safety and security.

A strong, connected and collaborative relationship between the school principal and safe school officer is a great asset in school safety. As with curriculum, or any program in a district or school environment, periodic evaluation is critical to success.

As the District continues to review and strengthen its safety and security measures and strategies at schools, a review of programs, protocols, practices, and/or policies that ensure and maximize collaboration and coordination among school administrators and safe school officers should be considered and implemented.

This item seeks to direct the Superintendent to review school-based partnerships around school safety and security; where feasible and appropriate, establish a working group comprised of principals, safe school officers, district staff, and any relevant collective bargaining, community, and/or parent representative to review and discuss the school-based partnership governing school safety and security and solicit feedback for improvement; where appropriate, review, develop, and/or implement protocols and training designed to improve and strengthen school-based partnerships and clarify roles governing school safety and security; where appropriate, review and/or initiate any policy formulations and/or amendments; and provide an update to the School Board no later than December 2, 2024.

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

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

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

1. review school-based partnerships around school safety and security;
2. where feasible and appropriate, establish a working group comprised of principals, safe school officers, district staff, and any relevant collective bargaining, community, and/or parent representative to review and discuss the school-based partnership governing school safety and security and solicit feedback for improvement;
3. where appropriate, review, develop, and/or implement protocols and training designed to improve and strengthen school-based partnerships and clarify roles governing school safety and security;
4. where appropriate, review and/or initiate any policy formulations and/or amendments, and
5. provide an update to the School Board no later than December 2, 2024.