

SUPERINTENDENT'S BULLETIN

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News for School Board Members and District Personnel



Dear School Board Members and District Personnel,

Welcome Back Everyone,

I am so pleased that this Opening of School has been practically perfect. That's a tongue twister, but so true. My goal this year for everyone who is involved with our schools to feel loved, valued and respected is taking hold throughout the district. Each school makes positive things happen differently, but the effort is there and it's clear that we are on the same page. It's easy in the beginning to support one another but when the going gets rough, that's the time we can really let kindness and understanding take hold. As you know only too well, a little recognition goes a long way with students, but it also makes a difference with adults. If you tell a colleague, you like something that he or she does in the classroom or compliment the way students are managed, you can make a person's day. Don't be stingy with praise! We all like to hear it, especially our kids. Use praise generously and see the results.

Yours in education,
Terri

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

The start of school brings the start of assessments for the 2023-2024 school year. Students will again be participating in the FAST Progress Monitoring program that tests students in grades K-10 in English Language Arts and grades K-8 in Math three times per year. The first testing window opened across the state on August 10th, 2023, and concludes on September 29th. Results are available to students within 48 hours of completing the assessment and are available to view in the FAST Family Portal for 3-10 (K-2 results will be available at the end of the testing window)-

<https://fl-familyportal.cambiumast.com/#/>

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Superintendent Theresa Axford addressed the Greater Florida Consortium of School Board Members last week, sharing the district's focus on marine environment and how we work with local partners as part of our educational programs. Dr. Sue Woltanski, President of the GFCSBM, invited the Key Largo School Everglades Ambassadors, with their teacher Pam Caputo, to talk to the members about their efforts to save the Everglades fragile ecosystem and the contributions made by famous advocate Marjory Stoneman Douglas. Mrs. Beth Rosenow had some of her Coral Shores High School students on hand at the Mote Marine Lab site to talk about their expanded work with coral restoration. Partnerships with United Way of Collier and the Keys, Reef Relief, Marine Lab and the Ocean Guardian Program have provided MCSD students with opportunities to explore our unique environment while learning how to protect the Keys.



Pictured above:
Dr. Woltanski, Superintendent Axford with
students from CSHS Reef Restoration



Pictured above:
KLS Teacher Pam Caputo, Superintendent Axford and Dr. Woltanski with
the KLS Everglades Ambassadors

EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

We are off with a nearly a full staff. Each of our public schools has access to Speech, Physical and Occupational Therapists, in addition to, enhanced Behavioral supports available to all 10 of our schools starting day one. We welcome Lindsay Gillespie to the Lower Keys as part of the behavioral team made up of Maryanne Nickle, Dr. Kyle Sheer, Dr. Christina Rodriguez with direct support from the University of Florida in our long term partnership. As we close out our small ESE American Recovery Act funds, we are proud to share that 99% of the dollars went directly to the ESE classrooms and teachers (small amount was indirect cost and mileage).

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

Summer is always the busiest season for Finance & Performance Team! This past week Finance closed the FY2022-23 Financial Book, and now we are working on the Annual Financial Report (AFR) due to the Board on September 5th. We are always proud of our AFR and our excellence in Financial Reporting. At the same time, we are making some final adjustments for our Final Budget Book FY2023-24, which is also due to the Board on September 5th. It was a wonderful budget season! All the Principals and Department Heads took this budget very seriously and did an extraordinary job of right-sizing their budgets for this year. We should be in good shape as we move forward in the 2023-24 school year.

Internal Services has been working very hard on several projects this summer. The most significant projects are new furniture for classrooms and media centers, RFP for the new Third Party Benefits Administrator, and updating our Purchasing Manual with the new purchasing authority thresholds. Internal Services is handling its workload like a CHAMP! All projects are heading to the finish line.

Payroll Department is ahead of its game! Continuously improving their process and procedure ensures all employees get paid on time and correctly. We also did have our first Health Fair at all three Lower, Middle, and Upper Keys. We want everyone to come back to the school year healthy and ready. A big THANKS to Elena and her team!!!

And we can never forget MIS Department. They hold a very important key to our success. They're keeping our ERP & SIS system up and running 24/7. Bringing us all to the newest and latest technology with the MCSD App and the Student Online Registration.



HUMAN RESOURCES AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

This year, 91 educators attended the 2023-24 New Teacher Orientation. After a continental breakfast, Mr. Russell, Executive Director of Personnel Support & Instructional Leadership, introduced Mrs. Axford to welcome educators new to the Monroe County School District. Our Superintendent presented the Florida B.E.S.T and NGSSS Standards with school climate, culture, professional support and iBelieve procedures. Mrs. Acevedo, Deputy Superintendent and Mrs. McPherson, Executive Director of Student Support Services, also spoke to start the day. The educators were in and out of group rotations where district presenters provided sessions in the areas of Federal Programs, Ethics, Certification, Professional Learning, MCSD Induction Program, ESE, Focus 101, Electronic Security, AVID, Payroll, Benefits and UTM. Lunch with an optional vendor fair and an afternoon Cookie Break provided lots of surprises. We are very grateful to our fabulous sponsors where donations awarded at least two awesome prizes for each educator. Ending the day at 3:30 pm, both new and experienced teachers shared how they felt supported and prepared to start the school year. Offered in Canvas to all educators, we will continue with a virtual orientation where resources can be referenced throughout the year. This will also enable teachers hired after August 1st to benefit and satisfy their New Teacher Orientation requirements.

OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

We are looking forward to a safe school year! A safe school is defined as “where teaching and learning are not distracted; disruptions are minimized; violence, drugs, bullying and fear are not present”. We are in process of finishing up the School Security Risk Assessments. We appreciate school administration and law enforcement’s assistance in completing these important reviews. We have also just completed the first phase of radio system upgrades at several of our district schools. Director of Safety and Security Alfredo Vazquez says, “A friendly reminder that all school employees need to have their ALICE training completed by September 15, 2023”.



TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Teaching and Learning Team has been busy supporting new and returning teachers with professional learning in the days before school started. First day expectations, utilizing Focus, AVID, IBelieve and our Healthy Living Initiative were just a few of the sessions provided by the team in an effort to provide back-to-school learning that was important for the first day of school. The team continues to provide support with school walk throughs, School Improvement Planning assistance, data analysis and professional learning.

