

SUPERINTENDENT'S BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 10, 2024
ISSUE 48



News for School Board Members and District Personnel

Dear Team Monroe,

We're reached the 19th day of school already and it's time for progress reports to go home. Please take a moment to look at those students who appear to need some assistance to be successful in your class. Have a chat with him or her and offer some support. That's really the ticket to creating an atmosphere that is hopeful and productive for students. If we remember back to all the things we learned about becoming teachers and making a difference in the lives of students, failure was not a part of the picture. We have to embrace the thought that students don't want to fail, but they may need a relationship with you to push them forward. It is very important to realize that EL students should have the opportunity to earn grades that are equivalent to the grades earned by general education students. Teachers should work collaboratively with the ESOL contact to make instruction comprehensible to the student at his/her level of English language proficiency. EL students will receive grades based on their progress in acquiring English skills and progress towards mastery of benchmarks and grade level standards. EL students may not be penalized or given a failing grade if curriculum, instructional strategies, materials, and assessments have not been accommodated and/or modified to meet their language needs. Documentation of such strategies, accommodations, and/or modifications is required. That's why it is important to have conversations with the student and the EL contact before issuing a failing grade.

We know that "Relationships are the Key" to a productive future. Make sure to know the types of help a student can get at your school be it - before school tutoring, afterschool tutoring, support during lunch or through a paraprofessional in the classroom or perhaps you supervise your own tutoring opportunities - make sure to share these avenues of support with the students. Top performing students may need similar kinds of supports and a pat on the back to keep them moving forward as well, if we catch all students before they feel overwhelmed, and failure is knocking at their door, we can have great impact on their academic success.

Yours in education,
Terri Axford

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

September marks the start of our Fall EOC (End-of-Course) retake exams for high school students. From September 9th through October 4th, students will have the opportunity to retake their Civics, US History, Biology, Geometry, Algebra 1, or FAST Grade 10 ELA assessments. Students may choose to retake exams for various reasons, such as improving their course grades, meeting graduation requirements, or aiming for qualifying scores for the Scholar Diploma designation. It's crucial for students to take advantage of these testing opportunities to fulfill their graduation requirements.

As we shared last month, students in grades K-10 are currently participating in FAST Progress Monitoring. You can view your student's results at: <https://fl-familyportal.cambiumast.com/#/> If you have any questions about testing, please contact your school for scheduling details.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Schools are busy with Open House and special Title I nights that provide an opportunity for parents to see what their child is doing in school and what resources are available to support them.



Pictured Above:
Superintendent Axford with KWHS
Principal Rebecca Palomino

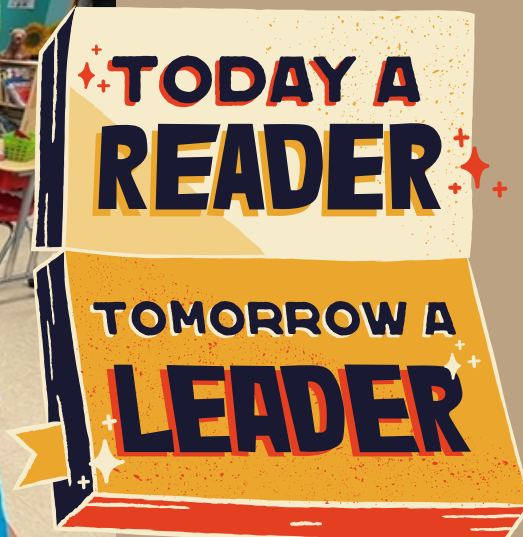
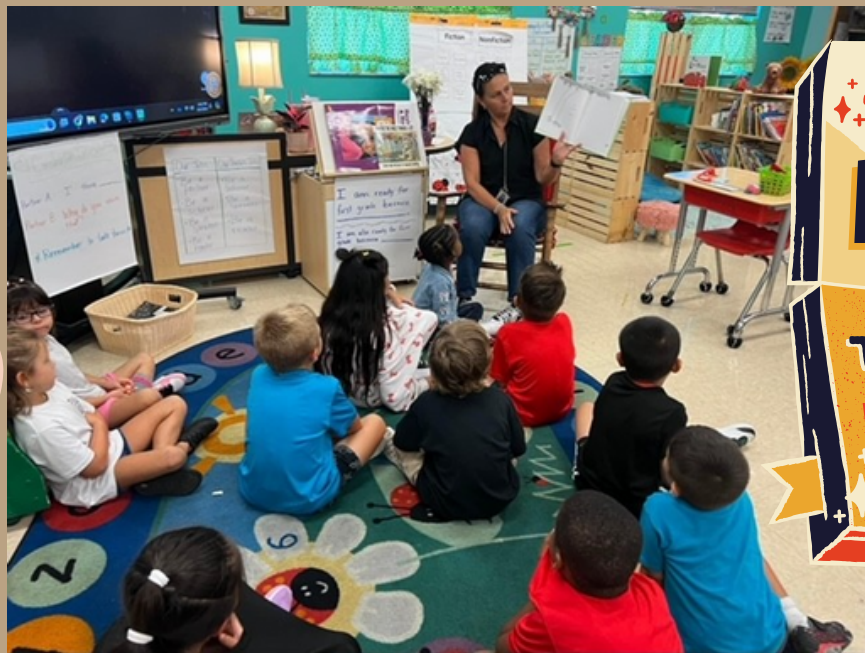


Parents sign in at Poinciana's Title I Night
Open House.

Literacy is a key focus for our district this year. Friday was National Read a Book Day and students are encouraged to read every day. Here are some tips to help students enjoy more reading time:

- Create a reading routine by establishing a special time when parents and children can sit together with books. Take turns reading a page, listen to a child read aloud or discuss the story.
- Allow your child to select books that interest them. School media specialists are trained to help students select books with engaging content that captures their attention and makes reading enjoyable.
- Incorporate reading into daily life by integrating reading into everyday activities. This can include reading signs, recipes, directions to a game or something interesting they may have found online or in a magazine.

Pictured to the Right:
HOB Assistant Principal
reads to students on
National Read a Book
Day!



COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Key Largo School 4th grade students took a field trip to study the environment. They measured temperature, salinity and water clarity using a Secchi disk. Our students have many opportunities for hands on learning both in and out of the classrooms. With our many community partners, we are able to provide real world experiences that enhance the curriculum and our goal to have students become stewards of the environment.



EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

On September 4th, a dedicated team of MCSD leaders welcomed facilitators from the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) to complete the District Best Practices for Inclusive Education (BPIE) assessment. The collaborative effort involved in-depth discussions, sharing of insights, and strategic planning to ensure that MCSD practices align with the highest standards of inclusivity. With the District BPIE now complete, the focus will shift to School BPIE, where teams are being assembled to complete the triennial assessment.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to Ja-Ronika Veldheer (AP- KWHS), Jessica Giusti (Teacher- SCS), Kevin Walden (AP- SLS), Ashley Mellies (Math Coach- GAE), Nicole Smith (Alternative Ed. Coordinator), Hannah Fisher (AP- KLS), Heidi Roberts (Literacy Coordinator), Daliana Goins (Threat Management Coordinator), Kyle Sheer (ESE Specialist), Christina Rodriguez (ESE Specialist), Jennie Gans (ESE Trainer), Dawn Starratt (ESE Program Specialist), and Lesley Thompson (Director of ESE) for their invaluable participation and contributions.

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

The Payroll and Benefits teams continue to work diligently, ensuring all employees are paid accurately and receive their benefits in a timely manner. As we approach our busy season, the Benefits team is gearing up for Open Enrollment and the MCSD Wellness Days, which promise to be impactful for our staff. A big shout out to the entire Payroll and Benefits team for their hard work and dedication! Your efforts do not go unnoticed, and we appreciate all you do to support our district!

The Finance team is proud to present the Annual Financial Report (AFR) for FY23-24 and the Final Budget Book for FY24-25 to the Board on September 10th. This year's achievements reflect our unwavering commitment to financial excellence. We are pleased to report that the district remains in a strong financial position at the close of the 23-24 school year, positioning us for continued success. Our success would not have been possible without the collaboration and patience of our School Principals and Department Heads throughout the budget process. Their efforts were instrumental in achieving a streamlined, balanced budget, and we are deeply grateful for their partnership. As we move forward, we remain dedicated to upholding the highest standards of financial reporting and stewardship. Here's to another year of excellence in financial management!

Internal Services is pleased to announce the rollout of a new and improved electronic procurement platform through OpenGov. This new procurement system will leverage artificial intelligence to facilitate the issuance of bids and assist the district in reaching a much wider audience of prospective contractors and suppliers to support a variety of school projects. We would also like to welcome Neilany Garcia as she transitions into the Property Control Specialist position with continued assistance from Maria Portal. Neilany, Taylor and Gaelan are working hard towards additional improvements anticipated to bring further streamlining to property control and records management procedures. More information about these changes will be made available at the September 17 office manager's meeting. Stay tuned!

Over the past few weeks, Management Information Systems has completed the submission Survey 6 (DOE derives school districts' start of year enrollment counts); Survey F (Adult Education summer term enrollments); Survey G (Adult Education enrollment counts for new term); Survey R (monthly SESIR data). We have also consolidated and updated the 24 Credit graduation requirements within Focus.

Along with daily Risk Management, Workers Compensation and Student accident-related issues, Risk Management continues to recognize potential hazards that could affect school operations, such as emergencies, critical incidents, and health and safety issues on a daily basis to ensure that all employees can come to a safe and healthy work place.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Our Human Resources team participated in the Coral Shores College Fair, where we had the opportunity to interact with all juniors and seniors. We discussed the potential for careers in teaching and learned more about their future plans. With over 30 post-secondary programs represented, it was an excellent chance to engage with students and highlight our presence. Additionally, our department has successfully onboarded 25 substitute teachers this school year. This effort ensures that our schools are well-supported, and that education continues smoothly in the absence of regular teachers.

OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

Prioritizing a safe and conducive learning environment for students is critical for effective teaching and learning. Ensuring that schools are free from distractions is a key part of this effort. The completion of the annual Florida School Security Risk Assessment is a significant step towards this goal. This assessment helps school officials at the district, state, and local levels identify threats, vulnerabilities, and appropriate safety controls. Praise is due to the school administration and our law enforcement partners for their dedication and collaboration in this important task.

Director of Safety and Security Alfredo Vazquez says, "Regular reviews of our security posture and practices are essential to ensuring the safety of our students and staff."



TEACHING AND LEARNING

We are excited to share that our district is fostering a vibrant culture of literacy across all content areas! Literacy Coaches and Media Specialists met last week and are collaborating with teachers to promote a love for reading and writing, integrating literacy activities in subjects beyond English Language Arts. Together, we are creating a community of readers and writers who are well-prepared for academic success!



21st Century the afterschool program at Gerald Adams Elementary is in full swing. This year, we're teaming up with the Key West Art and Historical Society to bring creative enrichment to our 2nd and 3rd graders. Students had an opportunity to learn all about Suzie Zuzek and her iconic designs for Key West Hand Print Fabrics. After the lesson, they channeled their inspiration into creating their own watercolor and crayon resist designs.

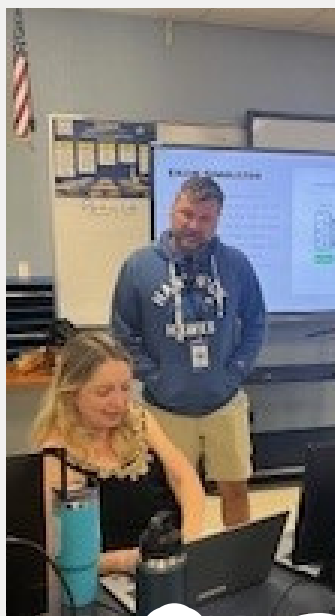


CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

Throughout September and into October, MCSD students will be celebrating Founders Month, Hero's Day, Hispanic Heritage Month, Constitution Day and Celebrate Freedom Week. Schools have lots of great events planned to recognize each event and some of the highlights will be included in next month's Superintendent Bulletin.



Middle school Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers recently gathered at Marathon High School for an intensive training session led by Mike Roy from Sugarloaf School. The focus of the training was on the new WordPress Certified Editor certification. This certification equips students with the skills to create their own websites, and will give students a head start in web development. Among the dedicated educators in attendance were Michele Barry from Key Largo, Tracy McDonald from Marathon, and Lisa Castillo from HOB. A special thank you to Mike Roy for generously sharing his expertise and helping teachers bring this valuable skill set to MCSD students.



NEVER
STOP
LEARNING

CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

Taylor Thomason, an eighth-grade student from Sugarloaf School earned second place in her category in the Junior Division at the State Science and Engineering Fair in Lakeland in April 2024. Taylor earned an additional prize, an invitation to apply to Thermo Fisher Scientific Junior Innovators Challenge (JIC), for her work with The Contribution of Polyethylene Plastics on Ocean Acidification. Taylor has just received the distinction of being chosen as part of the top 300 entries, from 1,862 applicants from across the United States. This distinction comes with a monetary prize, JIC merchandise, and additional prizes. Taylor will also be recognized on a published list of the top 300 Junior Innovators across the United States, shared through JIC's Facebook page, Twitter feed and Instagram. Taylor intends to use the monetary prize to help finance this year's STEM fair project, a continuation of her investigation into the effects of Polyethylene plastics. The next step will take place on September 18th, when 30 finalists will be announced from the top 300 entries. Good luck, Taylor! We are routing for you!

