

SUPERINTENDENT'S BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 11, 2025
ISSUE 53

HAPPY
Valentine's Day

News for School Board Members and District Personnel



Dear Team Monroe,



Today Representatives of our accrediting agency Cognia will present, at our School Board Meeting, a certificate to Key West High School for 100 years of continuous accreditation. My experience with accreditation began 40 years ago when Cognia was called the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. That association became Advanced- Ed and now they are Cognia. Essentially it is the same group that has grown. Accreditation is a highly valued designation. It is hard won. We just went through reaccreditation last year and the process is painstaking. Led by Christina McPherson and Leslie Holmes, we examined every phase of our programs both financial and educational. Your principals conducted numerous walk-through's using the tool prescribed by Cognia to guarantee that our classrooms were serving the needs of students at a high level. I am so proud to be associated with a school district that has a long-standing accreditation background and very proud of all of you for making this happen with your continued fine work with our students. What a great blessing to have continuous accreditation of all our high schools and now of all of our schools as a mark of our great work. And now Key West High School which is our oldest secondary school is being recognized for 100 years of excellence; this is a great distinction for Monroe County Schools and one to celebrate.

Yours in education,
Terri Axford

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

We are approaching our final six weeks before the spring testing season begins! Schools should be sharing out information on testing schedules and computer adaptive testing with parents and students in preparation for the spring session. Remember that attendance is important and coming to school well rested and ready to learn makes all the difference during the spring testing sessions.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Florida State Teacher of the Year Jaime Suarez came to visit schools in the Florida Keys. She was able to see AVID strategies in action and programs that are offered in the district such as fashion design and auto mechanics. Mrs. Suarez was able to hold a fish caught by members of the Switlik fishing club and she was able to talk to members of Marathon's Florida Future Educators of America. The MCSD District Teachers of the Year cadre, along with this year's school Teachers of the Year, were able to have a roundtable discussion about the exciting things Mrs. Suarez has seen during her travels to schools across the state as well as about professional learning and innovative teaching strategies.



Congratulations to Key West High School for winning the Academic Challenge Cup this year. Coral Shores High finished second, College of the Florida Keys Academy third and Marathon High fourth in the intensely rigorous competition.



CONTINUED COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Dexter Butler Court was dedicated last week in memory of the late educator, coach and father who made a huge impact on students, colleagues, and the community. The MCSD Board voted in October to dedicate the floor to Coach Butler. The ceremony to unveil the court design and officially dedicate it was attended by his family, friends, former students, and many members of the community.



EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

The Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Department is excited to continue its partnership with The Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) to provide enhanced support for students, parents and families. CARD will be visiting the Lower Keys on February 11th and 12th to offer direct assistance to classrooms, focusing on behavior and curriculum development. Additionally, CARD will host a lunchtime parent workshop at Gerald Adams on February 11th. This workshop will be led by Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) who speak English, Spanish, and Creole, ensuring that all parents can participate in the discussion and benefit from the valuable insights shared. Families and schools interested in reaching out to CARD for support can contact them directly. CARD's contact information is as follows:

Phone: 1-877-616-1936 - Email: info@centerforautism.com - Website: centerforautism.com

Parents and school staff can also reach out to the Monroe County School District (MCSD) ESE Department for assistance in connecting with CARD. This partnership aims to provide comprehensive support and resources to enhance the educational experience for students with autism and related disorders.



FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

The Finance team is gearing up for another budget season—yes, it's that time of year again! While the process remains the same, we're focused on streamlining and enhancing it this year to better support our schools and departments. Thank you to all our schools and departments for your patience, support, and collaboration each year during budget season. Your dedication makes the process smoother and more effective!



MIS is concluding the collection of student and staff data for submission to DOE for Survey 3. All data will be analyzed and cleaned in order to maximize state funding and compliance requirements, in coordination with each school and district department.

The Payroll team continues to work diligently to ensure every employee's payroll is accurate and processed on time. At the same time, our Benefits Department is dedicated to continually finding and enhancing benefits that support your health and well-being.

Risk Management continues to maintain a positive approach in providing MCSD and its employees protection against accidents, natural disasters as well as liabilities. This proactive approach continues to assist in minimize losses.

The Internal Services department is proud to announce Mr. Joe Thomas has accepted the position of Director of Internal Services. Gaelan did a tremendous job of creating forms and processes. It is our goal that Joe is a resource to help schools and departments with any questions related to these forms and processes. He will not be able to transition to the new position until March 31, but as soon as he gets to the Keys we will be glad to introduce him to everyone! In the meantime, please feel free to reach out to me!

HUMAN RESOURCES AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Recruitment remains a top priority for the Department of Human Resources. The HR Team plans for recruitment include returning to the UCF, FAMU, FSU and UF campuses to recruit education students. We invite applicants interested in Monroe County School District to speak with Human Resources Representatives every Wednesday from 4 to 5 pm in our "[Get To Know MCSD](#)" meetings being held on Microsoft Teams. The HR Team is holding a February meeting to update all District Office Managers with the MCSD early hiring timeline, which is assisted by active recruiting. To also be covered are the importance of the volunteer process, Exit form processing, out of field Survey 3 requirements, Intent To Remain form completion, annual reappointment and reviewing and refining many internal processes.

OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

The Food Service Department has been enjoying our partnership with Sea Level Social Media. We have been able to share content that showcases our staff and food items we serve our students. It provides our families with valuable information about the program and the guidelines.

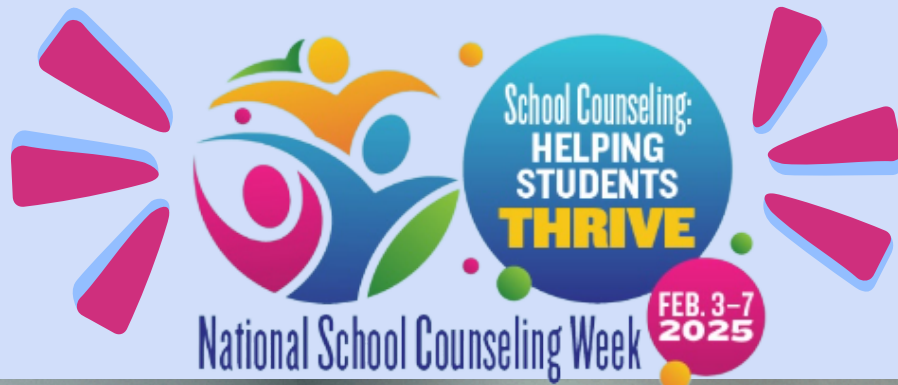
Last month we were able to showcase Poinciana Elementary School's glow party for Literacy Week on our Facebook & Instagram pages and their love filled decor for Valentines Day, which is filled with love.

"Its been great to be able to easily share pictures and information about the school nutrition program with the community. The students like to see the cafeteria joining in on their celebrations." says Effie Jackson, the Food Services Director.



STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

As National School Counseling Week comes to an end, please join us in thanking our dedicated school counselors. Thank you, for your dedication, compassion, and hard work in guiding and supporting our students. Your impact goes beyond the classroom, shaping futures and making our schools a better place. We deeply appreciate the support you give our students and staff each day.



CONTINUED STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

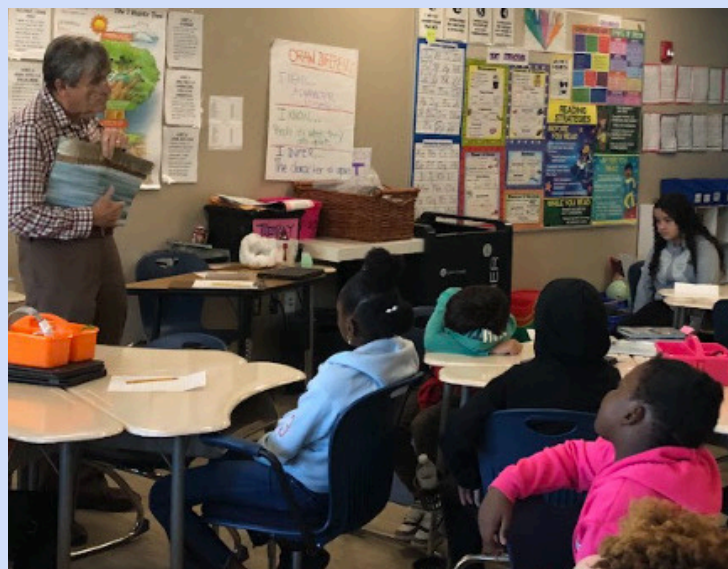
Elisa Levy, an accomplished author, consultant, and former United Nations conflict resolution expert, recently delivered an engaging presentation to school counselors and social workers. She equipped these dedicated professionals with practical strategies for managing difficult communications and challenging situations. Additionally, Ms. Levy emphasized the importance of self-care, offering valuable insights on how to incorporate it into their daily routines. Her session was both informative and inspiring, leaving the attendees better prepared to support their communities.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

We are incredibly grateful to our dedicated School Board and community members for their enthusiastic participation in this year's Celebrate Literacy Week. Your commitment to reading aloud to the students of Monroe County has not only brought stories to life but has also ignited a love for literacy across our district. Your support during our construction-themed week has been truly inspiring, and we are fortunate to have such passionate advocates for education and literacy. Thank you for building a brighter future with us, one book at a time!



Pictured Above:
School Board Member, Dr. Sue Woltanski



Pictured Above:
School Board Member, Mr. John Dick



Pictured Above:
School Board Member, Mrs. Yvette Mira-Talbott



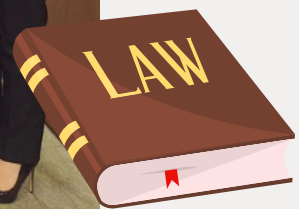
Pictured Above:
School Board Chair, Mrs. Mindy Conn

CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

February 1st marked the beginning of Black History Month, a time when students across the District will celebrate the numerous contributions of African American heroes to our nation.



The Key West High School Mock Trial Team won the 16th Circuit District Championship against Coral Shores. The competition was held at the Key West Courthouse with Judge Mark Jones presiding. They will now advance to the Florida High School Mock Trial competition, where they will compete against teams from the other 19 judicial circuits in Florida.



The excitement is building as the Key West Chamber of Commerce proudly awarded \$250 checks to sixteen talented girls from Key West High School. These budding designers are set to dazzle at the CTE Fashion Showcase on May 10, 2025, at 7 p.m. at the Key West High School Auditorium. Each young designer will use these funds to bring their unique fashion lines to life, celebrating a blend of innovation and creativity. Adding to the excitement, the Chamber has generously granted \$1,000

CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

to the Culinary Program at KWHs. This ensures a delightful array of refreshments, prepared by our talented culinary students, will be featured at the Showcase.



Thank you!



On January 31, MCSD students from Sugarloaf School and Horace O’Bryant had the opportunity to embark on an educational field trip to Fort Zachary Taylor State Park for the Civil War Heritage Days. They were fully immersed in history, witnessing captivating reenactments and enjoying a fun-filled day of learning about the past.

