

SUPERINTENDENT'S BULLETIN

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ISSUE 54

News for School Board Members and District Personnel



Dear Team Monroe,

Welcome to Spring – A Season of Growth and Opportunity!

I love the Spring especially in the Florida Keys. It helps me gain new perspectives on life and work; it also solidifies my focus on education and the impact we make each day on the lives of students and their families. This season reminds me that growth is possible when we nurture and support one another. Together, we are stronger through collaborating with and perhaps inspiring the people around us.

We may be small in Monroe County, but we are mighty. Our success is built on teamwork, and the shared belief that every student can learn. By working together, we create an environment where students thrive, both academically and behaviorally.

Let's embrace the opportunities for instruction in all aspects of school life with renewed energy and purpose, doing so will surely guide our students toward success.

Thank you for your passion, commitment, and the incredible work you do every day. I say that because I see the work that goes on in our classrooms. I have visited over 100 this school year and I am so gratified by what I see. I also visit cafeterias, transportation offices and school offices. I can see how much you strive to deliver excellence; it is energizing. The season of growth is here—let's continue our work and make it extraordinary, together!

Yours in education,
Terri Axford

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

The Spring testing season is quickly approaching. From March 3rd through March 28th, the College Board Suite of Assessments will be administered. All 8th and 9th-grade students will take the PSAT 8/9, all 10th-grade students will take the PSAT 10, and all 11th-grade students will take the SAT. Additionally, 12th-grade students have the opportunity to take the SAT if they wish to increase their score or earn a concordant score. Individual schools will share their schedules.

The BEST Writing Assessment will be administered to all students in grades 4-10. The window will open on March 31st and close on April 11th.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Superintendent Theresa Axford, Deputy Superintendent Amber Acevedo and School Board member Yvette Talbott joined the Monroe County Contingency in Tallahassee for Florida Keys Day and to meet with Legislators. The School Board group visited Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz who renewed his commitment to supporting them get the funds necessary to move to Bruce Hall on United Street. The Bruce Hall Building will house the district's central offices once it is refurbished. Trumbo Point will be vacated to avail the development of 150 units of affordable housing. The Monroe School District Reps also met with Senators Ana Maria Rodriguez, Alexis Calatayud, and Ed Hooper. Senator Hooper is the Chair of the Appropriations Committee in the Senate. He gave excellent advice on securing the funding needed by the School District. The team also met with Representative Mooney who shared his full support of the School District Project.

Board Members Dr. Sue Woltanski and Talbott spent time in Tallahassee for meetings with other state board members and legislatures discussing the issues facing education today.



Pictured Above:

Deputy Superintendent Amber Acevedo, Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz, Superintendent Theresa Axford, and Senator Rene Garcia the Turlington Building in Tallahassee.



Pictured Above:

Board Members Dr. Sue Woltanski and Yvette Talbott with FADSS President, Senator Bill Mumford in Tallahassee.

Marathon's Justice Lee is a state champion and added a silver medal to her accomplishments after winning the traditional event in a tight contest at the state level. The Dolphins team earned second place in the state with Ella Dunn earning two fifth place medals and Ayme Maradiaga a bronze. Ella Evans earned a sixth-place medal to help propel the team to the second-place finish. Coral Shores High earned four medals with Jennille Arias bringing home a silver and bronze, Sydney Eysenback a fourth and sixth place and Vanessa Gabriel a tenth-place medal.

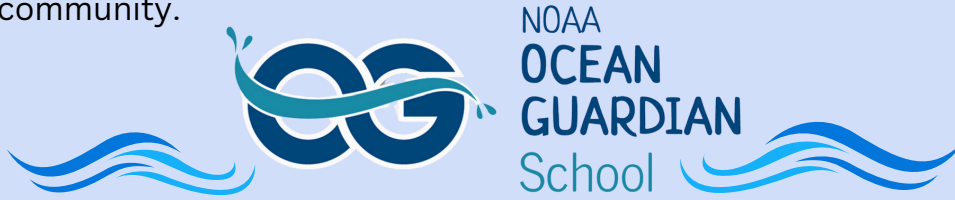


Pictured Left:
Weightlifting State Champ Justice Lee with her Marathon High School teammates who earned second team in the state.



CONTINUED COMMUNITY RELATIONS

We are growing the next generation of Ocean Guardians! Last week kicked off the first NOAA Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Guardian School District dig at Poinciana Elementary School. Students, Key West Police Department Officers, United Way of Collier and the Keys, along with many others got their hands dirty for a great cause. They planted native greenery to help reduce stormwater runoff, assembled take-home marigold seed packets, and worked together to bring their student-designed rain garden to life. We are creating environmental stewards that care about our community.



Pictured Above: Donna Tedesco, School Board Member Yvette Talbott and Christina McPherson at Poinciana Elementary's garden.



EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

FAA testing is off and running! The Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA) is designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate in the general statewide assessment program, even with accommodations. It aligns with Florida's alternate academic achievement standards, known as Access Points, which reflect the core intent of the standards at reduced levels of complexity. The assessment is administered through tasks that are tailored to the students' needs and abilities. Currently, 99 of our students from grades 3-12 are taking the FAA to ensure their educational progress is accurately measured and supported. A big thank you to our dedicated teachers and test coordinators for their hard work and support with this assessment!

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

The Payroll team continues to work diligently to ensure every employee's payroll is accurate and processed on time. Additionally, don't forget about the valuable benefits available to you! Teladoc Medical (Free), Dermatology, and Mental Health Services are part of your benefits package. These services provide convenient, virtual healthcare options to support your well-being. We encourage you to take advantage of these resources whenever needed.

We are pleased to announce that Internal Services has successfully completed the annual inventory for the 2024-2025 school year. Neilany extends her heartfelt thanks to all staff members who contributed to this important task! As we move forward, Neilany will be shifting her focus to the Records Destruction process, scheduled to take place during the summer. If you have any records or property needs, please do not hesitate to reach out. Neilany is here to assist you. Internal Services would also like to remind everyone to process their pcard transactions in a timely manner. This is very important, especially this time of year, with budget planning beginning. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to Taylor for assistance.

Budget season is in full swing for the Finance Department! As we prepare for the upcoming school budget meetings in early April, our team is diligently crafting budget documents to ensure every school receives the right-sized allocation. Our goal remains the same—providing schools with the resources they need to start the 2024-25 school year strong.

As we come back from our break, let us all prioritize reviewing our safety measures and risk management strategies to maintain a safe and supportive learning atmosphere.

MIS is currently focused on support for posting Q3 grades and generating report cards. The team is preparing to publish this year's summer school staff registration, while also finishing final data submissions for Survey 3 to DOE.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Instructional Transfer Requests must be submitted in Frontline Recruiting & Hiring by April 1st for the 2025-2026 Year. Instructional Transfer Requests must be provided to Principals. In selecting teachers for new positions created at or before the beginning of the school year (March 31st to preplanning), first consideration, per Article XIV, Section 1(D), which includes qualifications, training, experience, annual evaluations, and time in the district, shall be given to members of the current Transfer Request staff list who apply before applicants outside the school system are considered. (UTM Article XV : Section 5)



Pictured Above:

Daniella DeLucia and Jerian Winn representing
MCSD at Florida Colleges

Monroe County School District has been recently represented at The University of Central Florida, Florida A&M University, Florida State University and The University of Florida. MCSD Human Resources met with College of Education staff to ensure our partnership opportunity for student placements for teacher candidates. Our partnerships enable HR to speak in education classrooms of students to express our interest in hiring students upon graduation at \$62,100. We also provide recruitment information on how to become an educator, the FL certification process, MCSD professional opportunities, Get To Know MCSD through weekly Teams Meetings. We also provide support in areas like student teaching, practicum, internship, and field experience requirements at Monroe County School District.

OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

The Monroe County School District actively promotes a safe and supportive learning environment through our “See Something, Say Something” initiative through the Sandy Hook Foundation. We strive to empower students, staff and community members to speak up when they witness concerning behaviors, threats or potential safety risks. By encouraging open communication, the District fosters a culture of responsibility and awareness, where everyone plays a role in maintaining school safety. Whether it’s reporting bullying, suspicious activity or signs of mental health struggles, individuals are urged to take action rather than remain silent. This proactive approach helps prevent incidents before they escalate, creating a more secure atmosphere for learning and personal growth. “We want every student and staff member to know that their voice matters and can make a difference,” said Alfredo Vazquez, Director of Safety and Security.



STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Last week, the Educational Coalition for Monroe County and its student group, Marathon High School Champions for Change hosted a week of leadership and prevention opportunities at MHS. This included presentations by Jake White and Tomas Barraza from Vive18, Captain Zach Mason of the US National Guard, DEA Special Agent Oscar Negrón, AHEC, Womankind, Billy Davis, Inc., and other community organizations. MHS students attended prevention assemblies on Monday, spring varsity athletes also had the opportunity to attend sessions on Protect your Game, a national program. On Tuesday, middle school students attended a Positive Vibes Prevention Palooza while parents and community members attended sessions with a focus on drug and underage drinking prevention as well as information about local resources. On Wednesday, students participated in lunch activities and on Friday, one hundred and twenty students from KWSHS, CSHS, and MHS attended a countywide leadership forum at MHS. The leadership forum was opened by Superintendent Axford who discussed the role that leadership plays in students’ daily lives. A special thanks to the Monroe County Coalition and everyone else that made this week possible.



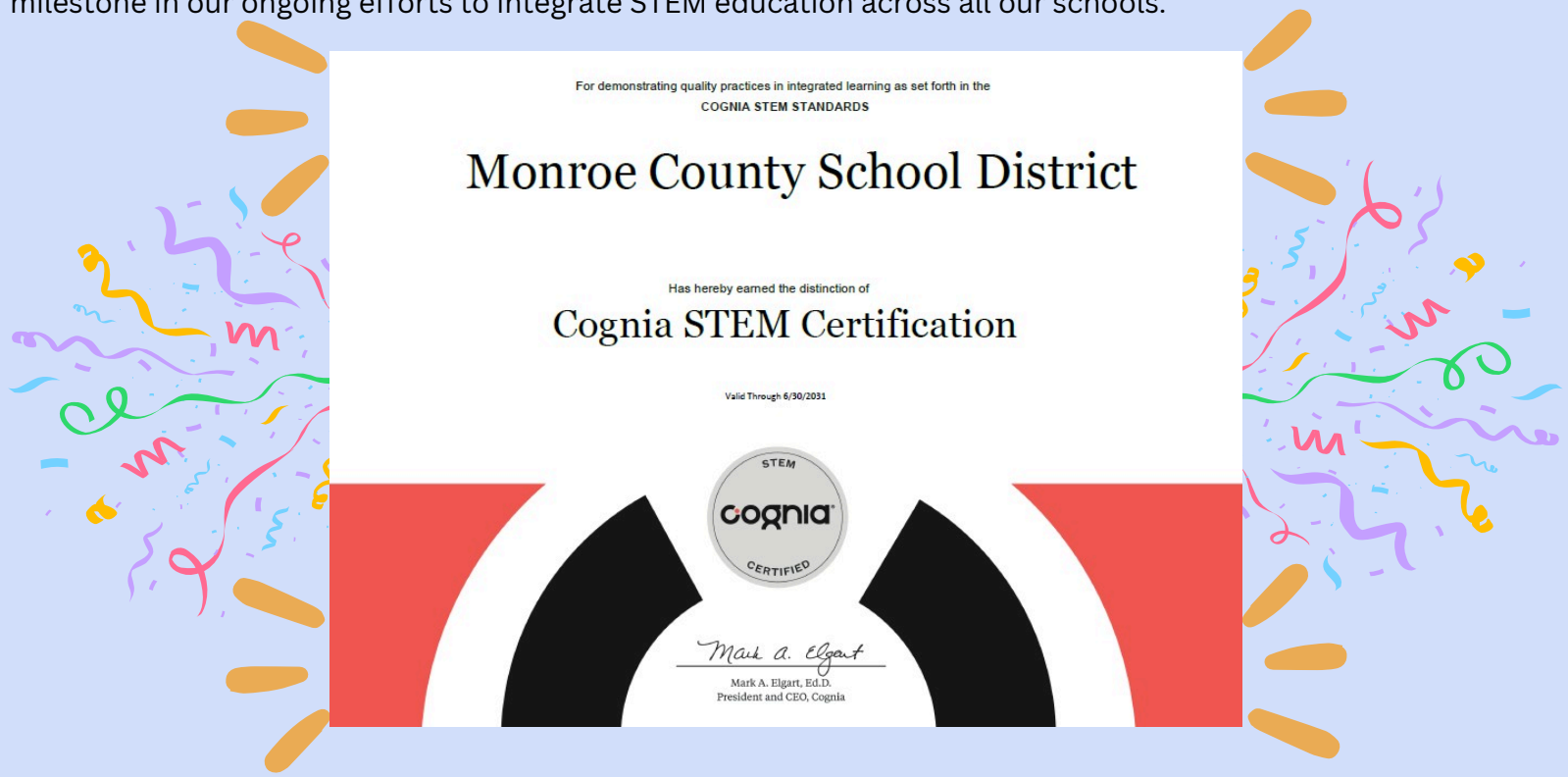
TEACHING AND LEARNING

Impressive events are happening in STEM across our district! Our Regional STEM Fair winners will be heading to Lakeland this week to compete at the state level. Our talented scientists will be showcasing seven projects across diverse categories, from environmental and biological sciences to engineering. In the junior category, we proudly have Taylor Thomason and Collin Palomino (SLS), Mikaela Aguirre and Ainsley Golden (OSCS), and Jacobo Gutierrez and Carlos Smith (TVM). Representing the senior category from CSHS are Violet Matthews, Rachel Rusch, Gabby Thomas, and Teagan Eriksen. We are rooting for them as they represent Monroe County School District with pride!

Good Luck!



We are also thrilled to announce that Monroe County School District has officially earned STEM accreditation. Achieving this prestigious recognition is the result of a rigorous process, including extensive documentation, district-wide STEM initiatives, exceptional educational experiences led by our talented educators, and thorough evaluation by an international board of directors through Cognia. This accomplishment marks a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to integrate STEM education across all our schools.



The career fairs, located at Coral Shores High School, Marathon High School, and Key West High School at the end of February, were each a tremendous success, providing students with an excellent opportunity to connect with over 40 local employers. Each event featured a diverse range of participants, including military recruiters, utility companies, banks, grocery stores, and construction firms, offering students a broad spectrum of career options to explore. Eager to learn more about their potential career paths, students actively engaged with representatives from various industries, gaining valuable insights into different professions.

CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

The events were thoughtfully organized by CTE Coordinator Caroline Bleske, with the support of dedicated staff at each school and local businesses. These career fairs were an invaluable experience for students, helping them make more informed decisions about their future careers.



Events supporting English Language Learners (ELL) have been taking place throughout the district. ELL Nights have provided families with valuable information, resources, and fun activities. Teachers and staff have engaged in professional development opportunities, such as Ellevation Strategies, 7 Steps to a Language-Rich Interactive Classroom, and Unlocking the Potential in Multilingual Learners. Additionally, the annual WIDA ACCESS testing for English Language Learners is coming to a close, marking the end of an important assessment period.

