

SUPERINTENDENT'S BULLETIN

MAY 30, 2023

ISSUE 35

News for School Board Members and District Personnel



Dear School Board Members and District Personnel,

Thanks to everyone for making this the best school year in recent times. It was truly a recovery from Covid-19 like no other. We have many happy stories to tell and many of them appeared on the District Facebook pages throughout the year; I am a devout follower and I love seeing all the things that are going on. I felt an atmosphere of joy in most buildings whenever I visited.

Students were better acclimated and seemed happier overall. I know that teachers had the essential roles to play in all of this and I am grateful for their perseverance and endurance throughout the year. There were still some behavior issues to deal with but for the most part, students did better.

We were champions in so many areas, it is amazing. Athletic competitions and academic ones, we were medaling at the state level. I am glad that things have progressed as they have; I look forward to next year with excitement. I hope that the summer brings relaxation and restoration to you and your families.

It will be August before we know it once again! See you then.

Yours in education,
Terri

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

This year the brand new Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) tests were implemented across the state. FAST Testing now occurs in grades K-10 three times per year and provides almost instant feedback to students and teachers. It has been amazing to chart our schools growth and progress throughout the year with this new tool. FAST data provides benchmark level detail to teachers about the learning progress of their students and broader insights into classroom, grade level and school wide trends.

CONTINUED ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

Our schools have done a tremendous job of implementing the new testing format this year. Currently, we are in the remaining weeks of our Spring testing and schools are busy scheduling their final sessions for the 22-23 school year. An exciting development this year is that FAST ELA, FAST Math and the BEST Algebra and Geometry EOC tests are reporting their scores daily in the testing reporting portal. Parents and students are also able to view scores through the FAST reporting portal that is available through the FOCUS Parent Portal.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

As the 2022-2023 school year comes to a close, there are many great things that took place in schools to strengthen our community relationships. Each school held Community Open Houses that took many forms across the district. From family movie nights to Hispanic Heritage celebrations, our schools invited families and the community to see the outstanding work our students and teachers are doing every day. Great programs are in place to help our students' become stewards of the environment including coral restoration spearheaded at Coral Shores High School, Everglades Ambassadors at Key Largo School and Ocean Guardian at Sugarloaf School. STEM projects were outstanding both at the district and state level and MCSD had multiple awards at the state competition.

The arts are growing, and students are shining in theatrical shows such as Aladdin, Beauty and the Beast, The Wiz and Mean Girls. CTE continues to expand, and students continue to amaze with their Adobe and technology certifications, accomplishments in the Fire Academy, beauty in cosmetology and Fashion Design, criminology, digital media and culinary. We launched our My MCSD App this year, providing an instant connection to grades, attendance, websites and district information. School social media sites are flourishing with information, daily school happenings and accolades, keeping the community informed and sharing the good news.



High School libraries were completely renovated, and the students love the modern seating and ability to collaborate. Across the district, students earned the Superintendent Remarkable Reader Awards in large numbers, showing a love for literacy that is promoted by our teachers and media specialists. In athletics, high school sports are growing in numbers and our middle school programs are expanding.

CONTINUED COMMUNITY RELATIONS



Individual and team accomplishments were many. We congratulate our state champion, Xavier Aarington from Coral Shores High School, who earned the gold medal in weightlifting and will be attending the US Naval Academy after a year in the Academy Prep School. Marathon's Dylan Ziels was one of the top pitchers in the nation, the Key West Conchs Wrestling earned its 16th District Championship and all three high schools had medal winners at the State Track Meet. The Lady Conchs Softball team are Regional Champs again!

Graduates from the Class of 2023 are going places, including KWS's NJROTC standout Adrian Horner was appointed to West Point in the fall. It's been an outstanding year and MCSD has a lot to be proud of!



Pictured above:
Xavier Aarington from Coral Shores High School



Pictured above:
Dylan Ziels from Marathon High School



Pictured above:
Adrian Horner from Key West High School

EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

As the school year is coming to a close in the ESE Department, many things are ramping up. We begin writing our annual grants, creating professional development opportunities, closing existing budgets, and much more to prepare for the 2023-2024 school year. Some of the things we have in store for next year are a wide variety of professional development opportunities for teachers, paraprofessionals, and school administrators. Topics will include classroom management, professional crisis management, individual education plan goals and a brand new resource, the ESE Landing Page, which houses a tremendous amount of resources for teachers and administrators. We are so fortunate to have such an amazing collaborative and solution-focused staff.

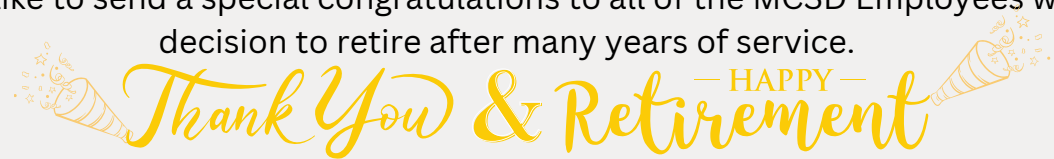
FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

Finance has finished all budget meetings with Schools and Departments. We are now waiting for the 2023-2024 budget report from the FLDOE, so we can finalize our next school year's budget. This time of the year is also our audit season. The new State Auditor Team is here physically at the Admin Building. The whole Finance and Performance Team is working hard with the State Auditors for this year's Operational and Financial Audit. We are also preparing ourselves for summer school and closing the 22-23 school year. We're working with all schools and departments to review open Purchase Orders, making sure vendors submit their invoices on time for the year-end check run! Payroll, Finance, and MIS Departments are working together on rolling forward all positions and staff to the next school year, getting ready for schools to do their Internal Roster Moves this summer.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Department of Human Resources proudly sets the district standard supporting guidance to MCSD toward staying on track with hiring, progressive discipline, important dates, and educator certification. This enables the district and schools to satisfy requirements set forth in contracts and by the FDOE. Providing educator and administrative contracts, annual acknowledgments, evaluation support, educator reporting, reappointment of staff and collective bargaining are a major HR importance. Current top priorities consist of recruitment, retention and hiring of highly qualified staff and educators for the 2023-2024 school year. This includes stay surveys and expanding our reach with job availability and applicant support. The HR Team is working with Duval Street Media to expand our marketing and recruitment efforts along with holding local Job Fairs at Baby's Coffee, Coral Shores High, Key West High and the Marathon Public Library. Continued Get-To-Know Monroe County School District meetings on Teams with invited applicants are providing very positive results. Most applicants are indicating they are being scheduled for interviews and currently looking into obtaining area housing. We set our goal toward 100% qualified staff on-boarded for the start of the school year. With new MCSD Strategic Plan efforts, HR has been working on supporting school leadership with improving teacher attendance and having sound retention rates. In closing, we are gearing up to prepare for our New Teacher Orientation, which will take place on August 1, 2023.

We would also like to send a special congratulations to all of the MCSD Employees who made the decision to retire after many years of service.



OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

During the 2022-2023 school year **Construction & Planning** completed all phases of the Sugarloaf School project finishing with a ribbon cutting and Guinness World Record on May 05, 2023!



Pictured above:
Brett Unke, Principal of Sugarloaf School with holding the Guinness World Record certificate for the most people doing the Baby Shark Dance!



Pictured above from left to right:
Amber Acevedo, Superintendent Theresa Axford, Mindy Conn, Brett Unke, Christina McPherson, Harry Russell, Pat Lefere, and Austin Tran join together for a celebratory photo.

The Tommy Roberts Stadium project progressed through various design phase approvals to finalize construction documents for a May 2023 start date. The Founders Park Baseball Field project will close out the school year as the bid committee convenes on May 23 to select a general contractor and begin negotiations for the Design Build project. Now, we're focused on gearing up for more construction and planning in the coming year to include Big Pine Academy, Reynolds School and Bruce Hall.

CONTINUED OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

Food Services was able to complete the beautification project with Marathon Middle/High School, Poinciana Elementary School, Key West High School, and Sugarloaf School receiving updated serving lines which provide more food choice options for our students, reducing the time it takes for them to get their meals, while adhering to mandated food safety regulations. Coral Shores High School serving line received a geometric paint design with their school colors and some wall graphics to give the space a fresh new look. "We look forward to implementing phase two of the beautification project for the serving lines at our schools adding digital menu boards, salad bars, coffee beverages, specialty entrees and baked goods", says Effie Jackson, the Food Services Director.

The **I.T. Department** had a successful 2022-23 school year providing quality technology and systems support, wrapping the year up by providing all staff members with a new device. We look forward to continuing our success in 2023-24. Cybersecurity awareness training will remain a priority as we continue to teach, learn and do business in a connected environment. We are planning to refresh a portion of our ClearTouch panels as well as some of the student device inventory ensuring the technology in use in our classrooms is reliable.

CONTINUED OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

It is a very busy time for the **Maintenance Department**. We are in full swing supporting end of year performances, awards, and graduations. As soon as these end, starting May 30th, we will shift gears into summer project mode. Just as if last year didn't happen we race to prepare the schools for the coming year with more scheduled projects, preventive maintenance and the inevitable unscheduled repair work that will need to be completed.

Safety and Security had a busy and challenging year from the implementation of ALICE, Intrado Safety Shield, adding Text Tips to all charter schools and moving from ERIP to the Navigate360 Emergency Management Suite. We had mandated level one and two CSTAG training courses for new team members and we purchased and deployed 120 Motorola radios and repeaters for schools to assist enhance communications. The start of the 2023-2024 school year will bring more changes to threat assessments, emergency drills and the Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool (FSSAT).

The **Transportation** team is ending this school year of hard work and dedication on an extremely high note. Three new in-house trained school bus drivers will be earning their Class B CDL along with passenger and school bus endorsements. Even better, two of the drivers will be assigned to Sugarloaf School where the greatest shortage of drivers exists! Transportation is looking bright heading into the 23-24 school year. With additional drivers, routes can be reconfigured to alleviate over-crowding and reduce ride time. In addition, more academic, extracurricular and athletic field trips can be supported.

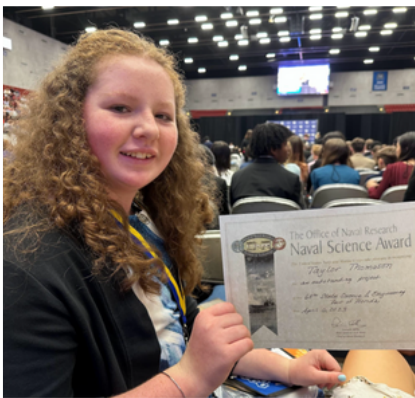
TEACHING AND LEARNING

A year in **STEM** Rewind!

The STEM program continued an amazing partnership with the Everglades Literacy Foundation & Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation! Many MCSD teachers from grades K-12 were part of trainings focusing on educating students about the wonderful ecosystems around us, the importance of conservation, and much more!

A bit closer to home the Monroe County Education Foundation continued their support in the implementation of Project Lead the Way (PLTW) in our schools. HOB was spotlighted for their success in implementing this STEM program during National STEM Week, via live broadcast from Ms. Hilary Melon's classroom. We are well on our way to providing this wonderful curriculum in each school from Key West to Key Largo.

MCSD swept the State STEM Fair in April, bringing home 1st place in the state for the Junior Division, 3rd place in the Senior Plant Sciences, 4th place Junior Division in Engineering, and many more! STEM wrapped up the year with the annual SeaPerch competition at Founder's Park in Islamorada. Students, teachers, and district personnel had a blast competing and spectating this event. Marathon Middle School took home 1st place, Key Largo with 2nd, and Sugarloaf in 3rd.



CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

Career and Technical Education

Coral Shores Automotive Training Shop had its 5 year ASE (The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence) re-evaluation on May 2. Although not final, the report from our ASE evaluator was very positive. The evaluator, Mark Armbrust, was most impressed with the amount of administration support the auto program receives from the Monroe County School District and the school administration. Under the shop’s instructor, Jorge Bosque, the program has certified more than ten students so far this year. Having one or more certifications from the ASE is one of the highest levels of certification a mechanic can receive.

Also, this year two CSHS students were the first place recipients of the Universal Technical Institute’s Top Tech Challenge in Miramar, Florida. Ryan Born and Evan White both received \$10,000 grants at one of UTI’s 16 technical schools nationwide.

Monroe Skills and Monroe Computes:

Last year our students earned over 1200 certifications in over 50 nationally recognized certifications, and this year we are poised to meet or exceed that number. Thanks to John Padgett, our students earn incentives that motivate them to become high achievers in nationally recognized industry certifications.



Key West High School Fashion Club:

Getting ready to present their 2nd annual Fashion Show. This year there will be double the designers. Please congratulate these very talented students and their teacher, Ms. Lauren Albury, as they continue to hone their talents.



Key West High School Culinary:

Lisa Rivard and her students celebrated their passing of their national certification exam for Food Management with a celebration at local restaurants all sponsored by Bill Lay, President of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association.



CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

The winners of the 2nd grade Color the Higbee contest that was sponsored by the Navy League of Key West were invited to attend a VIP tour of the USS Higbee. They had a terrific time and were even able to meet some of the crew including the Commanding Officer of the ship.



The Key West Chamber of Commerce at their April General Membership Meeting recognized Key West area teachers that were selected by their school administrators.



CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

This week members of the ESOL team and the ELA department had the opportunity to collaborate with district and school leadership teams in Broward and Lee Counties. From best practices learned during their visit, they revised essential components of the ESOL program. Three district literacy coaches aligned appropriate course selection with newcomers, progress monitoring, and establishing a supportive learning environment to accelerate language acquisition and standards mastery. The secondary grades EL contacts developed a professional learning framework that they look forward to implementing in the 2023-24 school year based on proven, research-based model of instruction specifically designed to meet the needs of ELs, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). SIOP provides teachers a structure for how to teach what students need to learn in terms of both the language skills in English and the specific content students need to learn, along with their grade-level English speaking peers. Additionally, they are prepared to launch International Academies at the middle and schools within the district, where newcomers will begin their journey in the American school system as a bridge to the mainstream classroom. Keep an eye out for innovative instruction that will accelerate our English Learners learning as we empower them to belong, excel, and succeed!



Pictured in front of the Broward County School District Administration Office (L-R): June Walsh, Literacy Coach; Mayredys Gonzalez, Literacy Coach and EL Contact; Natalie Liz, ESOL Coordinator; Leidy Monteagudo EL Contact and AVID Excel Site Leader

Literacy:

MCSD has partnered with the University of Florida Lastinger Center to provide small group training for PK-3rd grade teachers. The UF Lastinger Center for Learning Flamingo Small Group Literacy Instruction is a comprehensive, research-based five-step model that aligns instruction to student data, a phonics scope and sequence, and emphasizes oral language development throughout the lesson. 93 teachers will participate in a regional three-day institute on May 30th, June 1st and 2nd for initial training. Throughout next school year, the UF team will visit each elementary school to continue the training cycle. We are dedicated to developing the premier PK-3rd grade teaching cadre in the state.



CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

Counseling & Intervention Services:

Per state legislation, each year every school district must certify to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) that at least 80 percent of school personnel have completed Youth Mental Health Awareness Training. Between June 2022 and May 2023, 689 MCSD staff completed initial certifications, and 228 completed 3-year renewal certifications in the state identified evidence-based, nationally recognized program called Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA). Combining those numbers with our staff who certified over the last two years, our MCSD has now reached 93% trained in YMHFA. The absolute best part is that we, all of us together, are learning more how to identify and understand the signs of mental health concerns and substance use disorders and are providing more supports to those in need whether it's students, colleagues, friends or family. Thank you to all department leaders, administrators, and office managers for helping to make this a priority for your schools and departments. Please join us in also thanking our YMHFA Instructors – Mark Leffler, Linda Diaz, Marissa Means, Kevin Walden, Melissa Alsobrooks, Jennifer Bassett, and Daliana Goins (YMHFA Coordinator).



Student Services:

In January, the district was awarded an \$8.9 million dollar grant from the US Department of Education Office of Safe Schools. The purpose of this grant is to expand mental health services in schools. This five-year grant has allowed MCSD to hire nine additional school social workers. It also allows us to better address the well-being of our growing EL population by training 30 school counselors and school social workers to become bilingual.

Math:

MCSD is sending 16 teachers to the Florida Department of Education's B.E.S.T. Mathematics Professional Learning Event in Palm Beach June 26-30. This grant-funded event will include explicit, systematic training on content and implementation of the B.E.S.T. Mathematics Standards for grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12, and school leadership. Participants will actively engage in student-centered instruction as well as take part in a community of learners and leaders with their peer district. (I will be a facilitator for school leadership at this training)

As part of the grant, we are also sending teachers to the Florida Teacher Council of Mathematics (FCTM) to engage in best instructional practices in mathematics to include leadership opportunities in mathematics.