

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BULLETIN

DECEMBER 10, 2024  
ISSUE 51

News for School Board Members and District Personnel



Dear Team Monroe,

As we begin to wind up this semester of the school year, I am thankful for all the hard work that you accomplish to keep our students safe and learning each day.

I was at the State Superintendents' conference last week. One of the major topics again was School Safety. We can never let down our guard in this area. That is the consistent message that we hear from state officials. Hats off to our dynamic team of Alfredo Vasquez and Daliana Goins who keep us on task and ahead of the game in this area.

Enjoy the next few weeks of holiday festivities. Before we know it, it will be 2025.

Happy  
**Holidays**

Yours in education,  
Terri Axford

## ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

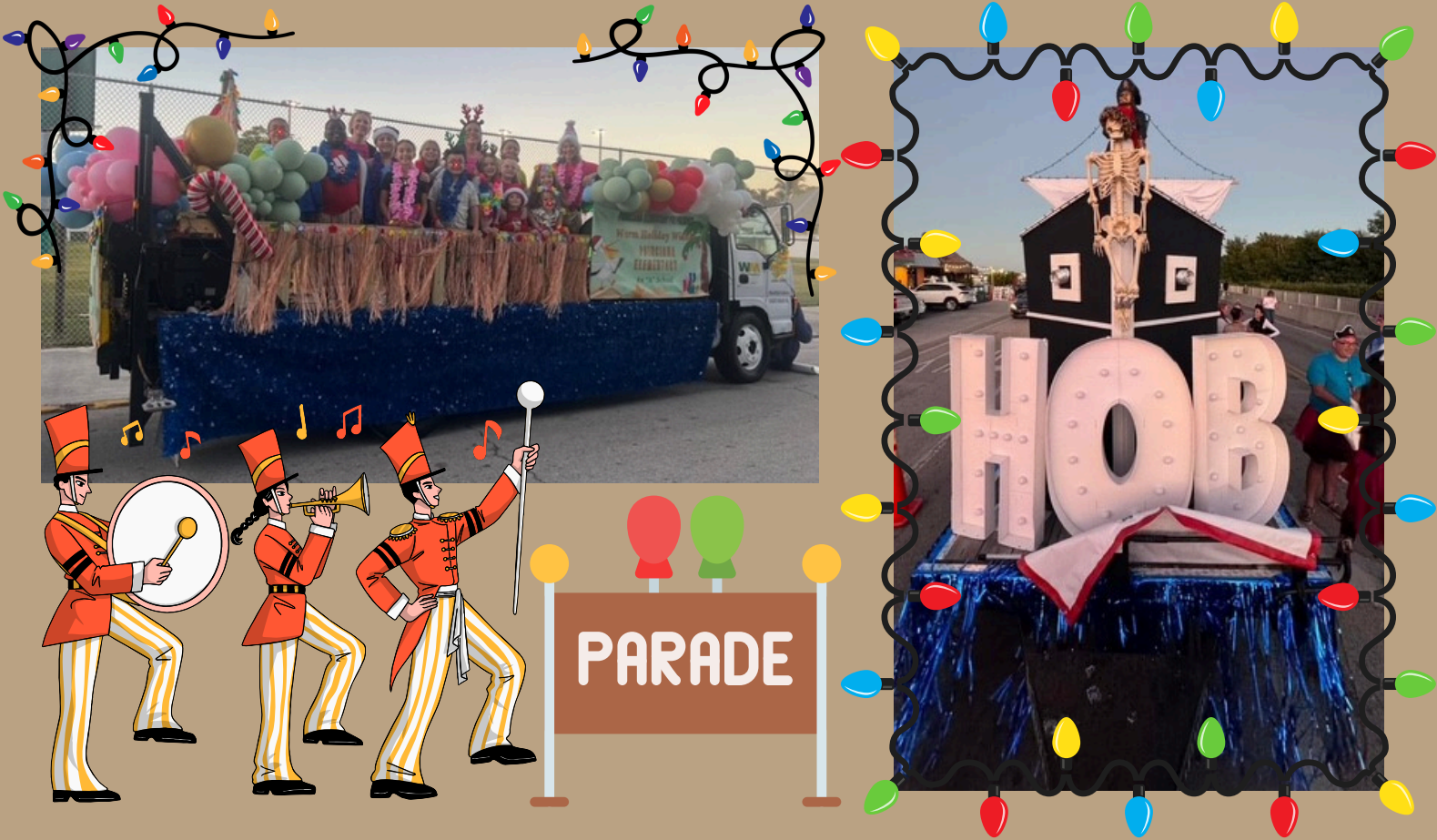
The second FAST Progress Monitoring window opened on December 2, 2024, and will close on January 24, 2025. Once these assessments are complete, our teachers and administrators will diligently analyze the assessment data to plan targeted instruction for our students.

Due to hurricane-related school closures, the High School End-of-Course (EOC) exams, FAST ELA Reading Retake, and the FCLE window have been adjusted. There will be two windows for these assessments: December 2–20, 2024, and January 6–17, 2025. Students will have one opportunity to take these assessments during these periods. Students may choose to retake exams for various reasons, such as improving their course grades, meeting graduation requirements, or achieving qualifying scores for the Scholar Diploma designation. It is crucial for students to take advantage of these testing opportunities to fulfill their graduation requirements.

Please contact your school directly for specific testing days for all of these winter assessment windows.

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Monroe County School District was well represented in the City of Key West's Annual Holiday Parade. Floats were entered by Horace O'Bryant School and Poinciana PTO with the Conchettes, Band and Bucanettes marching in the parade. The Conchettes were the 2nd place performance group and the Bucanettes were 3rd. Thank you to the adults and students who added festive cheer to the wonderful parade.



Key Largo School has been recognized as a Year 3 Ocean Guardian School by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary for their campus projects protecting the local watershed. Congratulations to the students and staff for being stewards of our environment!

*Congratulations!*



## CONTINUED COMMUNITY RELATIONS

With the holidays quickly approaching, schools are holding special evening events that include concerts, family nights and holiday activities. Students are busy with their progress monitoring testing and some fun holiday festivities. Be sure you check the school newsletters and Facebook pages so you don't miss out. Everyone wishes the staff, students and community a wonderful holiday and Happy New Year!



## EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

Pictured Sarah Sheer, Dawn Starratt and Kellie Niles lending a hand at the North Pole. Each year the ESE Department works with the Silverliner's Club and Head Start to make a very special trip to the North Pole at Key West International for our Preschool Students. The Sheriffs Farm is there with many animals, we had activity booths, celebrity book reading and of course Mr. and Mrs. Claus. Every child received a special gift and it was a wonderful way to start the holiday season. Thank you to all who supported and participated in making this event a huge success! Happy Holidays to from the ESE Department!



## FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

Survey 2 (Semester 1) student and staff data has been successfully submitted to DOE. In collaboration with each school, minor tweaks and updates to resolve any remaining errors will continue for the rest of the month. The new Focus Communication module continues to grow, and many schools are leveraging it to stay in touch with their students and families.

Risk Management continues identifying, assessing, and prioritizing potential hazards that could negatively impact our organization. This process includes evaluating both physical and operational risks, such as safety hazard, and compliance issues. Risk Management continues to ensure the safety and well-being of their employees, and maintain a safe workplace for all students and employees within Monroe County Schools.

The Finance team is pleased to announce the completion of our annual Financial Audit. We extend our sincere gratitude to all staff and departments who assisted in providing timely information and supporting the audit process. We are now awaiting the final step—our upcoming Exit Conference with the auditors—to review their insights and continue reinforcing our financial practices. Thank you for your collaboration and commitment to fiscal integrity!

It is inventory season! Internal Services recently completed on-site audits for fixed assets with all MCSD schools and departments and is pleased to report that no findings were found. Strong asset management is crucial to ensuring MCSD's continued eligibility for state and federal assistance, and it could not be done without the continued support of the dedicated school and district personnel who assist with completion of annual inventory and the on-site audits. Additionally, Internal Services is in the process of rolling out a new standard template for management of non-capital inventory, which should hopefully streamline inventory processes for all MCSD staff. Notices will be issued in the coming weeks with dates for completion of annual inventory in January. Stay tuned!

The Payroll team is proud to share that teacher evaluation raises were included in the November 15th paychecks. A big thank-you to the Payroll team for their hard work and dedication in making this possible! In addition, the Benefits and Wellness Committee recently organized three successful Wellness events, promoting health and building community (AHEC, Florida Health, Florida Blue) throughout the district. We extend our gratitude to KWHS, MHS, and CSHS for hosting these wonderful events, and to everyone who participated and contributed to their Wellness!



## HUMAN RESOURCES AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Instructional and Administrative Contracts for the 2024-2025 school year are available in the Employee Self-Service (ESS) section of Focus to review and sign as a pending Employee Agreement. Notices are also in ESS for educators to acknowledge they have reviewed their 2023-2024 Instructional Evaluation. Efforts are well underway toward enabling schools to hire educators required for the start of 2025-2026 school year. HR Staff is busy inviting and meeting with applicants in "Get To Know MCSD" online Teams meetings held on Wednesdays at 4:00 pm to support and assist with their decisions to apply and work in the FL Keys! In Frontline Recruiting & Hiring, a 2025-2026 Instructional job posting is open to provide a pool of applicants for schools to begin their efforts to fill teaching positions to become available for next school year.

## OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

The IT Department has been leading the integration and deployment of a new virtual reality (VR) solution, which will be piloted at Sugarloaf Middle School. IT Telecomm Specialist Carlos Alvarez had an opportunity to work Math Supervisor Amy Stanton and Trevor Tyler, Principal Sugarloaf Middle School, all under the direction of Superintendent Theresa Axford, to bring a new VR solution to change how students experience their education. Prisms VR is a spatial learning platform in which students learn core math and science through an immersive VR experience, providing the ability to kinesthetically manipulate math around them in a physical space.

Trevor Tyler said "Using the Prisms Pico 4 for teaching math and science to 7th and 8th graders will truly enhance student engagement. This immersive VR experience will not only captivate students but also empower teachers to create targeted, relevant lessons that reinforce retention. I'm thrilled by the opportunity provided by Superintendent Axford, IT Director Dr. Kolodziej, and Math Supervisor Ms. Stanton, and I can't wait to place these units in the hands of our students!"

## STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

On December 5, Key West International Airport turned into a holiday wonderland with the support of the Monroe County School District's ESE and Early Childhood Departments. The Silverliners, a charitable group of retired flight attendants, hosted the annual visit to the North Pole.

The airport's parking garage buzzed with holiday activities, including games, reading circles, and interactions with the Key West Police horses and Farmer Jeanne from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office. Upstairs, the Conch Flyer restaurant welcomed hundreds of preschool-aged children from MCSD and local private childcare providers to a festive feast featuring food, drinks, and heartwarming one-on-one moments with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Thanks to the Silverliners, every child enjoyed a hearty meal and went home with a brand-new Christmas gift to celebrate the season.



The district was awarded a one-million-dollar federal grant through the Department of Justice STOP School Violence program. This three-year grant will allow the district to hire two bi-lingual teachers to support a specialized four-week program for newcomer students, hire two part-time bilingual school-community liaisons, train staff on Trust-Based Relational Intervention, and provide support for students from licensed therapists. The objective is to provide wrap-around support for newcomer students so that when they enter their home schools they have a basic understanding of English to navigate the classroom and school, and to express basic emotions and needs.

## CONTINUED STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Additionally, they will learn behavioral expectations and how their school operates. The goals are to decrease risk factors for juvenile delinquency, improve sense of school safety and feelings of well-being for newcomer students, teacher climate, emotional regulation, and coping skills for newcomer students who have experienced trauma.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Teaching and Learning Team, along with the Superintendent and district staff, have been visiting classrooms weekly since the start of the school year. We are thrilled to see students taking ownership of their learning, working collaboratively, and employing critical thinking skills. It's clear that a Culture of Literacy is thriving across all our schools. Classroom walk-throughs by the administration and district team have been a top priority this year, supporting the implementation of state standards with a strong emphasis on classroom rigor.

MCSD is proud to announce the 2nd recipient of the IT Premier Pathway Silver Award. Derek Gasparico, a Marathon High School student, has earned his third Level 3 certificate for \$700. Derek has previously earned awards for ADOBE Visual Design, Entrepreneurship, and most recently, Device Configuration. These certificates all earn three college credits at any Florida college or university. Pictured is Principal, Christine Paul and Derek Gasparico.



Parents from our 21st Century program attended a healthy eating workshop hosted by the SOS Foundation, where they gained valuable skills in reading nutrition labels, creating well-balanced meals, and making smarter grocery shopping choices. The workshop marks the start of the SOS Foundation's partnership with our program, offering engaging, hands-on lessons for 2nd and 3rd grade afterschool students, along with workshops for parents.

## CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

Gerald Adams Elementary and Horace O'Bryant School kicked off December with their Literacy, STEM, and ELL Engagement Nights in collaboration with Title I. These exciting events welcomed students and their families for an evening of interactive reading and STEM activities, student showcases, and community vendor booths.

The Teaching and Learning Team and Federal Programs wishes everyone the happiest of holidays!

