

SUPERINTENDENT'S BULLETIN

MAY 14, 2025

ISSUE 56

News for School Board Members and District Personnel



Dear Team Monroe,

As testing continues, remember that your words hold immense power. Encourage your students—remind them they've worked hard, learned deeply, and truly deserve success. Praise their efforts, not just outcomes. Let them know it's normal to find some questions tough, and that persistence is key. A positive mindset isn't just helpful; it's essential. Confidence grows when students feel supported and believed in. Use the language of affirmation and resilience. When students trust their preparation and your belief in them, they perform better. Your voice can be the spark that turns anxiety into determination—so encourage students to be confident, positive and determined to do well every testing day and their scores will show it.

Thanks for all that you've done to prepare students for testing and to support their success in life. You all are truly amazing and it is a thrill for me everyday when I walk into classes and see your amazing work.

Yours in education,
Terri Axford

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

May is a busy month for assessments, with students across different grade levels actively participating in various tests. Students in K-2 began their FAST STAR Assessments on April 14th and are putting in their best efforts. FAST testing begins on May 1st for students in grades 3-10 in ELA and grades 3-8 in Math. Additionally, End-of-Course exams are being administered throughout the month for Biology, U.S. History, Civics, Algebra, and Geometry. The 5th and 8th Grade Science assessments will also take place.

High schools have entered a demanding schedule for Advanced Placement (AP) exams. Both seniors and underclassmen are also preparing for their final exams, bringing the academic year to a close.

To support students during this critical time, please ensure they arrive at school on time, well-rested, and ready to perform their best. Testing schedules for each school are available on their respective websites. If you have any questions or need further information, please don't hesitate to contact your child's school directly.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

On April 18th, students in the Firefighter I program at Key West High School took part in a critical milestone toward their state certification: the live burn training exercise. Under the expert guidance of Captain Anson, students donned full gear and put their classroom knowledge to the test in a controlled burn scenario—an essential hands-on component required by the State of Florida for Firefighter I certification.

Captain Smith provided real-time instruction as students navigated smoke-filled environments, fire suppression techniques, and teamwork under pressure. This immersive experience not only met a certification requirement but also gave students a powerful glimpse into the demands and rewards of a career in fire service.

We're proud of these future first responders and grateful to Captain Anson for his leadership and dedication to training the next generation of heroes.



EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

Four incredible teams of teachers, speech therapists, and paraprofessionals (from KLS, PKS, CSHS, and SSE) recently completed a year-long Environmental Communication Teaching training series. They worked together to help high-needs students initiate communication using assistive technology and environmental cues. Participants learned about the principles of environmental communication, planned classroom activities, and reviewed videos from their classrooms for group feedback. We are so proud of the work they put into the program! They learned so much, and their students averaged 24% growth in communication skills!

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

As we approach the end of the school year, it is important to reflect on the essential role Risk Management has played in supporting the safety and well-being of our students, staff, and visitors. I encourage all staff to report any facility concerns, security gaps, or incidents, no matter how small, so we can address them promptly during the summer months. Risk Management is a continuous process, and your observations are vital to maintaining a strong safety culture. Thank you for your commitment, vigilance, and partnership throughout the year. Together, we have made significant strides in protecting our school communities. We look forward to building on this foundation to ensure an even safer and stronger start to the upcoming school year. Have a safe and restful summer!

The Payroll team continues to work on ensuring effective and accurate payments to our dedicated staff. Additionally, our benefits team has been working tirelessly to enhance the employee experience, introducing new resources and tools to assist with benefit selection and management. These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to supporting the financial well-being of our employees and ensuring they have access to the best possible benefits packages.

Finance has successfully concluded all budget meetings with our schools and departments. A heartfelt thank you to everyone for your dedication, collaboration, and commitment throughout this budget season! Your efforts have been instrumental in ensuring a thoughtful and balanced financial plan for the upcoming year. Additionally, we welcome the State Auditors for the 2024–25 Financial Audit. As always, we stand ready to support a smooth and transparent audit process.

For the month of May, the Finance team would like to send out a friendly reminder that the following deadlines are fast approaching:

- **Requisitions:** The final date for issuing requisitions against the 2024-2025 budgets is now past. Only the following departments may now submit requisitions through June 13th: The Maintenance Department, the Transportation Department, the Information Technology Department, the Food Service Department, and the Federal projects. Any requisitions after June 13th will not be processed until July 3 against the 2025-2026 budget.

- **P-Card Purchases:** The school year is fast coming to a close. Reminder that all P-card purchases should be processed within FIVE days of the purchase. In order for the Finance Department to successfully close out the year, we will need to have all P-card purchases fully processed BEFORE the last day of school. Currently, MCSD has 180 P-card transactions pending approvals by their P-card owners and Departmental owners. Please help us prepare for the end of the school year by following up this week on any P-card transactions you currently have.

Below are some help aids on how to process your P-Card transactions. Should you have any questions do not hesitate to reach out to both Joe Thomas and Taylor Gandolfo.

- [Procurement Card Procedures Manual](#)
- Procurement Card Reference Page (Coming Soon)

CONTINUED FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

Property Control and Records Management: Within the next month, Neilany will be sending out invites for Internal Services Annual capital asset audits. School leaders will be receiving a random list of assets that will need to be located and audited in person by Neilany. To ensure a smooth process, we are asking that all items on the list be located before her arrival at the school. She also continues to prepare for a busy summer ahead juggling Records Management and Property Control. Please feel free to reach out to Neilany in regards to any questions you may have.

Wellness Committee

The Wellness Committee would like to congratulate Angela Ewing on winning the \$100 gift card for completing the MCSD wellness survey!

Your participation is greatly valued and helps shape the future of our schools.

We appreciate your dedication and willingness to share your insights to make a difference.

Enjoy your prize, Angela!

Thank you on behalf of The Wellness Committee.



Pictured Above:
Wellness Committee members Jennifer Oliva and Cheryl Garica with Angela Ewing.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Department of Human Resources supports Monroe County School District with important dates and educator certification guidance. This enables the District and schools to satisfy requirements set forth in contracts and by the FDOE. Timelines for providing educator and administrative contracts, signing of annual acknowledgements, educator reporting, reappointment of staff for the next school year, observations, evaluations and bargaining negotiations are all important priorities. While job postings are open year-round for bus drivers, aides, substitutes and Pre-K positions, the HR Team is working hard to recruit for the 2025-26 school year by expanding our reach with early job postings for highly qualified staff, administrators and educators. To assist with hiring considerations, schools are being updated with lists of educators requesting a transfer and those who have been released. Get-To-Know MCSD meetings continue every Wednesday at 4:00 pm on Microsoft Teams. Applicants are providing positive feedback indicating their excitement for upcoming interviews while looking into area housing. It's our hope that staff and educators enjoy a refreshing Summer and come back in August feeling supported by their HR Team!

OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

The IT Department has been busy with numerous projects recently, and while we eagerly anticipate sharing those successes with you once they are completed, we wanted to highlight a significant project that may have gone unnoticed, despite its powerful impact.

The project team conducted a comprehensive inventory of our entire fleet of student and district workstations. Through detailed data analysis, they determined that a four-year refresh cycle for our Chromebook devices is the optimal lifespan for these units

The team then established an annual refresh schedule, complemented by a maintenance vendor support agreement. This ensures our entire inventory is supported, eliminating the need for in-house repairs and....

CONTINUED OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

reducing our parts inventory. Between January and March of this year, the team successfully refreshed 5,031 student devices. We now have a predictable annual refresh rate to ensure maximum performance of our Chromebook fleet.

This same rigorous approach is now being applied to our teacher, lab, and district devices. By ensuring all our technology is fully managed, we can support future applications and program needs. This results in significant efficiency savings from minimized downtime, lower repair and replacement expenses, and reduced labor requirements.



Pictured Left:
Debbie
Arencibia and
I.T. Director,
Dr. Marlene
Kolodziej
moving
Chromebooks.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The South Florida Symphony Orchestra on April 16th entertained over 1,000 first and second grade students from Key West, Sugarloaf, Big Pine Key, and Marathon. Students experienced an outstanding performance by the Symphony of the classic, Peter and the Wolf. Students received dynamic and first hand musical education showcasing each instrument and the part it plays to produce an musical masterpiece.



TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Annual SeaPerch Underwater Robotics Tournament was held on April 16th at Founder's Park in Islamorada. Six schools—Key Largo, Plantation Key, Marathon Middle/High, Sugarloaf, Horace O'Bryant, and Sigsbee Charter School—participated with multiple teams competing to navigate their SeaPerch robots through an underwater obstacle course. This year's competition was particularly challenging due to wind-induced ripples that impaired visibility for the tethered robots.

The final heat concluded with a three-way tie for second place, with each team successfully navigating seven out of ten hoops. The teams were:

- The Blue Flamingos from Sugarloaf School (Jax Bickerstaff, Colton Johnson, and coach Alena Ellerbee)
- The Gooby Wooby's from Marathon Middle/High School (Aiden McIntyre, Connor Show, Evan Toman, Ean Batzer, and coach Rob Driscoll)
- Team KLS1 from Key Largo School (Arlette Castillo-Peralta, Raquel Wood, Esteban Mollineda, and coach Mark Leffler)

The traveling trophy was awarded to the first-place winners from Plantation Key School, The Penguins (Emma Dangel, Garrett Brown, Camilla Gonzalez, Emma Jester, and coach Cynthia Boyd). Plans for next year's competition and challenges for the traveling trophy are already underway.



CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Monroe County Bar Association is proud to announce the winners of the Law Day 2025 Contest, themed "The Constitution's Promise: Out of Many, One." This annual event celebrates the creativity and understanding of our nation's Constitution among students from various grade levels across Monroe County School District.

Division 1 - Lower Keys (Key West to Big Pine Key)
Kindergarten – 2nd Grade:
Winner: 'Abraham Lincoln' by Mr. Ryan Williams' Kindergarten Art Class at Gerald Adams School.
Prize: \$100 towards Pizza Party or Classroom Use.



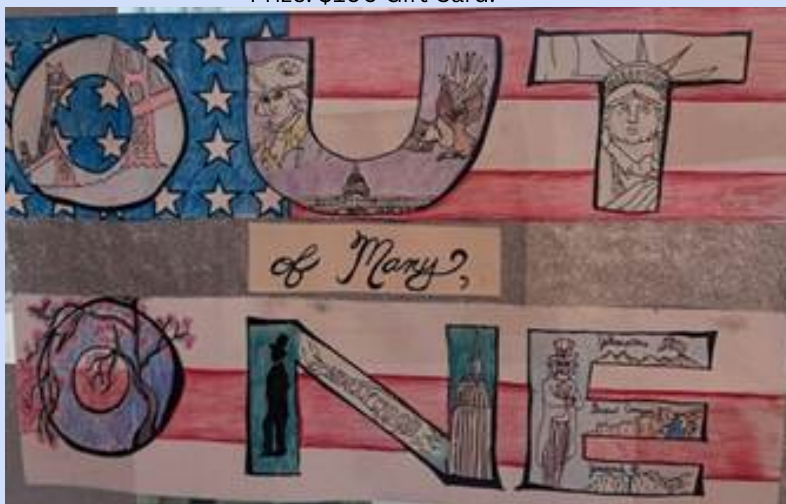
Division 3 - Lower Keys (Key West to Big Pine Key)
3rd Grade – 5th Grade:
Winner: "Unstoppable Together" by Donna Hennessy's 4th Grade Class at Poinciana School.
Prize: \$100 towards Pizza Party or Classroom Use.



Division 4 - Middle and Upper Keys (Marathon to Key Largo) 3rd Grade – 5th Grade:
Winner: "Stronger Together" by Ms. Lugo Dean's 5th grade class at Plantation Key School.
Prize: \$100 towards Pizza Party or Classroom Use.



Middle School 6th-8th grade (Division I) – Monroe County
1st Place: Parker Hyndman, 8th grade, Treasure Village Montessori.
Prize: \$100 Gift Card.



High School 9th-12th grade (Division II) – Monroe County
1st Place: "Promise Land Portrait" by Grace Leffler, 12th grade, Coral Shores High School.
Prize: \$100 Gift Card.



CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

MCSD's Title I booth, Wrapped Up in a Good Book, was a huge hit with students and families in Marathon at the Nautical Fun in the Sun community event! Kids were excited to select wrapped books based on fun, themed clues, sparking curiosity and promoting at-home reading. Parents appreciated the take-home literacy bags filled with resources to keep learning going all summer. It turned reading into a new adventure and brought smiles all around!

