

SUPERINTENDENT'S BULLETIN

JANUARY 30, 2024
ISSUE 41



News for School Board Members and District Personnel

Dear School Board Members and District Personnel,

If you asked me my favorite week of the year, it would be Celebrate Literacy Week for sure. And what a week it was. The celebrity readers who came out to visit every school is in itself a wonderful thing, but the celebrations that accompanied the reading are just amazing. From dressing as your favorite character to impersonating the types of genres in literature to vocabulary parades, the district was filled with everything about Literature we could think of. I want to thank all of our teachers, reading coaches and guest readers along with our amazing students who made this week so memorable.

Although it's my favorite week, I had to miss part of it because I attended Florida Keys Days in Tallahassee with the Monroe County Delegation of local legislators. My mission was to remind our legislators about our affordable housing plan for teachers. I was joined by School Board member Andy Griffiths. It was a very successful trip and worth the time and trouble that it takes to get to Tallahassee. Our Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez and State Representative Jim Mooney fully support our efforts. It was also my pleasure to meet with the Commissioner of Education, Manny Diaz, who also advocates for the needs of our Keys' schools.

I attended the South Florida Symphony Performance for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades last week. It is an inspiring program which helps students to understand how endangered our reef has become and helps us to understand what we can do to protect it for the future. I was so pleased with our students who showed their best behavior for the concert and clearly appreciated the opportunity. I would like to thank the South Florida Symphony for keeping Monroe County Schools as part of their itinerary, a special thanks to the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys who supported our students attending the Symphony performance and to Mrs. Christina McPherson, Executive Director for Student Support who coordinated the event.

Yours in education,
Terri Axford

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

The window for PM 2 has just closed as of January 26th. We look forward to reviewing the data as a district and know many schools have already begun the process of working with teachers and students to make a plan for success this spring. Our next testing opportunity is the end of February when three of our schools will be participating in the ELA and Math NAEP test. The NAEP or National Assessment of Educational Progress is an assessment given yearly at select schools and provides important information about student achievement and learning experiences in various subjects, it is considered the nations report card.

Our district also received its yearly graduation data. We are pleased to see an improvement in our graduation rates across the county, with an overall graduation rate of 89%. We look forward to continuing to grow this important metric of student success.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The South Florida Symphony Orchestra performed their outreach program 'Preserving Our Coral Reefs' recently to 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade. The musicians played two concerts, the first in Key West, then on to Marathon, where the students were taught about the need to preserve the coral reef and its inhabitants. Some students were also treated to Puppy Pals, an interactive program that focused on patience, persistence and positive attitude. The smiles, laughter and music got the kids moving and they thoroughly enjoyed the live puppies on stage. Plans are under way to extend these types of programs throughout the Keys.



Key West High School took first place at the District Academic Challenge, earning them a berth at the state level competition. Coral Shores High School finished in second place and Marathon High School came in third. College of the Florida Keys Academy had a good showing in their first participation. Rigorous questions from all areas of the curriculum are posed to the teams and they have one minute to come up with the correct answer. Students practice with their coaches throughout the year to prepare for the district event. Ashley Mellies, GAE teacher and tournament coordinator, was very impressed with the high caliber of knowledge and teamwork displayed.



CONTINUED COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Key West High School Mock Trial Team won the 16th circuit district championship against Coral Shores. The competition took place at the Key West Courthouse with Judge Albert E. Kelley presiding. The team will be heading to the Florida High School Mock Trial competition in Orlando in March to compete against teams from the other 19 judicial circuits in Florida.



EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

We provide a research based and legally vetted Professional Crisis Management (PCM) certification for the district. This certification focuses on de-escalation techniques to defuse challenging situations. In the 2023 – 2024 school year Dr. Sheer and Dr. Rodriguez have trained and certified over 200 teachers, para professionals and staff for MCSD! They have additionally provided site based classroom behavior training for 118 teachers and para professionals so far this year. In other news, collaboration is the name of the game currently in the world of MTSS. The district MTSS team leader Sarah Sheer along with the School Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, Curriculum Team, and school MTSS Coordinators have come together to clarify procedures, and expectations to ensure that we are servicing students and meeting their needs. We hosted our first face to face MTSS Coordinators meeting since before COVID, and also made presentations to the principals. Lastly, we started off the second half of the year with a hands-on Assistive Technology in the Classroom training where teachers and therapists learned how to implement technology for students with disabilities into their lessons.

Many MCSD teachers participated in a virtual FDLRS training, ESE 101, on January 19th. FDLRS is conducting another virtual training, “Rethinking Behavior”, on February 21. This is free and open to all teachers. [Use this link to register.](#)

We will be offering a second round of Developing an IEP training this quarter.
If interested, contact Marianne.Nelson@KeysSchools.com

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

During January, we welcomed our new Executive Director of Finance and Performance, Dr. Charlene C. White, to the team. Charlene and her husband, Robert, along with their six dachshunds moved into their new home on Big Coppitt. She has hit the ground running trying to help all the finance and performance team members and the district!



We are all very thankful for our payroll department that continues to get us paid in a timely and accurate manner! The benefits department continues to transition to Optavise. Issues are encountered but the team is very diligent in their efforts to work through them successfully!

The finance team is preparing for another budget cycle! Yes, it is that time of year once again! We are placing more of a focus on FTE to better estimate the budgets. With the help of MIS, reports have been developed to assist FTE projections at the school level. Splendid example of teamwork!

Internal services and risk management continue to focus on protecting the district. Between purchasing, contracts, and insurance renewals, they stay busy every day!

HUMAN RESOURCES

Annually, HR conducts Districtwide reviews of staffing configurations for planning the upcoming and future school years. It's mandatory for all staff to complete an Intent To Remain form in Focus by January 26, 2024 with their intentions to return to employment in our District for the 2024-2025 school year. Recruitment is the top priority for the Department of Human Resources. The HR Team will hold a meeting in Marathon to bring all District Office Managers together. The meeting will outline Frontline Recruiting & Hiring End-User Training, which will assist with active recruiting. To also be covered are the importance of customer service, staff attendance and reviewing and refining many internal processes. Applicants are invited to speak with MCSD Representatives every Wednesday in the "Get To Know MCSD" meetings being held on Microsoft Teams. The HR Team plans for recruitment and they will be visiting on the UCF, FAMU, FSU and UF campuses to recruit education students.



OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

At the home of the KWS Conchs under construction at Tommy Roberts Memorial Stadium/Rex Weech Field, work is in full swing. The Athletic complex welcomes guests from near and far for events and activities throughout the year. Renovations to the stadium keep it current and provide safe opportunities for our student athletes and their competitors. As work continues on bleacher seating, exterior façade, interior fit-out and the playing field, Tommy Roberts Memorial Stadium/Rex Weech Field is evolving aesthetically. The facility is beginning to look more like the one we know from the renderings. All reports generally indicate the project is on schedule and will meet the project standards set forth by the design committee. Director of Construction & Distribution Services, Doug Pryor, notes that the stadium project is "proceeding in general accordance with the construction documents," that the "quality of workmanship, appears to be good".



TEACHING AND LEARNING

Literacy Week Success – all of our schools participated in Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! from January 22 to January 26. The event's theme for this year was "Believe In Your 'Shelf' – Building Resiliency Through Reading." This annual initiative aims to foster awareness about the significance of reading, encouraging students and families to incorporate reading into their daily routines. The Monroe County School District is dedicated to promoting literacy development as a crucial component of children's education. By participating in this event, schools motivated students to cultivate resilience through reading, an invaluable skill that contributes to success in all aspects of their lives. A big thank you to all that took part and were guest readers at our schools last week!



On January 25, Key Largo School held their Family Literacy and EL Night event, where the EL team provided bilingual information guides and flyers for community resources to attending families. Both students and families enjoyed playing games and celebrating the pleasures of reading.



CONTINUED TEACHING AND LEARNING

Our students also commemorated the 100th Day of School last week by dressing up, engaging in fun activities, and sharing 100 reasons to celebrate being in school.



Key West High School's HOSA club, led by teacher Tara Jackson, marked the success of its second blood drive last week, collecting an impressive 28 units. Gratitude to all who supported through recruitment, volunteering and donations! Be sure to save the date for the upcoming final drive on April 4th – let's make it the biggest yet by encouraging friends and family to donate! Your contribution can truly make a significant impact!

