

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 29, 2024  
ISSUE 42



News for School Board Members and District Personnel

## Dear School Board Members and District Personnel,

As we approach the beginning of March, the pace picks up in our schools. We are supporting students with precise data from Progress Monitoring II and engaging them in data chats to energize them towards improved achievement. Let's hope that all of our efforts are rewarded.

Next week is an important week for me because it gives us an opportunity to talk to 6-12 students about the importance of being our partners in keeping schools safe. It encourages them to take responsibility to "Say Something" if they see anything that is out of the ordinary with one of their classmates or that could possibly be related to school violence. It's a well-known fact that in prior school shootings someone had prior knowledge that if acted upon would have been preventive. Let's help our students understand the power of saying something to a trusted adult if they have concerns.

Yours in education,  
Terri

## ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

We are approaching our final four weeks before the spring testing season begins! Schools should be sharing out information on testing schedules and computer adaptive testing with parents and students in preparation for the spring session. Remember that attendance is important and coming to school well rested and ready to learn makes all the difference during the spring testing sessions.

March 4th opens the spring PSAT/SAT window for students in grades 8-12. Schools will be scheduling their testing dates and have until April 26th to complete the spring PSAT/SAT sessions. April 1st through the 12th is our Spring writing window, students in grades 4-10 will participate in the BEST Writing assessment. We are currently in the FSA Retake window for eligible seniors who may have taken the previous FSA assessments and are working towards satisfying their graduation requirements.

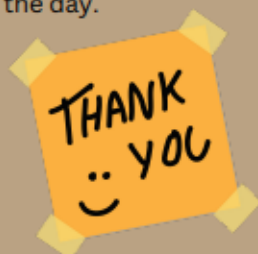
## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Justice Lee of Marathon High School is a two time gold medalist, winning in both the traditional and Olympic weightlifting events at the State meet. Coral Shores' Jennille Aria brought home a silver medal in the traditional event and a sixth place medal in the Olympic category. The Dolphins had two more medalists with Sierra Earnhardt winning a bronze and Ella Dunn earning a fifth place medal in the Olympic category.



Pictured Above:  
Justice Lee

School Resource Officers and Bus Drivers were celebrated this month on their special recognition days. Schools said thank you in a variety of ways including posters, treats and thank you cards. We appreciate those that provide the daily support to ensure our students arrive at school with a smile and are safe throughout the day.



## EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

The ESE Department has worked with the state to deliver multiple trainings to over 25 ESE Teachers throughout the district wide who will complete the Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA) for students identified with significant intellectual disabilities. The FAA tests mirror the state required tests and EOCs for grades 3 through 12. As a district we will individually test over 100 students with the specialized standards. The expectation is to see growth and advancement with each academic area of ELA, Math, Social Studies and Science. The FAA testing window opens the week of Feb 26th for 3-8th grade and the week of March 11 for grades 9 - 12. Each student will receive similar scores of proficiency on the tests and be included in growth scores for all students.

*Congratulations*

The Inclusion Teacher of the Year for Monroe County is Ms. Madeline Riquelme from Key Largo School! Additionally, the Student Services Employee of the Year is Ms. Katie Fernandez, staffing specialist at HOB! Congratulations to the winners and all the amazing nominees!

## FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

We are all very thankful to Superintendent Axford for allowing payroll to process the mid-February payroll early to surprise us all for Valentines!

During February, five members of the Finance and Performance team attended the FOCUS conference. Topics discussed were finance set-up essentials and mastering internal accounts, streamlining payroll balancing, and seamless fixed assets management.

The Finance Team is going into the budget season, and we are planning to simplify the process this year to better assist our schools and departments. We are also anxiously waiting for the final data from survey three, so we can plan and forecast for the upcoming school year. Thank you to all the schools that encouraged student attendance during the survey week. We appreciate your support!

Risk Management continues to focus on protecting the district and its employees, as well as helping maintain a safe and secure daily workplace for everyone.

Internal Services has just completed the annual inventory for the 2023-24 school year. A sincere thanks to all staff who worked on completing inventory, and a special thanks to Internal Services' newest Property Control Specialist, Maria Portal, who did an excellent job assisting schools and departments to overcome certain challenges that arose this year. Internal Services will be working with MIS in the coming months to make minor adjustments in Focus that will hopefully streamline annual inventory for everyone in future years.



## HUMAN RESOURCES AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Preparations for the 2024-2025 school year are in process for the Superintendent to make recommendations for reappointment at the April 23rd Board Meeting, which is no later than four (4) weeks prior to the teachers' last day of post planning. Reappointment emails were sent to Principals and District Leadership for return to the Certification Office indicating educators and administrators retiring, relocating, renewed, released or on-leave. Annual educators with requirements that must be satisfied by June 30, 2024 to enable renewal of their educator contract, will sign Contingency Agreements. Release Notices will be signed by the Superintendent and sent to schools for distribution by April 23rd to educators not being renewed.

Instructional Transfer Requests are due by April 1st for the 2024-2025 Instructional Transfer Request to 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)



## OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

The Monroe County School District is preparing for some change with the disposable items used for serving breakfast and lunch meals. The Food Service Director has been working diligently with the leading vendors in the industry that support K12 school nutrition programs to obtain the best contracted pricing for these products. Our main goal is to replace the plastic sporks and foam lunch trays with more sustainable options for the start of next school year. Other items such as the plastic soufflé cups used for fruit and veggies, and the plastic containers used for salads and sandwiches will also be replaced with eco-friendly solutions.

"Our department is excited for the coming changes, and looking forward to esthetically please touches the new items will bring to the presentation of our meals," says Effie Jackson, Director of Food Services.

The Food Service Department is also preparing for their first annual foods show in April. The event will be hosted at Poinciana Elementary School. Vendors for school nutrition programs will be demoing their items directly to our customers; our students.

"We are so please to be able to provide this event to our students, and we have seen the success of these events at other school districts. Students will be able to give their feedback, and help us put together a great menu for next year", says Effie Jackson.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

February 1st marked the beginning of Black History Month and teachers throughout the district will be celebrating the many accomplishments that African American heroes have contributed to our country.



K-5 MCSD teachers were recently introduced to a new literacy tutoring program called Amira. Amira allows students to choose from several appropriately difficult and engaging texts to read. As students read out loud Amira listens, assesses, and when they struggle, Amira provides feedback and support. Amira marries speech recognition and artificial intelligence with the Science of Reading to deliver personalized and in-the-moment tutoring to students as they practice. We hope to see the program help teachers plan and engage with students to promote growth from our most struggling readers.

MCSD students were able to enjoy an educational field trip to Fort Zachary Taylor State Park for the Civil War Heritage Days. The students were immersed in history and were able to witness engaging reenactments. It was a fun day learning about the past!



## TEACHING AND LEARNING CONTINUED

In partnership with Title I, MCSD recently participated in the Upper Keys' Winter Festival event, engaging in academic outreach to enhance Parent and Family Engagement. Participating families enjoyed creating different shapes and elaborate towers using toothpicks and gummy hearts, and experimenting with balance using a paper cup, popsicle sticks and candy conversation hearts. Younger students were immersed in interactive learning at our four-station sensory table, where they followed pretend hot cocoa recipes, explored themes from *The Hungry Caterpillar* children's book, and honed fine motor skills with a tweezer challenge. Through collaboration between educators, parents and community members we strive to boost student achievement while reinforcing our connections with stakeholders. Amazing outreach like this allows us to emphasize our dedication to supporting the educational journey of every student!



The MCSD Regional STEM fair was held on Sat., February 10th at Stanley Switlik Elementary School. Science came alive with 149 students from 14 public and charter schools in Monroe County presenting 108 school-based winning projects within 10 different STEM categories. The Junior Division Grand Prize winners were Taylor Thomason (SLS), Collin Palomino (SLS), Parks Dunn (PKS), and Jacobo Gutierrez and Carlos Smith (TVM). The Senior Division Grand Prize winners were Malia Alana (CSHS), Kaitlyn Mears (CSHS), Nathaniel Shugarman (CSHS), and Dominik Galaz (CFK). Wish our Grand Prize winners luck as they advance to the 69th State Science and Engineering competition in Lakeland, April 2nd – 4th.



Pictured Below:  
Superintendent Theresa Axford  
with the Senior Division Winners



Pictured Below:  
Superintendent Theresa Axford  
with the Junior Division Winners



## TEACHING AND LEARNING CONTINUED

We are excited to announce our upcoming Career Job Fairs that will greatly benefit our Junior and Senior students as they begin to plan for their future endeavors! These Career Fairs will provide invaluable insights and guidance to our students. We will be hosting three fairs across all of our high schools. The dates are as follows:

Tuesday, February 27th (8:30am-10:30am) Coral Shores High School

Wednesday, February 28th (8:30am-10:30am) Marathon High School

Thursday, February 29th (8:30am-10:30am) Key West High School

