

CONNECTION

A NEWSLETTER FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARENTS

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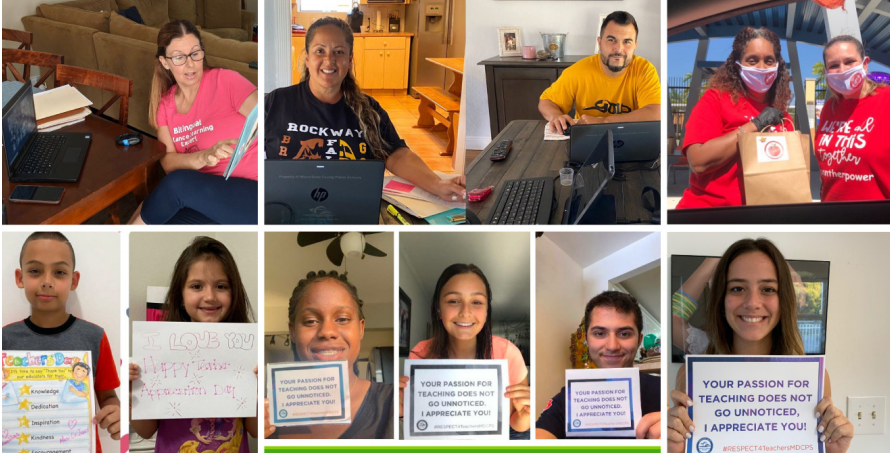
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May 2020

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SAYING THANK YOU TO ALL TEACHERS AND EMPLOYEES



National Teacher Appreciation Week has taken on a whole new meaning during the COVID-19 crisis of 2020. Teachers have always been rock stars, but never have they been more appreciated than they are now amidst these unprecedented times. Parents from all over the world have been walking in the shoes of teachers every day as they try to assist in the online education of their children at home.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) teachers have stood at the forefront of our community's response to the coronavirus situation. They've worked tirelessly to help students learn remotely since day one.

Teachers like Biscayne Beach Elementary School math coach Tanya Diaz-Rothman, whose zest for students' high engagement keeps her busy looking up new computer applications. This month, Diaz-Rothman inaugurated a "Star Wars"-

themed Jedi Academy in which she used classroom tools to put students into virtual breakout "rooms" so they could work together. The best part of this activity was that she dressed up as "Princess Leia."

Coral Reef Elementary School gifted teacher Martha Basulto keeps her students engaged daily. She created a little cardboard cartoon "emoji" of herself that she sent to her students with a poem urging them to take "Flat Mrs. Basulto" on all sorts of adventures and send her photographs.

This year, students and parents have had to be more creative to show their teachers how much they appreciate them; and technology plays a big part. Many students and parents took to social media, including Schools Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho who tweeted, "Your work and impact spread beyond our classrooms, and you have proven to us that teaching

can take place anytime, anywhere. Thank you for all that you do for our students."

One student shared on Twitter: "Thank you. Honestly you have been the best teacher I have ever had and the sole reason I didn't drop out the first quarter of this year, thank you for everything you have done. It has impacted my life for the better."

A parent also used social media to praise Auburndale Elementary School teacher Maria Teresa Diaz-Gonzalez. "Despite all that is going on," the parent wrote, "Mrs. Diaz-Gonzalez truly found a special way to connect with the children and even us parents. It's more than a class, we are a family."

Diaz-Gonzalez replied excitedly, "I am speechless! The joy this post has brought to me during this difficult time...when I see my kids during Zoom, I am just happy to know that they are safe and still show a passion to learn. Their enthusiasm makes teaching effortless. I am honored to be their teacher."

During these difficult times, it is also important to recognize the entire workforce, which is made up of selfless and dedicated professionals who are always ready to answer the call of duty. M-DCPS is grateful for their sacrifices and commitment to the entire community and wishes to say THANK YOU!



The health crisis caused by COVID-19 (coronavirus) led to the unprecedented closure of schools for the fourth quarter of the 2019-2020 school year. While M-DCPS has worked diligently to ensure a seamless transition from classroom to home-based learning, a considerable academic regression is likely to occur due to the dramatic shift in learning environments, specifically for students who are struggling.

When students, educators, and administrators return to school in the Fall, the classrooms may be different and potentially marked by larger equity gaps, substantial learning loss for many students, and exacerbated economic challenges for traditionally marginalized families and communities. While it is difficult to speculate on what missing months of school may mean for student achievement, research on summer learning loss has provided important insight on how to address some potential impacts of this extended pause in traditional classroom instruction once students return to school.

The Securing Opportunities for Academic Recovery plan, also known by the acronym SOAR, is the District's newly-developed strategic initiative to mitigate learning loss for some of its most fragile students.

SOAR is comprised of three phases - Recover, Regain, and Restart:

- **Recover:** During this phase, the District will provide students with opportunities for summer reading, remediation, credit/course recovery, and extended school year services from June 8 – July 10. This will closely mirror the traditional summer school program, but will be conducted virtually. Students with disabilities, students with an excessive amount of absences, and students who did not actively participate in distance learning will be engaged during this phase.
- **Regain:** This phase will address the unique circumstances of current 9th grade Algebra students and 10th grade English Language Arts students who did not have the opportunity to take the state assessments required for graduation. The District will provide these students with virtual test preparation and tutoring to enable them to achieve proficiency on these tests in early Fall, when the state will offer the tests again. Additionally, during this phase, all students will have access to the District's E-Learning Toolbox and Academic Challenges, via the student portals, as is customary. All M-DCPS students will also have access to the vast digital content the District licenses to assist students who are on grade level to enrich their learning and continue to challenge themselves during the summer months.
- **Restart:** Contingent on guidelines issued by federal and state public health authorities, M-DCPS intends to open schools early, on July 27, specifically for students demonstrating low levels of academic performance, as well as for students with disabilities, and English language learners. During this time, the identified students will receive intense instruction on the skills needed in core academic areas for their new grade level, so they are poised to be academically successful. During this phase, the District is also planning to expand the number of schools that participate in the extended school day program, and to begin Saturday School earlier in the year to maximize instructional time. If schools must remain closed during this phase, these plans will be converted to a virtual model.

The education of our students and their academic achievement is our number one priority. Ensuring that the challenge to mitigate any learning losses that will occur during this unprecedented, historic, global pandemic, is one that M-DCPS is poised to meet head-on by bold leadership and our unwavering commitment to support ALL children and their families in our community.



For graduating seniors across the country, COVID-19 (coronavirus) has forced necessary modifications or cancellation of some annual high school milestones. Graduation is the most important academic rite of passage for students who have worked so hard to complete a 12-year education and it is a meaningful moment for families as well, having supported these efforts through their academic journey. This is especially true for those students who are the first in their families to graduate and

others who have overcome personal challenges.

In an effort to ensure that the Class of 2020 graduates at Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) receive the pomp and circumstance they deserve, the District will hold virtual graduation ceremonies for each high school. The ceremonies will be broadcast beginning Monday, June 8 through Tuesday, June 16. The live streaming of each virtual graduation, as well as a schedule of ceremonies and a video archive can be accessed by visiting Classof2020.dadeschools.net. The ceremonies will also be televised on WLRN Channel 17.

The virtual commencement ceremonies will be followed by an in-person Class of 2020 celebration at each high school either in the summer or winter, once it is safe to do so under public health guidelines.

M-DCPS also developed a dynamic marketing and media campaign that encouraged the entire community to come together to celebrate graduates. For five weeks, M-DCPS highlighted seniors on social media and honored them with a districtwide Senior Recognition Day on May 20.

PARENT E-TIPS

Primary:

Help a Frustrated Student

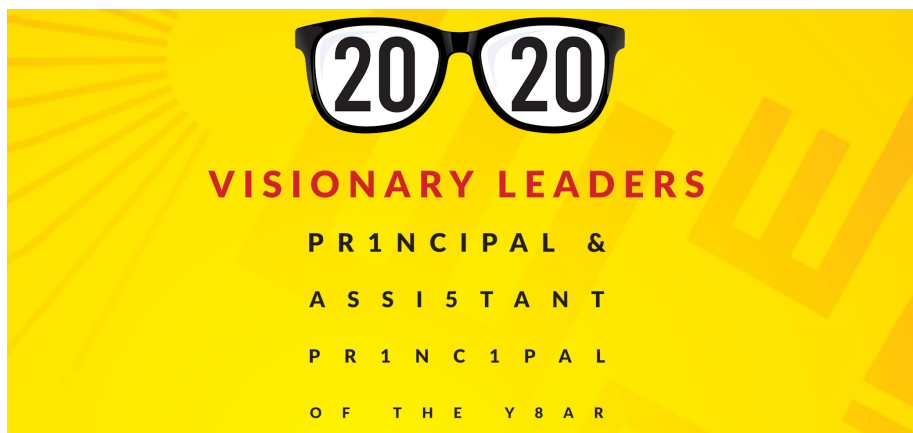
<https://bit.ly/2xGvqqb>

Secondary:

Modify Your Strategy If Your Teen Gets A Poor Report Card

<https://bit.ly/35DZVJZ>

TOP MIAMI-DADE SCHOOL LEADERS HONORED VIA VIRTUAL CEREMONY



The top Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) administrators were recognized last week during a live-streaming ceremony on Facebook of the annual Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year awards. Rafael A. Villalobos, the charismatic and innovative leader of John A. Ferguson Senior High who has helped shape the lives of thousands of students throughout Miami-Dade County Public Schools for more than

20 years, has been named the 2020 Principal of the Year.

Following his basic philosophy of putting students first, Villalobos' love and passion has resonated in every school he has led. His leadership has yielded major impacts, as evidenced by substantial increases in graduation rates, academic performance, and in the pioneering of innovative educational programs. Villalobos will

receive a \$2,000 cash prize, a three-year car lease sponsored by Toyota of North Miami, and a special gift basket valued at more than \$2,000. The runner up is Leon Maycock, principal of Miami Edison Senior High School. He will receive a \$1,000 cash prize.

Lamar Johnson, an assistant principal at Jesse J. McCrary, Jr. Elementary was named Assistant Principal of the Year. Johnson began his career in 2008 as a Miami Teaching Fellow. He will take home \$1,500, a 55-inch TV from Toyota of North Miami, and a special gift basket valued at more than \$1,000. The runner up is Celethia Passmore-Mack of Dr. Manuel C. Barreiro Elementary. She will receive a \$600 cash prize.

The annual event was sponsored by the Dade Association of School Administrators (DASA).

Florida Prepaid Open Enrollment extended until *May 31!*



Over the last 30 years, the Florida Prepaid program has helped close to 1.2 million families save for college, and more than 518,000 students attend college, making it the largest and longest-running program of its kind in the nation. We are pleased to share that our partner, Florida Prepaid, is responding to the challenges families may be facing amid COVID-19 with several options.

First, they are extending Open Enrollment until May 31, 2020, and waiving the \$50 application fee with promo code Miami1920. Second, new and current Prepaid Plan customers have the option to defer payments until July 20, 2020. And third, they have launched a portal with homeschool resources

available at <http://www.scholastic.com/icanbeanything/>. These moves are all part of Florida Prepaid's commitment to helping families financially and academically as they deal with the impacts of the pandemic.

All Prepaid College Plans are guaranteed by the State of Florida, ensuring families can never lose their investment. Families can use the online Prepaid Plan [pricing tool](#) to determine what the various plans cost based on a child's age, as well as explore the different payment options available. Prepaid Plan prices start at \$44 a month for a newborn – the lowest in five years.

The day will come when children will return to school again, excel

in the classroom, celebrate their accomplishments with graduation and head off to college. Be prepared now for happier days ahead with Florida Prepaid.

For more information, visit myfloridaprepaid.com.

SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

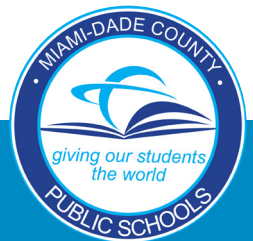
June 17
11:00 a.m.
Regular Meeting

IMPORTANT DATES & INFORMATION

May 25
Observance of Memorial Day

June 3
Last Day of School

June 4
Teacher Planning Day



www.dadeschools.net

Stay connected with Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Make sure you follow us on social media for the latest news and updates regarding the school district. #MDCPSConnects

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