

# CONNECTION

A NEWSLETTER FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARENTS

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March 2021

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## COVID-19: A YEAR LATER



One year ago, the educational experience was dramatically impacted, uprooting students and employees from their educational haven – the schoolhouse. Educators and administrators were tasked with reinventing teaching and learning, developing creative and innovative ways to engage with children while keeping them on-track, and ensuring parents stayed connected through the process.

Those were and continue to be challenging times, but we have crafted a new normal where online learning,

wearing facial coverings, frequent handwashing, and social distancing are daily occurrences. We have learned from our experiences and grown immensely as a school district. Despite our hardships, we are still here and standing strong.

In the past 365 days, with the support and guidance from health and medical experts, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has reaffirmed its commitment to student and employee well-being by implementing stricter health and safety protocols, increasing access to school meals, and expanding

community partnerships.

- Nearly 22 million free meals have been served to students and families in need.
- More than 165,000 devices were distributed and an additional 4,000 hotspots were provided.
- Our community partnerships have expanded the availability of COVID-19 testing as well as access to vaccines. More than 2,500 employees have been vaccinated through appointments secured by the District in partnership with Jackson Health System.

As a school district, we have persevered and proven once again that M-DCPS students, parents and employees are unstoppable. Together, we have traveled through stormy weather, and together, we will see brighter days ahead.

To view Superintendent Carvalho's message, visit <https://youtu.be/MmHPN8P11i8>.

## M-DCPS SEEKS STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK FOR NEW STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT



Last month, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) closed out its five-year strategic plan, Vision 20/20. A strategic plan or blueprint defines an organization's overall strategy or direction and informs ongoing decisions about the allotment of resources, which include time, funding, and human capital, in pursuit of that strategy. Together, the School Board, its employees, and our community stakeholders have achieved many great accomplishments. Over the

last five years, even under extreme challenges, M-DCPS has emerged as a national leader on numerous fronts.

Building upon the strengths of Vision 20/20, M-DCPS is embarking on the development of its next strategic blueprint, which will guide the school system in critical decision-making that will ultimately impact students, employees, and the community at large.

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As a public school system, M-DCPS is charged with ensuring the needs of our diverse community are met and providing the highest quality education to prepare our students for life-long success.

Students, parents, employees, and community members play an integral role in our school system and our overall success. Therefore, in the coming weeks, through a community-wide stakeholder survey, focus group sessions, citizen participation group meetings, and community listening tours with the Superintendent and School Board Members, M-DCPS will gather feedback as to what the District has done well, what it can improve upon, and what it should strive towards in the next strategic blueprint.

The District is encouraging anyone with a vested interest in public education to complete our Stakeholder Survey, which is available in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole. The survey, which must be completed by April 2, along with additional information on the strategic blueprint, can be accessed by visiting [strategicplan.dadeschools.net](http://strategicplan.dadeschools.net).

Share your thoughts on what the school system is doing well and what could improve the stakeholder

VIRTUAL LISTENING TOURS	
<b>District 1</b> <b>Dr. Steve Gallon III</b>	Wednesday, March 24 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
<b>District 2</b> <b>Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall</b>	Thursday, April 15 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
<b>District 3</b> <b>Ms. Lucia Baez-Geller</b>	Monday, April 05 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
<b>District 4</b> <b>Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman</b>	Tuesday, March 16 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
<b>District 5</b> <b>Ms. Christi Fraga</b>	Tuesday, April 6 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
<b>District 6</b> <b>Ms. Mari Tere Rojas</b>	Monday, March 22 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
<b>District 7</b> <b>Dr. Lubby Navarro</b>	Monday, April 12 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
<b>District 8</b> <b>Dr. Marta Perez</b>	Thursday, April 08 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
<b>District 9</b> <b>Ms. Luisa Santos</b>	Tuesday, April 13 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

experience by participating in our Virtual Listening Tours.

Together, we can ensure that M-DCPS continues to provide a world-class education that prepares students for success in college, career, and life.

## PARENT E-TIPS

### Creating Healthy Eating Habits

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

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK

BY DANIEL ORE, SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER



The COVID-19 epidemic has transformed our community, society, and world. Parents and children have been affected by the many changes we were forced to embrace

in our daily lives as a result of the pandemic. For our students, the impact has manifested itself as struggles with academics, attendance, and poor class engagement. Even more detrimental are the covert effects on their socio-emotional health, such as feelings of isolation, fear, anxiety, and stress. Parents and guardians have experienced some of the same physical and emotional stressors, plus the added pressures of caring and providing for their families. Parental challenges in the context of COVID-19 have included: loss of employment,

loss of income, increased demands for parental care and monitoring of their child, divorce/separation, homelessness, and scarcity of essential resources. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) social workers are key to helping combat these threats that can, in turn, affect a safe learning environment.

March is Social Work Month, and March 7-13 was School Social Work Week. We at M-DCPS recognize the importance of the profession and the critical role that social workers play in our schools.

School social work represents a specialized area of practice within the broad field of the profession. All M-DCPS school social workers have a master’s degree in social work, are certified by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) and approximately one third are licensed clinical social workers. They bring unique knowledge and skills to the school system and to the schools they serve. School social workers conduct parent interviews and complete psycho-social and behavioral assessments, provide mental health and crisis support, facilitate consultations with teachers, parents and provide students with individual and group counseling and therapy.

When COVID-19 forced the closure of brick-and-mortar schools last Spring, M-DCPS administrators and educators expressed concerns about inadequate student engagement and the inability to reach families. The District’s school social workers were essential in re-establishing links between our

schools, homes, and the community, to help foster academic success while promoting resiliency in families and children.

At the start of the 2020-2021 school year, the demand for student and family supports prompted M-DCPS to design an online method for schools to transmit student assistance requests to the school social worker. This system allows school administrators to generate referrals for services more efficiently. Since the system’s adoption, school social workers have received more than 7,000 referrals related to student evaluations, initial student screenings, individual counseling, and social service assistance to families. School social workers have also been extending their support to schools by assisting in wellness check-ins for disengaged students with several absences and truant students.

M-DCPS school social workers have learned many of the underlying

reasons for the struggles among students and families. They provide support, guidance, resources, and linkages to ensure successful student re-engagement with their schools and studies. In turn, each schools’ multi-disciplinary teams use this valuable insight to design holistic and practical school-based intervention plans and support to complete the student’s return to or exceeding pre-COVID-19 levels.

The delivery of school social work prevention and intervention supports demands high ethical, altruistic, professional, and moral standards and a prioritization of advocacy for the most at-risk children and families in our schools. Together with our schools and community stakeholders, school social workers feel they can be catalysts for transformational change and improve our students’ chances to succeed in the academic environment and beyond.

## ADDITIONAL COVID-19 TESTING DATES FOR CHILDREN

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), in partnership with University of Miami Health System, announces additional dates for free COVID-19 testing for all children, ages 4-18 in Miami-Dade County. Testing will be done through the Health System’s Pediatric Mobile Unit, which will be available in various school parking lots throughout the month.

A parent/guardian must accompany their child for testing; identification is not required. Walk-ups are welcome, but appointments are encouraged.

Appointments may be made by calling 305-243-2059. April testing dates and locations will be made available in the near future.

The dates and locations for the mobile unit testing, taking place from 3 p.m. – 5 p.m., are as follows.

<b>March 19</b>	<b>iTech @ Thomas A. Edison Educational Center</b>	6101 N.W. 2nd Avenue Miami, FL 33127
<b>March 22</b>	<b>Coral Reef Senior High School</b>	10101 S.W. 152nd Street Miami, FL 33157
<b>March 23</b>	<b>J.C. Bermudez Doral Senior High School</b>	5005 N.W. 112th Avenue Doral, FL 33178
<b>March 24</b>	<b>North Miami Beach Senior High School</b>	1247 N.E. 167th Street N. Miami Beach, FL 33162
<b>March 25</b>	<b>American Senior High</b>	18350 N.W. 67th Avenue Hialeah, FL 33015
<b>March 26</b>	<b>Miami Sunset Senior High School</b>	13125 S.W. 72nd Street Miami, FL 33183
<b>March 29</b>	<b>iTech @ Thomas A. Edison Educational Center</b>	6101 N.W. 2nd Avenue Miami, FL 33127
<b>March 30</b>	<b>Coral Reef Senior High School</b>	10101 S.W. 152nd Street Miami, FL 33157
<b>March 31</b>	<b>J.C. Bermudez Doral Senior High School</b>	5005 N.W. 112th Avenue Doral, FL 33178



prospective families. Families are invited to join via the following link: <https://dadeschools.zoom.us/j/88242166107?pwd=QThLUeUliUzdKRmdkbVF5YzM1T1BUZz09>.

## IMPORTANT DATES & INFORMATION

**March 29 – April 02**  
Spring Recess

**April 09**  
Head Start Enrollment Day 2021

## SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

**April 21**  
10:00 a.m.  
Conference Session:  
Attendance Zones for  
2021-2022

**April 21**  
11:00 a.m.  
Regular Meeting (Initial  
Reading-Attendance  
Zones for 2021-2022)

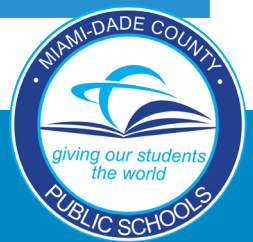
The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Head Start and Early Head Start (HS/EHS) program is accepting applications for children ages two (2) months to four (4) years of age to participate in the 2021-2022 program year.

The Head Start/Early Head Start program is provided in partnership with Miami-Dade County Community Action and Human Services Department and is a federally funded, comprehensive child development program for income-eligible children who reside in Miami-Dade County. Children between the ages of three (3) to five (5) may participate in the Head Start program, enrolling as soon as their third birthday. Early Head Start serves children ages two (2) months

to three (3) years of age. Children with disabilities are included in the program and receive a full range of developmental services.

On Friday, April 9th, M-DCPS HS/EHS is hosting Head Start/Early Head Start Enrollment Day 2021. Families are encouraged to apply online by visiting [headstart.dadeschools.net](https://headstart.dadeschools.net). Families may also contact their nearest HS/EHS school to obtain information on the program, including eligibility criteria and application procedures. A list of participating schools is also available at <https://headstart.dadeschools.net/>.

Information sessions will be held on April 9, 2021 on Zoom to provide program information to all



[www.dadeschools.net](http://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

## SOCIAL MEDIA

 @MDCPS  
@EscuelasMDCPS  
@MiamiSup

 @MiamiSchools  
@AlbertoMCarvalho1

 @MiamiSchools  
@MiamiSup

 @MiamiSchools

## The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair  
Dr. Steve Gallon III, Vice Chair  
Lucia Baez-Geller  
Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall  
Christi Fraga  
Dr. Lubby Navarro  
Dr. Marta Pérez

Mari Tere Rojas  
Luisa Santos  
Alberto M. Carvalho  
Superintendent of Schools  
Maria Martinez  
Student Advisor to the School Board

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