

# CONNECTION

A Newsletter for Miami-Dade County Public Schools Parents

## M-DCPS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS SCORE BIG WIN

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) and the 77,000 English Language Learners (ELL) in the District scored a big, meaningful win as the federal government reversed course to allow more flexibility in how the State will test students still learning English. The U.S. Department of Education recently approved Florida's amendment to its Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver granting an exemption from the performance criteria for recently arrived immigrants that have been in this country for less than two years.

Florida was one of the first states to implement strong accountability measures for its schools. But when the No Child Left Behind Act was enacted in 2001, it meant that Florida had two systems: the state's and a federal one. In October 2011, the US Secretary of Education invited states to request a flexibility waiver enabling them to move to a single accountability system. In February 2012, that waiver was granted. The US Department of Education added criteria that needed to be reviewed, requiring action by the State Board of Education as well as legislation.

In order to renew Florida's ESEA flexibility request for 2014-15, the Florida Department of Education submitted an updated flexibility application on June 4, 2014. In August, the federal government denied that waiver request. That same month, Superintendent of Schools Alberto M. Carvalho joined the Governor and the Commissioner calling on the U.S. Department of Education to reverse its decision.

Superintendent Carvalho followed that request with a position piece that proposed five changes to the State accountability system. The first change was a revisit of the flawed policy that held ELL students accountable before they were even able to have complete command of the English language. Last November, he traveled to Washington D.C. to negotiate the ELL policy with Secretary Duncan.

## M-DCPS OUTPERFORMS STATE ON HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES, GRADUATION RATES

Miami-Dade County's public high schools have once again outperformed the state on school performance grades, despite increased accountability measures.

High schools in Miami-Dade scored better School Performance Grades at a higher rate than the state average, despite changes in the grading scale and the inclusion of new components in the grading formula.

- 43 percent of M-DCPS senior high schools earned an "A", as compared to 36 percent statewide.
- 74 percent of M-DCPS senior high schools earned an "A" or "B", as compared to 71 percent statewide.

- 97 percent of M-DCPS senior high schools earned School Performance Grades of "C" or better, as compared to 95 percent statewide.

For the fourth consecutive school year, M-DCPS has had no "F"-rated schools among its traditional senior high schools.

Miami-Dade also beat the state's average graduation rate, with 76.6 percent of students graduating, above the state average of 76.1 percent. If traditional senior high schools are considered by themselves, without the inclusion of charter schools, Miami-Dade's graduation rate reaches 80.2 percent. Miami-Dade's graduation rate also exceeded those of Broward, Duval, Hillsborough, and Orange counties.

These notable achievements are the result of continuing hard work by the District's teachers, administrators, school employees, and volunteers.

## FIVE FINALISTS VIE FOR MIAMI-DADE'S 2016 FRANCISCO R. WALKER TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Miami-Dade County Public Schools will host the 2016 Francisco R. Walker Miami-Dade County Teacher of the Year dinner to name the most outstanding teacher throughout the District on Thursday, Feb. 5, at 6 p.m. at the DoubleTree by Hilton Miami Airport & Convention Center. The 2015 Rookie Teacher of the Year also will be chosen.

The five teacher of the year finalists, the areas they represent and their schools are listed as follows:

North – Christine Rodriguez, Hialeah Gardens Senior High  
Central – Lisa Hauser, iPreparatory Academy  
South – Geoffrey Aladro, Frank C. Martin K-8 Center  
ETO – Tawana Akins, Holmes Elementary  
Alternative/Vocational – Charlemagne Olius, Adult/Vocational/Alternative Education

The District and United Teachers of Dade also will recognize the 2015 Rookie Teacher of the Year finalists, and announce the winner at the event. The finalists are listed as follows:

North – Stacey Lynn Rodriguez, Lawton Chiles Middle  
South – Desiree Amber Chase, MAST @ Homestead  
Central – Elizabeth Rulan, Miami Springs Senior High  
Alternative/Vocational – Rebekah Erdvig, Adult/Vocational/Alternative Education

## DATES TO REMEMBER

February 16 - All Presidents Day  
February 17 - Teacher Planning Day  
March 20 - Teacher Planning Day  
March 23-27 - Spring Recess

**M-DCPS ON THE COLLEGE BOARD'S 5TH ANNUAL AP DISTRICT HONOR ROLL FOR SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN STUDENT ACCESS, SUCCESS**

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is one of 547 school districts in the U.S. and Canada being honored by the College Board with placement on the 5th Annual AP District Honor Roll for increasing access to Advanced Placement (AP) course work, while simultaneously maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP Exams.

Reaching these goals indicates that the District is successfully identifying motivated, academically prepared students who are ready for the opportunity of AP. Since 2010, M-DCPS has increased the number of students participating in AP while improving the number of students earning AP Exam scores of 3 or higher.

During the period from 2010 to 2014, Miami-Dade County Public Schools:

- Increased student participation in AP by an average of five percent annually;
- Increased the number of AP course offerings by 29 percent from 870 to 1,125;
- Increased the percentage of AP students earning a 3 or above, with 46 percent of AP students scoring 3 or above in 2014; and
- Increased the percentage of traditionally underserved minority AP students participating and earning a 3 or above on at least one AP Exam.

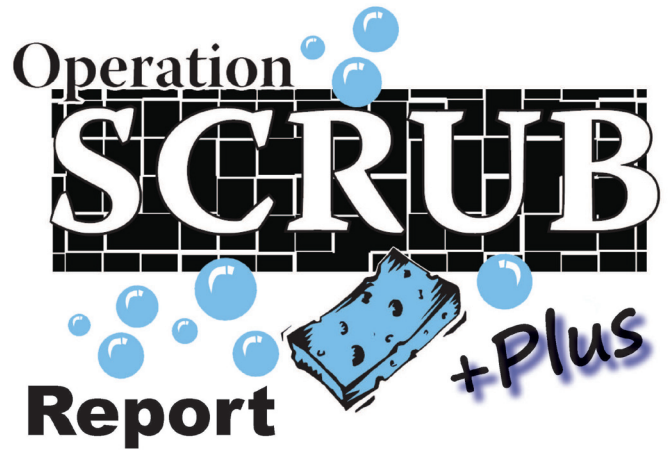
In 2014, more than 3,800 colleges and universities around the world received AP scores for college credit, advanced placement, and/or consideration in the admission process, with many colleges and universities in the United States offering credit in one or more subjects for qualifying AP scores.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools is committed to expanding the availability of AP courses among prepared and motivated students of all backgrounds. The AP District Honor Roll validates Miami Dade's focus on access to advanced academic programs and AP courses.

The College Board's AP Program enables students to pursue college-level studies — with the opportunity to earn college credit, advanced placement or both — while still in high school.

**UPCOMING SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS**

March 11	11:00 a.m.	Regular Meeting (Initial Reading - Attendance Zones for 2015-2016)
April 15	9:00 a.m.	Conference Session: Attendance Zones for 2015-2016
	11:00 a.m.	Regular Meeting
May 13	11:00 a.m.	Regular Meeting (Final Reading - Attendance Zones for 2015-2016)



**Report Health & Sanitation Concerns**

**305-20-SCRUB**  
**scrub.dadeschools.net**  
**TDD/TYY: 305-995-2400**



Students and Parents may visit [scrub.dadeschools.net](http://scrub.dadeschools.net) to report Health and Sanitation concerns at their school.

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

- Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair
- Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman, Vice Chair
- Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall
- Susie V. Castillo
- Dr. Wilbert "Tee" Holloway
- Dr. Martin Karp
- Dr. Marta Pérez
- Raquel A. Regalado

Alberto M. Carvalho  
 Superintendent of Schools

Julian Lafaurie  
 Student Advisor to the School Board

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