

# NEWS ALERT



**Miami-Dade County Public Schools**

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## **Welcome to the 2019-2020 School Year at M-DCPS** ***New Programs, Safety Measures, Mental Health Initiatives***

On Monday, August 19, 2019, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) will once again open its doors to more than 350,000 students for the start of a new school year, one that promises to be another banner year. We are rolling out academic programs and initiatives designed to continue the innovation, academic rigor, parental engagement, and increased efficiencies in operations, for which this A-rated school district has garnered national recognition. Additionally, the District will continue its steadfast commitment to ensuring the safety and security of its students, employees, and visitors, through increased hiring of police officers and the deployment of innovative technology.

Here are some highlights of what our community can expect during the upcoming school year:

### **Academic Programs and Initiatives**

New and enhanced programs and initiatives will be launched to benefit students, employees, parents, and the community. These include an emphasis on sustainable operations, such as installing solar panels and water bottle-filling stations, that will both serve as an example to students and help meet the environmental challenges facing our world; building partnerships with such noteworthy institutions and businesses as Zoo Miami, Florida International University, Audible (an Amazon Company), Lego and Verizon, among others; and increased STEAM and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

Additional academic programs and initiatives include:

- Pre-K and Kindergarten readiness
- College readiness
- Expansion of music programs at all elementary schools
- Climate change education
- Harnessing solar energy
- Expansion of our Learn to Swim program
- Partnerships with professional athletic organizations to enhance our elementary and K-8 physical activities
- Teacher resources, including a resource center and a state-of-the art professional development facility
- Parent resources, including a virtual Parent Academy Campus
- Deployment of 24,000 mobile devices, 17,000 teacher desktops and 1,000 interactive whiteboards

To learn more about this year's new programs and initiatives, please click on the following link:

<http://news.dadeschools.net/cmnc/new/29158>

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## **Safety**

The District has invested in enhancing school safety through school police, infrastructure improvements, and personnel training and development aimed at averting potential tragedy. Through an aggressive yet highly selective hiring process for the Miami-Dade Schools Police Department (M-DSPD), and with collaboration from Miami-Dade County and a number of municipal law enforcement agencies, all school campuses, both M-DCPS-operated and charter-run, have a school resource officer (SRO) or a school safety officer (SSO) assigned for the start of the school year, as required under the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act.

Additional points ensuring safety at all M-DCPS facilities include:

- All classroom doors will be locked during the school day so that anyone seeking to gain entry will be required to have a key or knock.
- School sites have reduced points of entry for both employees, students and visitors.
- Hard corners, a safe area, have been designated at school sites.
- Perimeter fencing of school sites are regularly checked and inspected. Procedures are in place that elevate all work order requests for perimeter fencing, classroom and exterior door lock repairs to critical incident status.
- All school-site personnel and all students in secondary schools are required to have identification badges.
- New security signage has been installed at schools directing visitors to the main entry point.
- "Raptor" visitor management system (VMS) has been implemented at all schools. To date, the system has screened 1.9 million registered visitors to school sites and facilities.
- An additional 1,600 security cameras were added this year, bringing the total camera count to more than 18,000 districtwide.
- 105 public address systems were upgraded, and an additional 66 upgrades are currently in progress, allowing for quick, clear schoolwide and exterior area communication.
- The Police Command Center serves as the nucleus of the M-DSPD's intelligence-led policing strategy, greatly improving the ability to identify, assess, and respond to threats. From the command center, police can view cameras in real-time at every school site, as well as monitor the Raptor VMS and ShotSpotter technology, a military grade ballistic-identifying software.
- Redundant and failsafe notification mechanisms are in place for critical incidents.
- The "See Something, Say Something" campaign was expanded.
- The M-DSPD Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) were updated to provide clear language related to how police officers are to move forward in the event of an active assailant incident.
- In addition to monthly fire drills, each school must conduct one active assailant drill. Each school must also conduct one hostage drill, one bomb threat drill, and one tornado drill per quarter on an alternating basis. All active assailant and hostage drills must be developmentally and age appropriate. Monthly drill scenarios will be released on an ongoing basis. Annual emergency drill schedule and Fire Alarm System Inquiry (FASI) drill logging procedures will be forthcoming.
- Enhanced and systemic training of personnel and students will continue.
- School-site personnel have received directives regarding the mandatory use of the VMS and implementation of the "challenge and check system." This practice directs faculty and staff to stop all unknown individuals NOT wearing staff, student or visitor's identification. These individuals are escorted to the designated Access/Entry point for proper screening.
- Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) training will be conducted at all schools and District offices.
- Communications outreach has been enhanced, including text messages to parents and employees during emergency situations.

## New School Year / add two

- Social media has been used to promote social media responsibility using the hashtag #ThinkBeforeYouPost.
- TipSoft: M-DSPD utilizes as its mobile tip/reporting application. The link to this application can be found on the M-DCPS home page, M-DSPD Home page and via the anonymous reporting page.
- FortifyFL, a suspicious activity reporting tool that allows users to instantly relay critical information to appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials, has been added to the Dadeschools mobile app. This tool can also be downloaded from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. It can also be accessed from the Dadeschools.net homepage, as well as the student, parent, and employee portal pages. Additionally, a link to FortifyFL is available on each school site information page. Tips may also be submitted online at [getfortifyfl.com](http://getfortifyfl.com).

### **Mental Health**

The 2019-2020 school year will see an expansion of the Department of Mental Health Services, which was established July 2018 to coordinate and facilitate services between schools and community agencies and ensure students who are referred for mental health care are accessing services. Ten additional Mental Health Coordinators (40 total) were hired to assist schools in providing greater flexibility in the identification of students in need of mental health evaluations. The department will also coordinate school and community-based services for students and families to enhance students' social-emotional well-being and maximize their success.

Among the many additional measures being taken to provide for the mental health of all students are the following:

- The partnership will continue with The Children's Trust and the 40 mental health providers they hired to assist schools. Partners through The Children's Trust include: Community Health of South Florida, Nicklaus Children's Hospital, Citrus Health Network, Borinquen Medical Center, Jessie Trice Community Health, and the University of Miami.
- New partnerships were established with outside contracted agencies to support the collaboration between schools and the community in order to provide a full continuum of services. Agencies include: Citrus Health Network, Ayuda Inc., Chrysalis Health, Inc., DTT Coaching Services, LLC, Empowering Youth, Inc., Board of Trustees (Florida International University), The Village South, Healthy Connections CHMC, Inc., Jewish Community Services of South Florida, Prosperity Social and Community Development Group, Inc., Neurohealth Professional of Florida, Inc., and Invo Healthcare Associates, LLC.
- New students registering must report previous mental health issues so schools can follow up and ensure necessary support and services are provided.
- All schools will continue to actively involve their Threat Assessment Team and Mental Health Team to discuss students who may need mental health services and direct these students to school and community resources to get the appropriate assistance.
- School-site teachers and staff will participate in the Youth Mental Health First Aid Training, which is a six-hour program designed for adults who regularly interact with adolescents that teaches the risk factors and warning signs of a variety of mental health challenges.
- Students will participate in the National Council of Behavioral Health Teen Mental Health First Aid Pilot Program, which teaches high school students about common mental health challenges and what they can do to support their own mental health or support a friend who is struggling.
- The Florida Board of Education's newly required five-hour Mental and Emotional Health Education for students in grades 6-12 will be implemented.
- Various platforms for parent training (live and virtual) will be expanded to increase their knowledge and awareness of mental health to best support their child.

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New School Year / add three

- The Department of Mental Health Services' Parent Assistance Line can be reached at (305) 995-7100 and additional information may be found on their website at [mentalhealthservices.dadeschools.net](http://mentalhealthservices.dadeschools.net).

## **GOB**

Students, staff and the community can once again look forward to the many beautiful new buildings and renovations that await them at M-DCPS during the 2019-2020 school year. These improvements are made possible with the continued implementation of the General Obligation Bond (GOB) – to renovate, remodel and replace schools; expand student capacity; enhance safety and provide technology upgrades.

This year, \$129.4 million in capital improvements are set to be unveiled as a result of the GOB. To date, GOB expenditures total approximately \$733.6M (\$92.8M for technology and \$640.8M for facilities), with another \$74.9M contracted. All completed GOB projects have come in on time and at or under budget. Additional information about GOB projects unveiled for 2019-2020 may be found at <http://news.dadeschools.net/cmnc/new/29176>

## **Transportation**

The District's 1,060 buses will be undertaking the massive operation of transporting approximately 45,000 Miami-Dade school children twice daily via 883 routes in the county and will travel over 13 million miles this school year covering 2,400 square miles throughout Miami-Dade County.

Additional points related to the District's transportation services are the following:

- All buses are air conditioned and are inspected for clean air quality, have seatbelts that allow for emergency release, meet the national and state guidelines for transporting students.
- Drivers go through rigorous training programs that focus on safe and efficient transportation of our students prior to being certified to operate our buses.
- Over 1,000 students will benefit from Flex Stops that allow the transportation of magnet students who do not reside within the Transportation Service Zone area but are near a bus route with available seating capacity.
- Global Positioning System (GPS) allows for greater operational efficiencies to be utilized by shortening bus routes and tracking bus positioning and will allow District staff to keep parents informed of the Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) of their child's bus route through the dispatch system.
- In the coming months, parents will also be able to obtain their child's bus information through the Dade Schools Mobile app.

## **Food**

On a tastier note, M-DCPS prepares 75,000 breakfast meals, 161,000 lunch meals and 29,000 after-school meals daily; a total of 265,000 daily meals each school day. M-DCPS' Department of Food and Nutrition will provide new breakfast and lunch menu items for the 2019-2020 school year. Among the new items are cheesy bites, fruit smoothies, vegetarian breakfast patties, potato and egg frittatas, whole grain cinnamon rolls, turkey and cheese calzones and vegetarian Chow Mein. Back by popular demand are fish filets and nuggets, along with an even larger variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.

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New School Year / add four

The District is also aiming for a healthier environment. The Department of Food and Nutrition is continuing its sustainability initiatives by using only compostable trays and eliminating plastic straws. Paper straws will be available if the student needs it. For a look at some of delicious new food items, go to <http://news.dadeschools.net/cmnc/new/29166>

For the most up-to-date information, please download the Dadeschools mobile app to your iPhone or Android device. Follow us on Twitter [@mdcps](#) and [@miamisup](#) and on Facebook at [MiamiSchools](#) and [AlbertoCarvalho](#). For additional information about M-DCPS programs and resources please visit the district's Back-to-School Tool Kit at <http://toolkit.dadeschools.net>.

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