

# CONNECTION

A NEWSLETTER FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARENTS

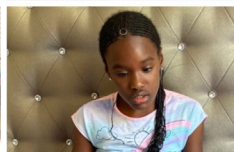
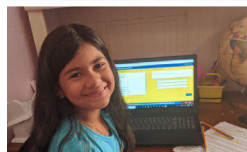
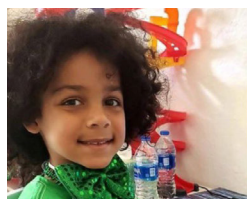
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April 2020

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## FORWARD. TOGETHER. EDUCATE.



For the past several weeks, we have been thrust into the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. The entire country has had to adjust priorities and accept a new normal to our daily lives. This includes classroom instruction and student learning.

Like school districts across the nation, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), its students, teachers, and parents have had to rethink traditional methods of teaching and learning. Governor Ron DeSantis' decision to close schools through at least May 1 came as no surprise to our district and school leaders. Given the health crisis upon our nation, we were already preparing for remote teaching and learning. In light speed, we quickly mobilized the district's technical and digital assets to ensure that robust instruction continues despite the pause impacting the rest of the world.

The school district launched distance learning in mid-March, and it continued following the Spring Recess with full implementation of

the M-DCPS Instructional Continuity Plan (ICP) 2.0. Under this upgraded version, attendance is recorded and grades are issued. The first week ended with 91 percent student attendance. The plan is available for viewing at [icp.dadeschools.net](http://icp.dadeschools.net). Teachers received comprehensive online professional development training, equipping them with the knowledge and tools needed for successful digital instruction.

Additionally, school site leaders surveyed students at their schools to identify those with mobile device needs. More than 100,000 mobile devices, including phones for connectivity, have been distributed to support distance learning in Miami-Dade thus far. Our principals continue to contact parents to ensure that every child has the needed digital tools to facilitate online learning, while also making accommodations for students who are homeless or live in migrant camps. Recognizing that effective online learning also depends on reliable Internet connectivity, the school District leveraged its relationships

with the private and public sectors to ensure geographic areas that lack proper connectivity are addressed. Parents with questions about how to obtain a device or support for connectivity should email their child's school principal or call our support line at 305-995-3000.

But as important as mobile devices and technology are, so too are motivation and encouragement. Parents, along with teachers, play a pivotal role in this new teaching and learning environment. It's important that students engage daily in their online learning, and while our teachers are responsible for delivering instruction, parents are the catalyst to ensure that students remain engaged. Now, more than ever, parent/teacher/school partnerships are paramount.

And while COVID-19 has forced us to drastically augment our virtual engagement, it has not diminished our spirit of community.

From distributing mobile devices to handing out more than 850,000 grab-and-go breakfasts and lunches, our workforce has risen to the occasion to help our students and their families. We are accomplishing all of this responsibly, adhering to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) social distancing guidelines.

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This has been an extraordinary time for our nation, impacting every industry from health to business to finance to education. We have been forced to navigate untested and uncharted waters. From day one, M-DCPS has focused on ensuring that instruction remains consistent and is made available to every child. While the lift has been heavy, the love, support, and solidarity have been overwhelming. Knowing that our students' educational journey continues even through this pandemic is more than gratifying – it's awe-inspiring. The resolve of any community and its residents is

revealed in times of challenge and adversity. Miami-Dade has shown its strength and compassion. We continue to deliver on our promise of a world-class education because of the leadership of our Superintendent, School Board, committed teachers, school-site leaders and District workforce, as well as our parents, and community and business partners.

And while no one knows what the future holds, the path forward is clear. We must continue to work together to provide students with a learning experience that is exciting and meaningful.

## PARENT E-TIPS

### Primary:

**Don't Always Answer Your Child's Questions**

<https://bit.ly/3emDaOx>

### Secondary:

**Turn Your Teen's Smart Phone Into a Learning Aid**

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

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A STUDENT AND A TEACHER DURING DISTANCE LEARNING



Before all schools were closed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, a typical day for 8th-grader Montserrat "Montse" Hernandez would begin with her arriving at Bob Graham Education Center K-8, hurrying off to her first period home room class for attendance, meeting with friends, attending her favorite classes – Algebra 1 and World History – and asking her teachers lots of questions while they explained everything that was on the board that day.

Now, one of the differences with Distance Learning is she can calmly finish her breakfast before entering her virtual classes. The 13-year old, who will be attending

Barbara Goleman Senior High's Law Enforcement/Intelligence Studies program next year, connects with her classmates with the Zoom app and it also gives her a chance to talk to her teachers during the class.

"I use Edmodo for all my teachers. In my personal opinion, this program is excellent because I can communicate with them very easily," she said.

Like many students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), Montse was already familiar with online applications. She explained that she does all her homework using i-Ready, Edgenuity and other programs

"Even though I prefer attending school because it's not the same as when you're sitting in a classroom, in this moment, Virtual School is very beneficial for me and all the students because it's permitting us to keep on learning and it's giving us the opportunity to finish the school year."

As school systems around the country continue to navigate these uncharted

waters due to the global pandemic, M-DCPS has taken additional steps to support students, teachers, schools and community.

Shifting from classroom teaching to online teaching has been an adjustment, no doubt, but with a little planning and practice, it can be done. The District has identified digital resources such as Edgenuity, Gizmos, i-Ready, and Class Dojo among others, that teachers can use to deliver core content. However, there also are digital resources that provide students with assignments during school closures.

The Instructional Continuity Plan (ICP) 2.0 keeps track of attendance and grades are recorded. Information on available resources for students and teachers to use during this time has been updated and many publishers are generously providing free access to normally fee-based content. The District has also included high quality, standards-aligned materials, which will benefit teachers and students.

“Miami-Dade County Public Schools has done a wonderful job at equipping all teachers with the necessary tools and professional development opportunities to make distance learning a success,” says Vanessa Valle, the District’s 2021 Teacher of the Year.

“Distance learning has presented us all with a challenge,” says Valle, who is the literacy coach, Reading Department chair and Lead teacher for Hialeah Gardens Senior High’s Law Academy. “Teachers, students and parents have been faced with having to think out-of-the-box and make things happen. As educators, we are equipped with the innate drive to make things happen because we care for our students.”

Communication is essential in online learning. ICP 2.0 includes information about the District’s platform of choice, Microsoft Teams. This app is available through the student and

employee portals and provides secure communications between teachers and students. The ICP 2.0 website also includes information about Zoom Video Conferencing, which is also available through Microsoft Teams.

Many teachers have opted to use Zoom, which provides a simple and robust communications platform. The integration of Teams and Zoom allows teachers to use the functionality of Zoom in a secure environment established through the integration of Zoom into Teams and by requiring Microsoft Teams/Office 365 authentication.

The District continues to offer teachers opportunities for professional development during this time. Included in ICP 2.0 is the Distance Learning Support PD Menu that lists over 40 professional development offerings available to teachers and covering topics such as navigating their remote

classrooms, exploring best practices for distance learning, and improving communication and collaboration with colleagues and students. The selection of webinars or videos – both District-created or collaboratively produced with our partner content providers – are available through the employee portal. Teachers can participate on the dates and times that work best for them.

Valle is optimistic with how students and teachers are being exposed to innovative technology tools to make the best of the circumstances.

“From my personal experience, students are working hard and definitely learning. In this, we have all learned to become expert communicators. Communication has driven the success of the program in place. M-DCPS has united and demonstrated the power of collaboration, empathy, and the love that exists in our community.”

## CENSUS 2020 – EVERYONE COUNTS!



All kids count.

The 2020 Census is in full swing! The census counts everyone in the United States and is used to determine congressional representation and how more than \$675 billion in federal funds are distributed each year to support vital programs in Miami-Dade County. These funds shape local healthcare, housing, education, transportation, employment, and

public policy. The 2020 Census will shape the future of our community—for the next 10 years.

Be sure to count everyone living in your home including kids, parents and grandparents on your 2020 Census form. Don’t forget to include newborn babies and young children as it impacts programs such as children’s health insurance, hospitals, child care, food assistance and early childhood development.

You can respond online, by phone or by mail, and the Census Bureau offers resources in English and 59 other languages to ensure that everyone can respond. Your responses to the 2020 Census are safe, secure,

and protected by federal law. Your answers can only be used to produce statistics. They cannot be used against you by any government agency or court in any way—not by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security, or the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

If you need additional assistance or access to a computer, we have Census Assistance Centers located at selected adult education centers and community schools with personnel ready to assist you. For more information, visit [www.census2020.dadeschools.net](http://www.census2020.dadeschools.net).





Since the beginning of school closures on March 16 due to COVID-19, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has distributed more than a million “grab-and-go” meals to families in need throughout the district.

M-DCPS employees have answered the call to assist during this time of strain in our community, passing out meals at 50 select school sites. Seventy-three percent of M-DCPS students receive free or reduced-price lunch, which demonstrates the alarming food insecurity in South Florida.

“We will be with our community, through this crisis, every step of the way,” said Schools Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho. “I want to shine the spotlight on the brave men and women of Miami-Dade County Public Schools who maintain the lifeline of food distribution to the neediest in our community and

thank the many generous donors and partners who support our efforts.”

M-DCPS has also partnered with individual donors, local organizations and restaurateurs to provide thousands of additional meals to children and families. With the dollars donated, food is purchased from restaurants, supporting the hospitality industry and the local economy while delivering hot meals and bags of fresh produce to families. Since March 25, the inception of the Meals-on-the-Go program, thousands of hot meals have been delivered to homes in our most fragile communities. The partnership has already raised more than \$500,000. To learn more on how you can support this effort, visit <http://www.giveourstudentstheworld.org/>.

In addition to the ongoing feedings

at school sites, M-DCPS partner organizations are assisting in our efforts to ensure no child or family goes hungry. Meals and food distribution are also available from the following partners:

- [Share Your Heart](#)
- [Farm Share](#)
- [Feeding South Florida](#)

The District’s commitment to providing food security for our students and families has not wavered. For more information and for the list of all meal distribution sites, please visit <http://covid19.dadeschools.net/>

## SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

**April 29**

**10 a.m.**

**Conference Session:  
Attendance Zones for  
2020-2021**

**11 a.m.**

**Regular Meeting**

## SOCIAL MEDIA



@MDCPS  
@EscuelasMDCPS  
@MiamiSup



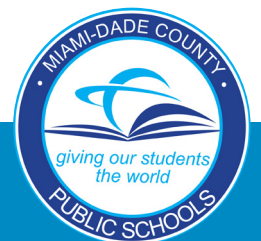
@MiamiSchools  
@AlbertoMCarvalho1



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

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Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall  
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Dr. Lawrence S. Feldman  
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Dr. Marta Pérez  
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Superintendent of Schools  
Christopher Badillo  
Student Advisor to the School Board