

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FRANCISCO R. WALKER 2027

**TEACHER OF THE YEAR
AND
ROOKIE TEACHER OF THE YEAR
RECOGNITION DINNER**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026

6:30 P.M. | PROGRAM & DINNER

SIGNATURE SPONSORS

**EDFED
KENDALL TOYOTA
UNITED WAY**

**DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HOTEL
MIAMI AIRPORT & CONVENTION CENTER
711 NW 72 AVENUE, MIAMI, FLORIDA 33126**

**M-DCPS
YOUR BEST
CHOICE**

**2027 FRANCISCO R. WALKER
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TEACHER OF THE YEAR & ROOKIE TEACHER OF THE YEAR
RECOGNITION CEREMONY**

Opening

Ms. Nicole Sued, Mistress of Ceremonies
Univision/Mix 98.3 Radio Host

Presentation of Colors

Honor Guard
Miami-Dade County Public Schools Police Department

Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Kylie Sowers
Student Advisor to the School Board

National Anthem

Ms. Chloe Jean-Jules
New World School of the Arts Student

Introduction of District Finalists

Ms. Nicole Sued

Greetings

Ms. Mari Tere Rojas, Chair
The School Board of Miami-Dade County

Recognition of Region Teacher of the Year Finalists

Ms. Nicole Sued

Dinner Served

Partner Remarks

Mr. Osmani Gonzalez, President
Miami-Dade County Council PTA/PTSA

Mr. Leonardo Mourão, President
Dade Association of School Administrators

Sponsor Recognition

EdFed, Kendall Toyota, and United Way Miami

Video of Teacher of the Year and Rookie Teacher of the Year District Finalists

Student Performance

“One Short Day”
Miami Arts Studio Middle School Theatre Students

Acknowledgement of 2026 Teacher of the Year

Dr. Precious Symonette and Ms. Unethia Fox
Teacher of the Year Coalition

Reflections

Ms. Viviana Ventura
2026 Miami-Dade County Francisco R. Walker Teacher of the Year
Southwood Middle School

Remarks

Mr. Antonio White, President
United Teachers of Dade

Remarks

Dr. Jose L. Dotres, Superintendent
Miami-Dade County Public Schools

**Announcement of 2027 Rookie Teacher of the Year and
Francisco R. Walker Teacher of the Year**



AWARD HISTORY

Francisco R. Walker was a teacher at Miami Edison Middle School as well as a member of the United Teachers of Dade. He was a young teacher and was the first teacher in Florida who lost his life in the line of duty on school property. At his memorial, dignitaries from around the state spoke on his behalf and offered proclamations to his family in honor of his dedication and devotion to this great profession. He was a great role model for his students. In memory of Mr. Walker, the name of the Miami-Dade County Teacher of the Year Award was changed to the Francisco R. Walker Miami-Dade County Teacher of the Year Award.

SELECTION PROCEDURES

The Francisco R. Walker Teacher of the Year is chosen from more than 18,000 Miami-Dade County teachers who met the criteria established by the Florida Department of Education for the Florida Teacher of the Year. The 2026 Teacher of the Year and 2026 Rookie Teacher of the Year are chosen through a selection process that begins at the school site to choose their Teacher of the Year and Rookie Teacher of the Year. Each school's Teacher of the Year and Rookie Teacher of the Year are submitted to their respective region. Finalists are identified at each region, and a Region Teacher of the Year and Region Rookie Teacher of the Year are chosen and submitted to the District level. The District Teacher of the Year and District Rookie Teacher of the Year are each selected by a joint M-DCPS/UTD Task Force. At all levels, the selection is a collaborative effort of M-DCPS, UTD, the Miami-Dade County Council PTAs/PTSAs, and business representation.



2027 FRANCISCO R. WALKER MIAMI-DADE COUNTY TEACHER OF THE YEAR TASK FORCE

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dr. Milagros Gonzalez, Co-Chairperson
Professional Development and Evaluation

Jorge M. Bulnes
Southwest Miami Senior High School

John Crary
Winston Park K-8 Center

Marcia C. Fernandez
Parkway Elementary School

Walter C. Hall
Leisure City K-8 Center

Chandrell Larkin
Hubert O. Sibley K-8 Academy

Barbara Martin
Coral Way K-8 Center

UNITED TEACHERS OF DADE (UTD)

Dr. Erick M. Hueck, Co-Chairperson
Miami Senior High School

Melissa C. Abril-Dotel
North Beach Elementary School

Hiralda Cruz
UTD Staff Liaison

Nadia S. German
Ojus Elementary School

Ray L. Parris
New World School of the Arts

Stephen M. Pereira
School for Advanced Studies-Wolfson

Dr. Precious T. Symonette
Miami Norland Senior High School

ROOKIE TEACHER OF THE YEAR TASK FORCE

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Leonardo Mourino, Co-Chairperson
Morningside K-8 Academy

Mercy Aguilar
Oliver Hoover Elementary School

Iliana B. Artime
George Washington Carver Middle School

Reginald H. Johnson
Alternative Education

Jorge Mazon
Miami Beach South Pointe Elementary School

Marie H. Orth-Sanchez
Professional Development and Evaluation

Alonza Pendergrass
Air Base K-8 Center for International Education

Scott A. Weiner
Miami Coral Park Senior High

UNITED TEACHERS OF DADE (UTD)

Dr. Nyree M. Washington, Co-Chairperson
Coral Reef Senior High School

Jade A. Deal
UTD Staff Liaison

Valencia A. Falco
Richmond Heights Middle School

Octalie Holmes
Nathan B. Young Elementary School

Emmanuela T. Louis
Jose de Diego Middle School

Renee O'Connor
Miami Norland Senior High School

Lawanda N. Reddick
Comstock Elementary School

Monica G. Toranzo
Hialeah Gardens Senior High School



**FRANCISCO R. WALKER
TEACHER OF THE YEAR DISTRICT FINALIST**



JULIA PENNINGTON-GILCHRIST
DR. FREDERICA S. WILSON/SKYWAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Meet Julia Pennington-Gilchrist, a fifth-grade Reading/Language Arts teacher whose dedication to Miami-Dade County Public Schools spans 31 years. More than a teacher, Julia is a life-changer, known for transforming students and school culture.

A proud alum of Miami Central Senior High School, Julia leads with love; inspired by the teachers who supported her through homelessness during high school. She serves as a role model for her students who are among the lowest 25th percentile, leading them to achieve 100% learning gains for two consecutive years.

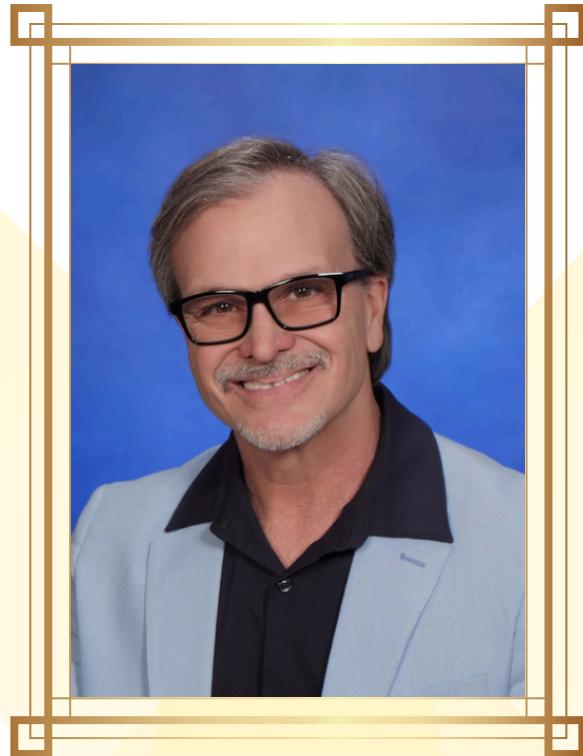
Beyond her role at Skyway Elementary, Julia founded Scholarship Sundays, helping high school seniors earn over \$100,000 in scholarship monies, and revitalized the annual Royal Court Coronation, a tradition that now unites the entire Carol City Feeder Pattern. A pillar of her community, Julia Pennington-Gilchrist ensures every child feels valued and prepared for success.

NORTH



REGION

**FRANCISCO R. WALKER
TEACHER OF THE YEAR DISTRICT FINALIST**



ROBERTO RABELEO

SOUTH MIAMI MIDDLE SCHOOL

Roberto Rabelo is a passionate veteran educator with 37 years of experience, and a legacy of transformative impact as a seventh-grade Civics teacher at South Miami Middle Community School. He is the architect of the Do What Others Won't Mindset of Success, a philosophy centered on growth and resilience that has driven dramatic results: in one year, his students' Civics EOC scores soared from 64% to 83%, outperforming advanced classes.

Mr. Rabelo's influence extends far beyond the test scores. As the "Social Learning Guru", he champions social-emotional growth, leading school-wide movements of positivity. A powerful community advocate, he established The Power of One and ICLK (Inspiring Compassion, Love, and Kindness), both student-led initiatives to secure essential resources for the less fortunate, and leading to South Miami being designated as a "Compassionate City." Roberto Rabelo is more than an educator; he is a mentor, a leader, and a hero dedicated to showing every student that they are limitless.

CENTRAL



REGION

FRANCISCO R. WALKER TEACHER OF THE YEAR DISTRICT FINALIST



DALE J. ADAMSON

HOWARD D. MCMILLAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Meet Dale Adamson, a true champion of innovation and the heart of Howard D. McMillan Middle School! For 14 years, Dale has been sparking curiosity, as the Robotics and Engineering Academy Lead Teacher; consistently pushing boundaries. A Milken Educator Award winner and Magnet Schools of America Region 3 Teacher of the Year, his dedication to rigor is proven.

Adamson's impact is defined by exceptional student outcomes, including a 98% proficiency rate in Algebra 1, and seven consecutive VEX IQ State Championships leading the school's STEM Squad." Beyond the classroom, he has donated over 500 hours as a robotics head referee and serves as the school's varsity basketball coach.

A mentor who instills a lasting commitment to excellence, Dale Adamson is a builder of programs, a builder of community, and, most importantly, a builder of young minds.

SOUTH



REGION

**FRANCISCO R. WALKER
TEACHER OF THE YEAR DISTRICT FINALIST**



GARY D. SPITNALE

MIAMI LAKES EDUCATIONAL CENTER AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Gary D. Spitnale is a veteran educator with over 18 years of experience teaching Culinary Arts at Miami Lakes Educational Center & Technical College. With a professional career spanning 55 years, Chef Gary leverages his vast industry background—including directing multimillion-dollar luxury resort operations—to prepare high school and postsecondary students for real-world success.

His commitment to excellence is evidenced by his students' success, with over 90% of them earning national ServSafe and ACF certifications, and graduates consistently advancing into leadership roles within South Florida's hospitality industry. A leader in his field, Chef Spitnale has served as President and Treasurer of the Greater Miami American Culinary Federation (ACF) and was named the 2024 ACF Chapter Chef of the Year. For Chef Spitnale, excellence is the key ingredient to success.



**POSTSECONDARY CAREER AND TECHNICAL
EDUCATION/DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL
OPPORTUNITIES**

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Marina Rasero Rodriguez, ADA MERRITT K-8 CENTER
Hannah Phillips, AGENORIA S. PASCHAL/OLINDA ES 

Nancy Wright, AIR BASE K-8 CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
Lillymae Benjamin-Peterkin, ALONZO AND TRACY MOURNING SENIOR HIGH
BISCAYNE BAY CAMPUS

Kaylee Moreno, AMELIA EARHART ES
Alberto Concepcion, AMERICAN SHS 

Adrienne Anderson, ANDOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL
Wendy Van Grieken, ANDREA CASTILLO PREPARATORY ACADEMY
Jeanette Dorval, ARCH CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Melanie Richardson, ARVIDA MIDDLE SCHOOL
Valeri Gloria, AUBURNDALE ES

Henry Laguerre, AVENTURA WATERWAYS K-8 CENTER
Claudia Chatterton, AVOCADO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Laydien Fleites, BANYAN ES

Rebecca Alea, BARBARA GOLEMAN SHS

William Bryan, BEL-AIRE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Laura Gomez, BEN SHEPPARD ES

Wayne Kirkland, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN K-8 CENTER
Christina Diaz, BENT TREE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Felix Amador, BIOTECH @ RICHMOND HEIGHTS 9-12 HIGH SCHOOL 

Antonella Castro, BISCAYNE BEACH ES

Pablo Scaglia, BLUE LAKES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Erika Hurtado, BOB GRAHAM EDUCATION CENTER

Renette Collier, BOOKER T. WASHINGTON SHS

Angely De Paz, BOWMAN ASHE / DOOLIN K-8 ACADEMY
Nancy Adelson, BRENTWOOD ES

Anne Chmelir, BROADMOOR ES

Victoria Curry, BROWNSVILLE MS

Belinda Rowe, BRUCIE BALL EDUCATIONAL CENTER
Alana Lopez, BUNCHE PARK ES

Denise Sola, CALUSA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Jelysse Gonzalez, CAMPBELL DRIVE K-8 CENTER
Margaret Del Val, CARIBBEAN K-8 CENTER

Lakisha Williams, CAROL CITY ES

Kenyada Jefferson, CAROL CITY MS 

Chaneice Hall, CARRIE P. MEEK / WESTVIEW K-8 CENTER

Christina Vliet, CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: A CAMBRIDGE AS
Tanya Mobley, CHARLES DAVID WYCHE, JR. ES

Samentha Joseph-Richardson, CHARLES R. DREW K-8 CENTER
Kristine Suarez, CHARLES R. HADLEY ES

Monique Grandio, CHRISTINA M. EVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Janie Garcia, CITRUS GROVE K-8

Rebecca Labello, CLAUDE PEPPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Katie Arsham, COCONUT GROVE ES

Hugues Pericles, COCONUT PALM K-8 ACADEMY
Gilma Cortez, COMSTOCK ES

Zurisadday Arrocha Pellon, CORAL GABLES PREPARATORY ACADEMY
Rebeca Reinoso, CORAL GABLES SHS

Michelle Gonzalez, CORAL PARK ES

Natalie O'Neill, CORAL REEF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Stephanie Woolley-Larrea, CORAL REEF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Melanie Breto, CORAL WAY K-8 CENTER

Yvonne Emmanuelli, CUTLER BAY MIDDLE SCHOOL
La-Shanda West, CUTLER BAY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Frances Guerra, CUTLER RIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Adelfa Concepcion, CYPRESS K-8 CENTER

Latoya Covington, D. A. DORSEY TECHNICAL COLLEGE
Lisa Cantin, DANTE B. FASCELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Nancy Curbelo, DAVID FAIRCHILD ES

Paula Newkirk, DAVID LAWRENCE JR. K-8 CENTER

Niuriy Gonzalez, DEVON AIRE K-8 CENTER

Aurora Garcia, DOROTHY M. WALLACE COPE CENTER

Zola Lyn, DR. MICHAEL M. KROP SHS

Cristina Valdes, DR. CARLOS J. FINLAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Dominic Humphrey, DR. EDWARD L. WHIGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Julia Pennington-Gilchrist, DR. FREDERICA S. WILSON / SKYWAY ES 

Jessie Delgado-Pardo, DR. GILBERT L. PORTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Jenny Martinez Velazquez, DR. HENRY E. PERRINE ACADEMY OF THE ARTS

Runiya Brown, DR. HENRY W. MACK / WEST LITTLE RIVER K-8 CENTER

Brandi Aguada, DR. MANUEL C. BARREIRO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mykeshia Fenn, DR. ROBERT B. INGRAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Rossana Marrero, DR. ROLANDO ESPINOSA K-8 CENTER

Marina Nunez, DR. TONI BILBAO PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Zaida Perez, DR. WILLIAM A. CHAPMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ana Diaz Consul, E.W.F. STIRRUP ES

Marlon Greig, EARLINGTON HEIGHTS ES

Sheren Broadhurst, EDISON PARK K-8 CENTER

Nadesha Alonso, EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVE OUTREACH CENTER

Aynet Bustillo, EMERSON ES

Sandra Burr, ENEIDA MASSAS HARTNER ES

Angela Hopkins, ERNEST R. GRAHAM K-8 ACADEMY

Orietta Adrian, ETHEL KOGER BECKHAM K-8 CENTER

Stephanie Abreu, EUGENIA B. THOMAS K-8 CENTER

Yli Moreno, EVERGLADES K-8 CENTER

Roberto Lago, FAIRLAWN ES

Carolina Charria, FELIX VARELA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Gina Martin, FLAGAMI ES

Elizabeth Maristany, FLAMINGO ES

Donald Mills, FLORIDA CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Lidia Rivera, FRANCES S. TUCKER ES

Ana Allmon, FRANK C. MARTIN K-8 CENTER

Jamala Francois, FULFORD ES

Richard Quintana, G. HOLMES BRADDOCK SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Sandra Crissien, GATEWAY ENVIRONMENTAL K-8 LEARNING CENTER

Darren McDaniel, GEORGE T. BAKER AVIATION TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Adriana Perez, GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER ES

Malika Baltimore, GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER MS

Christopher Kelly, GEORGIA JONES-AYERS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Kernante Jules, GERTRUDE K. EDELMAN / SABAL PALM ES

Jonathan Cid, GLADES MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hilda Rodriguez, GLORIA FLOYD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ashley Donaldson, GOLDEN GLADES ES

Latoshia Lawrence-Martin, GOULDS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Kimberly Moore, GRATIGNY ES

Katrina Moncholi Ramos, GREENGLADE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Vivianna Padron, GULFSTREAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Jacqueline Blanco, HAMMOCKS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Tekia Smith, HENRY E. S. REEVES K-8 CENTER

Osmarie Fortich, HENRY H. FILER MS

Patricia Rios-Gonzalez, HENRY M. FLAGLER ES

Kaycie Alver, HENRY S. WEST LABORATORY SCHOOL

Miryam Peña, HERBERT A. AMMONS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Abnerys Leon, HIALEAH ES

Lilia Melendres, HIALEAH GARDENS ES

Paula Ricardo, HIALEAH GARDENS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Jeselie Martinez, HIALEAH GARDENS SHS

Mellanie Malik, HIALEAH MS

Ana Martinez, HIALEAH SHS

Michelle Medina, HIALEAH-MIAMI LAKES SHS

Tangela Cooper, HOLMES ES

Sheleathia Watts, HOMESTEAD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Andrew Taylor, HOMESTEAD SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Camille Anderson, HORACE MANN MS

Dale Adamson, HOWARD D. MCMLIAN MIDDLE SCHOOL 

Linda Holcomb, HOWARD DRIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Vernita Collins, HUBERT O. SIBLEY K-8 ACADEMY

Lianett Hechavarria, INTERNATIONAL STUDIES PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Karen Alonso, IPREP ACADEMY NORTH

Bradley Sultz, IPREP ACADEMY

 **Region Finalist**

 **District Finalist**

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Angela Jimenez, IRVING & BEATRICE PESKOE K-8 CENTER
Kimberly Rotolante, ITECH @ THOMAS A. EDISON ED. CTR.
Samantha Sanchez, J.C. BERMUDEZ DORAL SENIOR HIGH
Dayami Zayas, JAMES H. BRIGHT / J.W. JOHNSON ELEMENTARY
Shontel Howell, JAN MANN EDUCATIONAL CENTER 
Melissa Rojas, JANE S. ROBERTS K-8 CENTER
Kyra Carter, JESSE J. MCCRARY, JR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Nicole Chau, JOE HALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Dianelys Descalzo, JOELLA C. GOOD ES
Susan Betancourt, JOHN A. FERGUSON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Ja'Nyre Parker, JOHN F. KENNEDY MS
Mariela Jane, JOHN G. DUPUIS ES
Janellee Figueroedo, JOHN I. SMITH K-8 CENTER
Cinthia Gonzalez, JOHNNIE M. PARRIS COLONIAL DRIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Iris Martin, JORGE MAS CANOSA MIDDLE SCHOOL
Dashawniese Rainey, JOSE DE DIEGO MS
Jessica Torres, JOSE MARTI MAST 6-12 ACADEMY 
Margarita Tomasso, JUVENILE JUSTICE CTR ALT ED 
Shaniquah Belvin, KELSEY L. PHARR ES 
Melissa Streeter, KENDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Maria Nella Pinza Salazar, KENDALE LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Natasha Quesada, KENDALL SQUARE K-8 CENTER
Elizabeth Martinez, KENSINGTON PARK ES
Florence Pierre, KENWOOD K-8 CENTER
Alexandra Wolfe, KEY BISCAYNE K-8 CENTER
Tania Reina, KINLOCH PARK ES
Betty Robinson, KINLOCH PARK MS
Pamela Miller, LAKE STEVENS ES
Justin Townsel, LAKE STEVENS MS
Shameeka Meredith, LAKEVIEW ES
Richard Lizcano, LAMAR LOUISE CURRY MIDDLE SCHOOL
Nicole Gonzalez, LAURA C. SAUNDERS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Dwight Stevens, LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL
Randene Chickillo, LEEWOOD K-8 CENTER
Maura Robledo, LEISURE CITY K-8 CENTER
Jose Carrasco, LENORA BRAYNON SMITH ES
Melinda Scott, LIBERTY CITY ES
Tyrone Thompkins, LINDA LENTIN K-8 CENTER
Leonel Hernandez, LINDSEY HOPKINS TECHNICAL COLLEGE
Jessica Chavez, LUDLAM ES
Nydia Rivera, M.A. MILAM K-8 CENTER
Yolanda Thompson, MADIE IVES K-8 PREPARATORY ACADEMY
Noel Borroto, MADISON MS
Dr. Jasmine Ambeau, MANDARIN LAKES K-8 ACADEMY 
Idania Ramos, MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Stacy Spencer, MAST @ FIU BISCAYNE BAY CAMPUS
Jennifer Garnett, MAST ACADEMY
Yesenia Toledo, MAYA ANGELOU ES
Michael Helsper, MEADOWLANE ES
Cindy Granberry, MEDICAL ACADEMY FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Ashley Anglade, MELROSE ES
Dr. Juan Del Rio, MIAMI ARTS STUDIO 6-12 AT ZELDA GLAZER 
Nikoo Sanjabi, MIAMI BEACH FIENBERG / FISHER K-8
Margareth Schreiber, MIAMI BEACH NAUTILUS MS
Katora Mobley, MIAMI BEACH SHS
Jason Borgart, MIAMI BEACH SOUTH POINTE ES
Mark Reynolds, MIAMI CAROL CITY SHS
Schneyder Telus, MIAMI CENTRAL SHS
Leia Cole, MIAMI CORAL PARK SHS
Lamia Zahloul, MIAMI EDISON SHS
Barbara Smith Brown, MIAMI GARDENS ES
Jonathan Vale, MIAMI HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Leroy Wright, MIAMI JACKSON SHS
Elizabeth Orozco Monroe, MIAMI KILLIAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Gary Spitnale, MIAMI LAKES ED. CTR. AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE 
Yadira Suazo, MIAMI LAKES EDUCATIONAL CENTER
Oscar Badillo, MIAMI LAKES K-8 CENTER
Martha Vargas, MIAMI LAKES MS
Delia Schroeder, MIAMI NORLAND SHS 
Shileda Marshall, MIAMI NORTHWESTERN SHS
Sandra Tilton, MIAMI PALMETTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Fabienne Dominique, MIAMI SHORES ES
Darell Bernard, MIAMI SHS
Saida Chebbi, MIAMI SOUTHRIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Lilia Alvarez, MIAMI SPRINGS ES
Jaime Castano, MIAMI SPRINGS SHS
Lissette Castelero-Terron, MIAMI SUNSET SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Danette Deillon, MORNINGSIDE K-8 ACADEMY 
Christina St. Lawrence, MYRTLE GROVE ELEMENTARY
Dalia John Lewis, NATHAN YOUNG ES
Lavette Rutherford, NATURAL BRIDGE ES
Jacqueline Rodriguez, NEVA KING COOPER EDUCATIONAL CENTER
Silas Hoover, NEW WORLD SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
Christopher Jarrett, NORLAND MS 
Jennifer Irastorza, NORMA BUTLER BOSSARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Vanessa Alfonso, NORMAN S. EDELCUP / SUNNY ISLES BEACH K-8
Almendra Bodan, NORTH BEACH ES
Melissa Orr, NORTH COUNTY K-8 CENTER
Jasmine Williams, NORTH DADE MS
Tabitha Stanley-Williams, NORTH GLADE ES
Ayme Acosta, NORTH HIALEAH ES
Marc Maneus, NORTH MIAMI BEACH SHS
Monique Bullock, NORTH MIAMI ES
Sebastian Iturriaga, NORTH MIAMI MS
Tiffany Howard, NORTH MIAMI SHS
Maria Gonzalez, NORTH TWIN LAKES ES
Shannette Phillips, NORWOOD ES
Jessica Chen, OJUS ES
Laura Chavez, OLIVER HOOVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Alain Alvarez, OLYMPIA HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Elda Cepeda, PALM LAKES ES
Yamila Moreno, PALM SPRINGS MS
Jennifer Morffiz, PALM SPRINGS NORTH K-8 CENTER
Brittany Batten Jones, PALMETTO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Monica Alvarez, PALMETTO MIDDLE SCHOOL
Andrea Edwards, PARKWAY ES
Angelica Aragundi, PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR K-8 CENTER
Katrina Williams, PAUL W. BELL MIDDLE SCHOOL
Qiana Rogers, PHYLLIS RUTH MILLER ES
Sakeeta Mohabir, PINE LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Alexis Ellison, PINE VILLA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Maria Teresa Carranza-Gutierrez, PINCREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Marsha Fraser, PONCE DE LEON MS
Muhammed Clemons, RAINBOW PARK ES
Jordan Diaz, REDLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Neah Kriger, REDLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL
Sandra Rivera, REDONDO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Milagros Lopez, RIVERSIDE ES
Eduardo Acosta, RIVIERA MIDDLE SCHOOL
Deborah Davis, ROBERT MORGAN ED. CTR. AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE 
Carolina Sanchez, ROBERT MORGAN EDUCATIONAL CENTER 
Laura Berenguer, ROBERT RENICK EDUCATIONAL CENTER
Shamel Gibbons, ROBERT RUSSA MOTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Kathryn Sadurni, ROCKWAY ES
Jose Calonge, ROCKWAY MS
Patrick Vega, RONALD W. REAGAN / DORAL SHS
Nancy Carreno, ROYAL GREEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Yolanda Alfonso-Vo, ROYAL PALM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Francisco Castro, RUBEN DARIO MS

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Christine Bergman, RUTH K. BROAD / BAY HARBOR K-8 CENTER
Summer Tie-Shue, RUTH OWENS KRUSE EDUCATIONAL CENTER

Nelmi Santiago, SANTA CLARA ES

Antonio Seay, SCOTT LAKE ES

Jeanette Dovales, SEMINOLE ES

Gisela Reyes, SHENANDOAH ES

Lourdes Fuller, SHENANDOAH MS

Yenni Espinosa, SILVER BLUFF ES

Elizabeth Marin, SNAPPER CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Brigette Perez, SOUTH DADE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mark Godinez, SOUTH DADE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Joyce Griffiths, SOUTH DADE TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Angellina Ross, SOUTH HIALEAH ES

Felicia Johnson, SOUTH MIAMI HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Izarys Ruiz, SOUTH MIAMI K-8 CENTER

Roberto Rabelo, SOUTH MIAMI MS 

Joyce Campbell Sanjorge, SOUTH MIAMI SHS

Herminio Brasil, SOUTHSIDE PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Aleida Taveras, SOUTHWEST MIAMI SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Sarah Gomez-Martinez, SOUTHWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Evelyn Pantoja, SPANISH LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mary Hernandez, SPRINGVIEW ES

Monica Ramirez, SUNSET ES

Dennis Baquero, SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Maggie Lopez, SWEETWATER ES

Rashonda McKinney, SYLVANIA HEIGHTS ES

Claudia Alvarez, TERRA ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Yvette Wells, THOMAS JEFFERSON BISCAYNE GARDENS K-8

Sabrina Henry, TREASURE ISLAND ELEMENTARY

Beatriz Rivero, TROPICAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Guerline Dessalines, VAN E. BLANTON ES

Geraldine Cameron, VILLAGE GREEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Pricilla Maldonado, VIRGINIA A. BOONE / HIGHLAND OAKS ES

Sylvia Viquez, W. R. THOMAS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Andrea Minto, W.J. BRYAN ES

Elsa Urra, WELLMAN MATTHEWS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Heizel Cruz, WEST HIALEAH GARDENS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Jennifer Castillo, WEST HOMESTEAD K-8 CENTER

Doria Servilla, WEST LAKES PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Juan Grisales, WEST MIAMI MS

Alfredo Toral, WESTLAND HIALEAH SHS

Vivian Hernandez, WHISPERING PINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Latonya Gibbs-Hill, WILLIAM H. TURNER TECHNICAL ARTS HIGH SCHOOL 

Amarilis Salazar, WILLIAM LEHMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Steven Coiras, WINSTON PARK K-8 CENTER

Verona Nisbeth-Hart, YOUNG MEN'S PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Adrienne Burrows, YOUNG WOMEN'S PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Vanessa Cespedes, ZORA NEALE HURSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Region Finalist



District Finalist

ROOKIE TEACHER OF THE YEAR DISTRICT FINALIST



KATHERINE OCEJO

ERNEST R GRAHAM K-8 ACADEMY

Introducing Katherine Ocejo, who earned her college degree before high school graduation, a class of 2023 M-DCPS Alum—and she hasn't slowed down since! Katherine Ocejo is redefining kindergarten at Ernest R. Graham K-8 Academy.

She creates a joy-filled classroom environment often dressing as characters to bring lessons to life. Her pedagogical approach is highly specialized, where students use "Happy Hands" for phonics and "Silly Voices" for math, building joy and foundational skills. An advocate for STEM, she founded the Robotics Jr. Club to introduce programming to young learners and leads professional development on Canva and Google Classroom for her peers.

Beyond the classroom, she serves as a positive role model through Girls Inc. Miami and actively supports school-wide fundraisers like "McTeacher Night". Parents describe her as a "source of stability" who possesses the intuition and heart of a seasoned educator, successfully transforming student anxiety into academic confidence.

NORTH



REGION

ROOKIE TEACHER OF THE YEAR DISTRICT FINALIST



TYONE HAYNES BOOKER T. WASHINGTON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

In just three years, Tyone Haynes has made an immediate and profound impact at Booker T. Washington Senior High. This dedicated educator, who holds Social Science and Spanish teaching certificates, has established a reputation for excellence.

His classroom is a welcoming, structured space where students are challenged, inspired, and feel safe. He actively personalizes lessons; captivating student interest by incorporating visuals and real-world examples to foster their critical thinking.

Beyond teaching World History and AP Human Geography, he dedicates countless hours offering free weekly after-school and weekend AP tutoring, supporting foster youth through the First Star program at the University of Miami, and serves as a mentor in the Teacher Accelerator Program. Mr. Haynes' dedication is celebrated by colleagues and parents alike.

CENTRAL



REGION

ROOKIE TEACHER OF THE YEAR DISTRICT FINALIST



KRISTIAN JOSE LUCIANO HOMESTEAD MIDDLE SCHOOL

In his second year with Miami-Dade County Public Schools teaching 7th Grade Civics and 8th Grade World History at Homestead Middle School; Kristian Luciano also serves as the Social Science Department Chair and the school-site lead for the International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

Luciano's teaching is deeply informed by his own challenging childhood. He views the classroom as a refuge and prioritizes safety and structure; creating a calming environment where students feel secure enough to take academic risks. A true testament to his instructional skill and leadership, his students demonstrated a remarkable 14-percentage point increase in the 2025 Civics EOC.

Beyond the classroom, he is a Volunteer Guardian Ad Litem, advocating for foster youth, and sponsor of the National Junior Honor Society. Mr. Luciano has an unwavering commitment to excellence and championing student potential.

SOUTH



REGION

ROOKIE TEACHER OF THE YEAR DISTRICT FINALIST



PEDRO D. PEREZ

MIAMI LAKES EDUCATIONAL CENTER AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Meet Pedro Perez, a Master Automotive Service Technology instructor at Miami Lakes Educational Center and Technical College as well as a proud alumnus of Miami Senior High School, Class of 2001. Currently in his second year of teaching, Perez transitioned into education following a distinguished 20-year career, including being a recipient of the CarMax Top Tech Award, and is an active member of the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). His classroom mirrors a real-world auto shop-- emphasizing safety, professionalism, hands-on learning, and mentorship.

Praised by his Director for "advanced instructional skill" and "natural leadership" that exceeds his rookie status, Perez has successfully bridged the gap between industry expertise and impactful pedagogy. His commitment to student success is echoed by his students, who value his patience and his ability to treat them as future technicians.



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Jose Montes, ALONZO AND TRACY MOURNING SENIOR HIGH BISCAYNE BAY CAMPUS
Denesse Haber, AMELIA EARHART ES
Willie Nordellus, ANDOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL
Johanna Farnataro, ANDREA CASTILLO PREPARATORY ACADEMY
Monica Barrios, AUBURNDALE ES
Monica McKenzie, AVENTURA WATERWAYS K-8 CENTER
Santashia Persons, AVOCADO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Carolina Pichardo, BANYAN ES
Ariel Pinder, BARBARA GOLEMAN SHS
Brittany Lark, BARBARA HAWKINS ES
Olga Delgado Bolano, BEN SHEPPARD ES
Kayla Render, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN K-8 CENTER
Robbie Chamoun, BENT TREE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Luis Suarez, BIOTECH @ RICHMOND HEIGHTS 9-12 HIGH SCHOOL
Ledia Suarez Otero, BISCAYNE BEACH ES
Jessica Padron, BLUE LAKES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Alexandra Socorro, BOB GRAHAM EDUCATION CENTER
Tyone Haynes, BOOKER T. WASHINGTON SHS 
Rachael Ruiz, BOWMAN ASHE / DOOLIN K-8 ACADEMY
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Ingrid Calderon, DR. TONI BILBAO PREPARATORY ACADEMY
Daisy Salinas, DR. WILLIAM A. CHAPMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
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Shadavia Riggins, EARLINGTON HEIGHTS ES
Jenny Datiz, EDISON PARK K-8 CENTER
Jossiana Diaz, EMERSON ES
Paulina Reynaldo, ENEIDA MASSAS HARTNER ES
Katherine Ocejo, ERNEST R. GRAHAM K-8 ACADEMY 
Jennifer Usatorres, EVERGLADES K-8 CENTER
Byron Sanchez, FAIRLAWN ES
Alberto Charria, FELIX VARELA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Aileen Garces, FLAMINGO ES
Roger Amaya, FLORIDA CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Candice Colebrook, FRANCES S. TUCKER ES
Laura Macias, FRANK C. MARTIN K-8 CENTER
Charlotte Vitalo, FREDERICK DOUGLASS ES
Sandra Lafolle, FULFORD ES
Stephanie Ocampo, G. HOLMES BRADDOCK SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Maria Rosero-Barros, GATEWAY ENVIRONMENTAL K-8 LEARNING CENTER
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Ayleen Saavedra, GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER ES
Brianna Carriere, GEORGIA JONES-AYERS MIDDLE SCHOOL
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Flore Beliard, GOLDEN GLADES ES
Natalie Peralta, GOULDS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Lucia Navarro Herrero, GRATIGNY ES
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Karla Garzon, GULFSTREAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
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Ciana Centurion, HENRY M. FLAGLER ES
Anny Paquin, HERBERT A. AMMONS MIDDLE SCHOOL
Sofia Lopez, HIALEAH ES
Monica Gonzalez, HIALEAH GARDENS ES
Matthew Busch, HIALEAH GARDENS MIDDLE SCHOOL
Mauris Baluja, HIALEAH GARDENS SHS
Anthony Velazquez, HIALEAH MS
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Roxy Garcia, HIALEAH-MIAMI LAKES SHS
Catherine Ryan, HOLMES ES
Kristian Jose Luciano, HOMESTEAD MIDDLE SCHOOL 
Ami Merino, HOMESTEAD SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Paul Puls, HORACE MANN MS
Autum LeBron, HOWARD D. MCMILLAN MIDDLE SCHOOL
Jordan Butler Putt, HOWARD DRIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
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Simone De Santana, IPREPARATORY ACADEMY
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Christopher Castillo, MAST @ FIU BISCAYNE BAY CAMPUS
Valentina Procopio, MAST ACADEMY
Xiaoyuan Jiang, MAYA ANGELOU ES
Marian Wong, MELROSE ES
Dennis Bermudez, MIAMI ARTS STUDIO 6-12 AT ZELDA GLAZER
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Rigel Jimenez, MIAMI BEACH SHS
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Aaron Lopez, PALM SPRINGS MS
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Alan Mejia, SOUTH DADE TECHNICAL COLLEGE
Ileana Manzano, SOUTH HIALEAH ES
Danay Rodriguez Reyes, SOUTH MIAMI HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Oscar Quesada, SOUTH MIAMI MS

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Edwin Ponce, SOUTHWEST MIAMI SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Mery Rodriguez, SOUTHWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Janiel Moreira, SPANISH LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Maide Planas, SUNSET ES

Michella Silvestros, SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Natalie Lorenzo, SYLVANIA HEIGHTS ES

Samantha Gonzalez, TERRA ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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Marlene Hidalgo, TROPICAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Danielle Bosch Hernandez, TWIN LAKES ES

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Yaremys Cruz De La Paz, W. R. THOMAS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Ashley Randle, W.J. BRYAN ES

Daniela Jacome, WEST HIALEAH GARDENS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Alexandria McLeod Lopez, WEST HOMESTEAD K-8 CENTER

Andy Rivero Fleites, WEST MIAMI MS

David Duckardt, WESTLAND HIALEAH SHS

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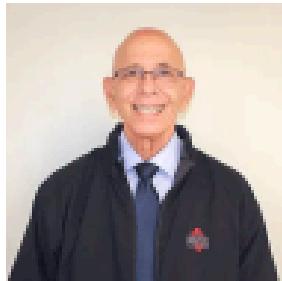
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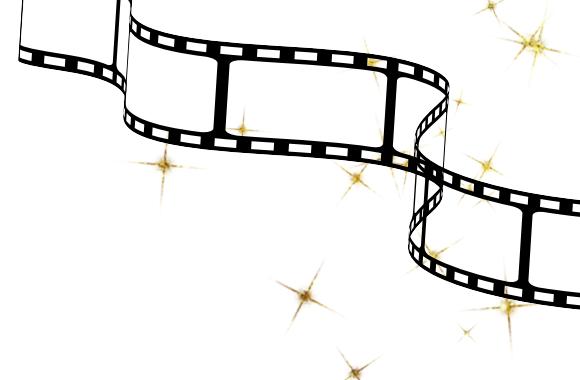
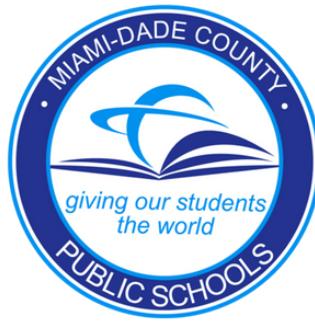
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Julia Pennington-Gilchrist

2027 Teacher of the Year District Finalist

NORTH REGION

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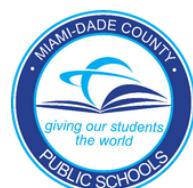


March 7, 2026

5K RUN/WALK | 1 MILE RUN | KIDS DASH



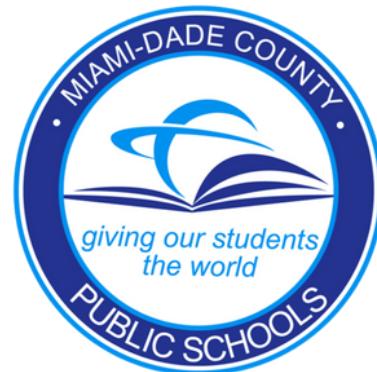
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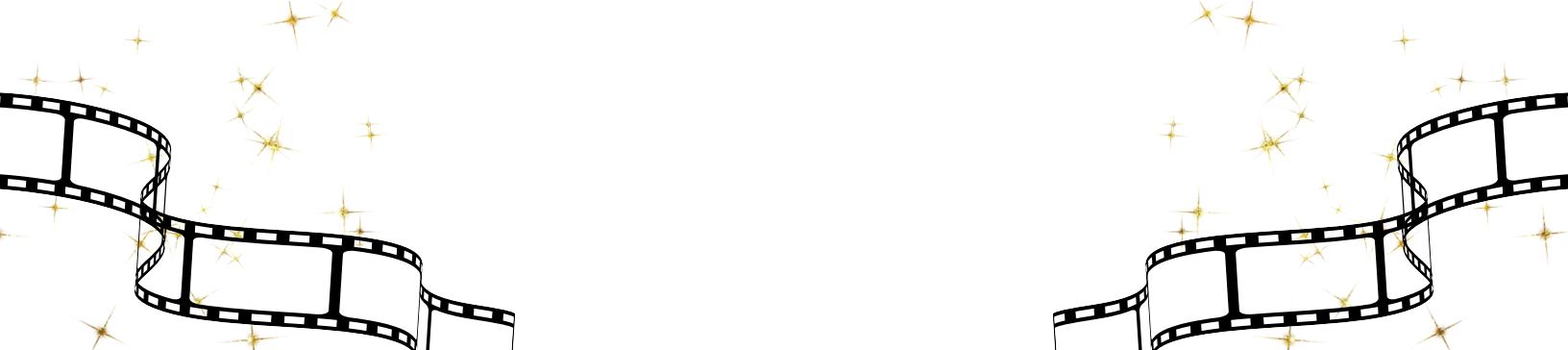
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