

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FRANCISCO R. WALKER 2027

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

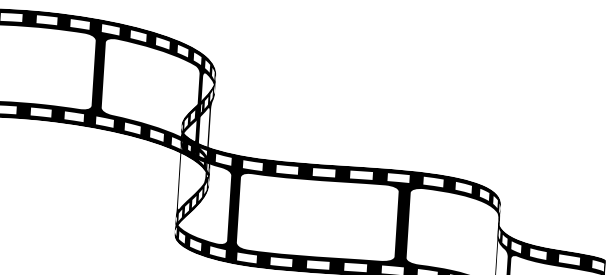
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026

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**



**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 Mouriño, 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	

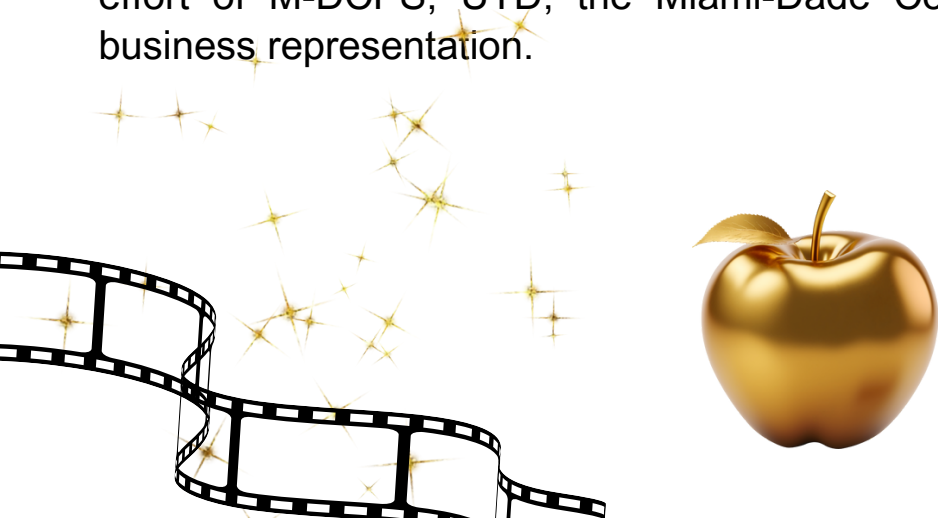


AWARD HISTORY

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 RABELO

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
 Latoyia 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
 Niurys 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
 Nadeshka 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
 Vivianne 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. MCMILLAN 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, IPREPATORY 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.
 Sammantha 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 Figueredo, 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 BISCAWAYNE 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 BISCAWAYNE 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
 Schnyder 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 Casteleiro-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. EDELICUP / 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 Morfiz, 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, PINECREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 Marsha Fraser, PONCE DE LEON MS
 Muhammed Clemons, RAINBOW PARK ES
 Jordan Diaz, REDLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 Neah Krigger, 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



Region Finalist



District Finalist

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 Davales, 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 Urrea, 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

ROOKIE TEACHER OF THE YEAR DISTRICT FINALIST



KATHERINE OCEJO

ERNEST R GRAHAM K-8 ACADEMY

Introducing Katherine Ocejjo, earned her college degree before high school graduation, a class of 2023 M-DCPS Alum—and she hasn't slowed down since! Katherine Ocejjo 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.



**POSTSECONDARY CAREER AND TECHNICAL
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OPPORTUNITIES**

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Ronaldo Rodriguez, ADA MERRITT K-8 CENTER
 Manuel Acuna, AGENORIA S. PASCHAL/OLINDA ES
 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
 Jossica St Cyr, BRENTWOOD ES
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 Martinna Crosdale, BROWNSVILLE MS
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 Kennisha Coleman, BUNCHE PARK ES
 Savannah Cawvey, CAMPBELL DRIVE K-8 CENTER
 Izellie Almonor, CARIBBEAN K-8 CENTER
 Sabrinah Tillman, CAROL CITY ES
 Destiny Wallace, CAROL CITY MS
 Johanna Louissaint, CARRIE P. MEEK / WESTVIEW K-8 CENTER
 Nicholas Moreno, CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: A
 CAMBRIDGE AS
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 Kenya Williams, CHARLES R. DREW K-8 CENTER
 Ninna Garcia, CHARLES R. HADLEY ES
 Andreina Coutts, COCONUT GROVE ES
 Marjorie Perez, COCONUT PALM K-8 ACADEMY
 Gabriela Jiron, COMSTOCK ES
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 Maya Carter, DR. FREDERICA S. WILSON / SKYWAY ES
 Megan-Paige Ruiz, DR. GILBERT L. PORTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Braytez Florvil, DR. HENRY W. MACK/WEST LITTLE RIVER K-8 CENTER
 Ingrid Calderon, DR. TONI BILBAO PREPARATORY ACADEMY
 Daisy Salinas, DR. WILLIAM A. CHAPMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 Ashley Diaz, E.W.F. STIRRUP ES
 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
 Wilfredo Castro, GEORGE T. BAKER AVIATION TECHNICAL COLLEGE
 Ayleen Saavedra, GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER ES
 Brianna Carriere, GEORGIA JONES-AYERS MIDDLE SCHOOL
 Carolina Rufin, GLORIA FLOYD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 Flore Beliard, GOLDEN GLADES ES
 Natalie Peralta, GOULDS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
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 Monica Gonzalez, HIALEAH GARDENS ES
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 Juvitza Gjurić, JOE HALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
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 Joseph Ojeda, JOHN A. FERGUSON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
 Jose Castaneda, JOHN F. KENNEDY MS



Region Finalist



District Finalist

ROOKIE TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Monica Ochoa, JOHN I. SMITH K-8 CENTER
 Rahsheba Adams, JOHNNIE M. PARRIS COLONIAL DRIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 Jessica Rivas, JORGE MAS CANOSA MIDDLE SCHOOL
 Janae Couch, JOSE DE DIEGO MS
 Keren Duran, JOSE MARTI MAST 6-12 ACADEMY
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 Debra Roberts, LAKEVIEW ES
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 Taylor Bresk, LENORA BRAYNON SMITH ES
 Magalie Valmyre, LILLIE C. EVANS K-8 CENTER
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 Pektra Edgerton, LORAH PARK ES
 Elizabeth Valbuena, LUDLAM ES
 Lisandra Gomez, M.A. MILAM K-8 CENTER
 Kevin Costa, MADIE IVES K-8 PREPARATORY ACADEMY
 Tiffany Paul, MADISON MS
 Yamile Crespo, MAE WALTERS ES
 Charles Johnson Jr., MANDARIN LAKES K-8 ACADEMY
 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
 Jennifer Rye, MIAMI BEACH FIENBERG / FISHER K-8
 Jacqueline Ngo Um Tiba, MIAMI BEACH NAUTILUS MS
 Rigel Jimenez, MIAMI BEACH SHS
 April La Pierre, MIAMI BEACH SOUTH POINTE ES
 A'Rawni McPhee, MIAMI CAROL CITY SHS
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 Pedro Perez, MIAMI LAKES ED. CTR. AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE 🍏
 Leonardo Gonzalez, MIAMI LAKES EDUCATIONAL CENTER
 Alyssa Alonso, MIAMI LAKES K-8 CENTER
 Leydi Rodriguez, MIAMI LAKES MS
 Stephanie Zephir, MIAMI NORLAND SHS
 Chana Benson, MIAMI NORTHWESTERN SHS
 Ernesto Ferris, MIAMI PALMETTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
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 Jennifer Duden, MIAMI SPRINGS SHS

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 Kareena Rozier, NORLAND ES
 Shana Sharperson, NORLAND MS
 Codiene Rhoden, NORMAN S. EDELCUP / SUNNY ISLES BEACH K-8
 Tiana Lanier, NORTH COUNTY K-8 CENTER
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 Brenee Davis, ORCHARD VILLA ES
 Victoria Garcia, PALM LAKES ES
 Aaron Lopez, PALM SPRINGS MS
 Adriana Muller, PALM SPRINGS NORTH K-8 CENTER
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 Jonathan Boyce, PAUL W. BELL MIDDLE SCHOOL
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 Estrella Crump, REDONDO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 Marcia Seiglie, RIVERSIDE ES
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 Ileana Manzano, SOUTH HIALEAH ES
 Danay Rodriguez Reyes, SOUTH MIAMI HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
 Oscar Quesada, SOUTH MIAMI MS



Region Finalist



District Finalist

ROOKIE TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Brandon Milian, SOUTH MIAMI SHS
Keylin Huete, SOUTHSIDE PREPARATORY ACADEMY
Edwin Ponce, SOUTHWEST MIAMI SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Mery Rodriguez, SOUTHWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL
Janiel Moreira, SPANISH LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
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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
Toufic Zakharia, YOUNG WOMEN'S PREPARATORY ACADEMY
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Kristian Jose Luciano



Pedro Perez

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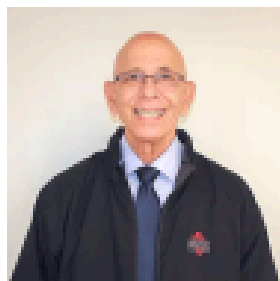
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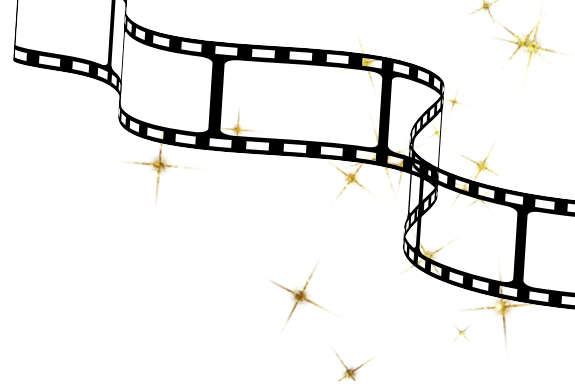
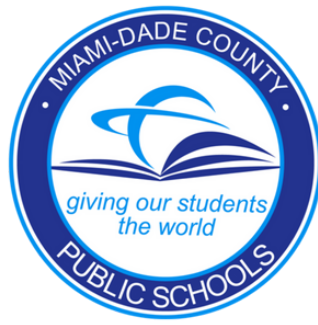
Rookie
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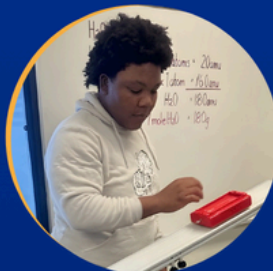


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Julia Pennington-Gilchrist

2027 Teacher of the Year District Finalist

NORTH REGION

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March 7, 2026

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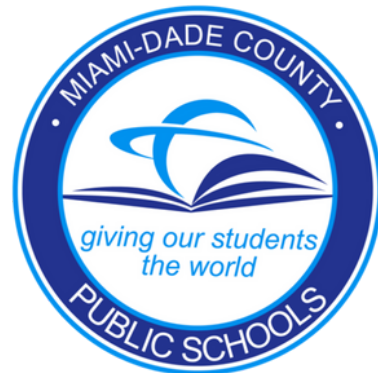
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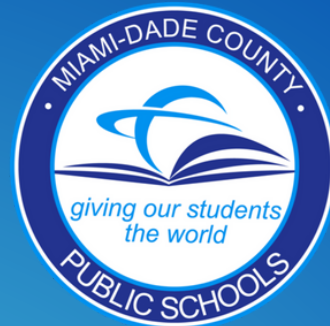


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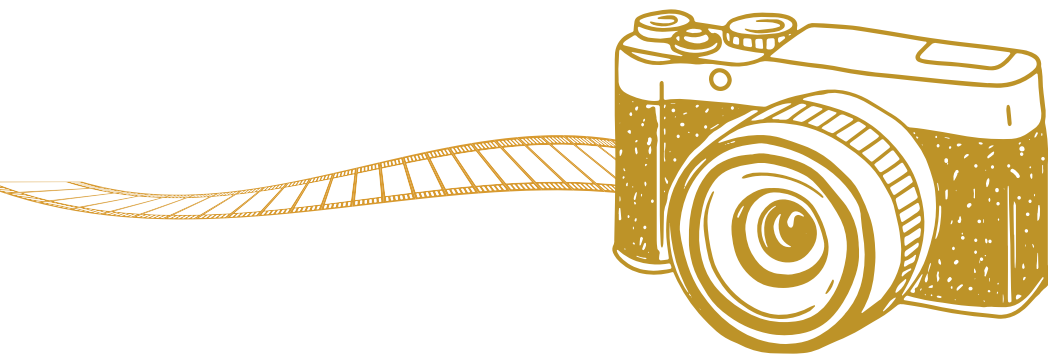


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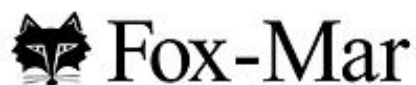


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A large, shiny golden apple is the central focus. Overlaid on the apple is the text "M-DCPS YOUR BEST CHOICE" in a bold, golden, sans-serif font. The "Y" in "YOUR" and the "C" in "CHOICE" have a diagonal slash through them. In the center of the word "CHOICE" is a circular seal for Miami-Dade County Public Schools. The seal features a stylized sun or flower icon and the text "MIAMI-DADE COUNTY", "giving our students the world", and "PUBLIC SCHOOLS".

M-DCPS YOUR BEST CHOICE

**FRANCISCO R. WALKER
2027 TEACHER OF THE YEAR AND ROOKIE TEACHER OF
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