



Parent News

An up close look at your Broward County Public Schools

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Cover Story

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS EARNS AN 'A'

Broward County Public Schools (BCPS), the second-largest public school system in Florida and sixth-largest in the nation, earned an 'A' grade from the Florida Department of Education in 2007/08, a feat accomplished for the second time in three years. BCPS earned its first District-wide 'A' grade for the 2005/06 school year.

"It's truly a credit to our School Board, which keeps us focused on teaching and learning – a great teaching staff and a great administrative staff," said Superintendent James F. Notter. "I truly believe the thing that makes Broward County different is that we care and keep focused on what is best for our children every single day."

One hundred forty-one District schools earned 'A' grades in 2007/08, including 99 elementary schools, 29 middle schools and 13 high schools, accounting for more than 58 percent of public schools in Broward county. The total number of

'A' schools in 2007/08 is an increase of 18 (two elementary, nine middle and seven high schools) from one year

ago. Overall, 74.4% of Broward County Public Schools earned 'A' or 'B' grades in 2007/08, compared to 68.6% in 2006/07.

More than 50 District schools saw grade increases from 2006/07, including 18 elementary schools, 18 middle schools and 15 high schools. Overall, 14 schools posted multiple grade increases.

The District also produced a combined decrease of 12 'C', 'D' and 'F' schools from 2006/07. Broward had eight fewer 'C' schools, one less 'D' school and three fewer 'F' schools than a year ago.



HELPING YOUR CHILD BE SUCCESSFUL



Parents and guardians serve an important role in the education of their children. You are their first teacher - you set the standard for respect, honesty and integrity in their lives. Below are a few useful tips to reference as your children progress through elementary, middle and high school.

Parents of Elementary School Students - Make certain your child has enough sleep and eats healthy meals. Provide a specific place for your child to do his/her homework and be there to assist when needed. It is important for children to read, read, read! Keep lines of communication open with your child, teachers and school staff. Safety and security are most important issues for young children.

Parents of Middle School Students – Develop and maintain open communication with your children - take time to participate in their school activities. Be aware of their environment and friends and stay in contact with other parents. Assist your child with their academics as well as their hobbies and read, read, read!

Parents of High School Students - Know where your child is, what they are doing and the names of their friends. Always get the basics - who, what, where, when, why and how. Help guide your child in their academics, career path and course selection. If needed, seek assistance from educators in your child's life, including teachers, administrators and guidance counselors. Teach your child to be responsible for his/her actions, decisions and behaviors.

ABOUT PARENT NEWS

Parent News is a bi-monthly newsletter designed to keep parents of Broward County Public Schools students informed about news and events associated with their school system. This publication is produced at no cost to the school system or taxpayers. The advertising contained in the *Parent News* envelope offsets the cost of producing and distributing the newsletter. The District does not endorse any of the companies whose ads appear with this publication. If you have any questions, please call 754-321-2300.



MISSION & CHALLENGES

By Robin Bartleman, School Board Chair,
and James F. Notter, Superintendent of Schools



We return for the start of classes for the 2008/09 school year with a clear sense of mission as provided by the School Board's Strategic Plan for 2008-2011. However, we also return with a clear set of nearly insurmountable challenges presented to us by the Florida Legislature in terms of actual and potential funding cuts that could alter the nature of public education in Florida for the foreseeable future.



The good news - The School Board's new strategic plan, which was approved near the end of the last school year, was more than a year in development and includes seven clear goal areas for the District in the areas of student

achievement, wellness, safety, innovation, employee excellence, parent involvement, business and community partnerships and environmental stewardship. The plan's vision is "educating today's students for tomorrow's world." Under the goal areas are specific objectives with quantifiable achievement levels so the Board may track progress on all seven goal areas over the next four years.

The strategic plan essentially constitutes the road map for everyone in the organization. The plan has been well communicated throughout the District, so that everyone knows what is expected in fulfilling these goals and objectives on behalf of our students.

The bad news - As mentioned earlier, we are facing severe financial challenges brought on, in part, by the current economic downturn impacting Florida and the nation and by a state legislature that continues to underfund public education. The State of Florida now stands at 50th in the nation – dead last! – in per pupil state funding for public education. And that isn't all. We are also facing a series of proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution that,

if passed, will alter the nature of public education as we know it, perhaps forever.

Here they are:

- **Amendment 5** would eliminate the state required property taxes that currently provide half the funding for public education in Florida.
- **Amendment 7** would remove current language from the state constitution that specifically prohibits the use of taxpayers' money for religious and other sectarian purposes and institutions.
- **Amendment 9** would require school districts to allocate a minimum of 65 percent of their total state funding directly to classroom instruction and institute vouchers.

All three proposed constitutional amendments contain major unknown elements that may not become apparent until after passage. The net effect of the amendments is to shift funding away from public education through vouchers and the elimination of the source of half of the funding for public education without a viable replacement source for these monies.

Broward County Public Schools is currently facing approximately \$394 million in state funding cuts to its operations and capital budgets. The District has been under hiring and purchasing freezes for more than a year; overtime has been cut to emergencies; and the use of outside contractors to supplement for needed work has been curtailed. Additionally, the District has cut more than \$4 million dollars in administrative costs. These measures have combined to see us through the initial two years of state funding cuts. The prospect of future state funding cuts that would potentially be worsened by passage of the aforementioned constitutional amendments does not make us at all optimistic for the future of public education in this state.

In closing, please know that your School Board voted unanimously to oppose Amendments 5, 7, and 9. Thank you in advance for continuing to support your Broward County Public Schools.

A STRONG STANCE AGAINST BULLYING



The School Board has adopted a strong Anti-Bullying Policy for immediate implementation due to increased levels of bullying occurring in schools and our community. Over the last year, a School Board charged Task Force, chaired by active parent Shelly Heller and District Prevention Specialist Aimee Wood, developed the policy for review and approval. Members of the Task Force include school, area and District personnel, students, Broward Teachers Union members and community members.

The policy was developed prior to the passage of House Bill 669, which mandates that all districts adopt such a policy by December 1, 2008. Once again, Broward County Public Schools is leading the way! The policy specifically prohibits bullying of or by any District student or employee, with consequences for those acts that meet the definition of bullying as defined in the policy:

"Bullying" means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees.

There are lots of examples of bullying given in the policy, including cyberbullying—using technology to systematically and chronically cause the hurt and/or distress stated in the definition.

There will be a massive campaign that you will hear more about and are strongly invited to be part of at your child's school's open house, School Advisory Council meetings and area and district advisory meetings.

For more information on the policy, go to (www.broward.k12.fl.us/sbbcpolicies/) and reference Policy 5.9.



DISTRICT NAMES PRINCIPAL, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

Western High School Principal Scott Fiske and Margate Middle School Assistant Principal Oslay Gil were named the District's top principal and assistant principal at the 2008 ACCLAIM Awards, held at the Signature Grand in Davie.



Scott Fiske

An 18-year educator, Fiske enters his sixth year as principal of Western High. Under his leadership, Western's graduation rate increased by 33.6%, to 89.8% in just two years, while enrollment in advanced placement and upper level math courses also increased. Additionally, Fiske implemented

innovative academic/non-academic programs that helped increase attendance, raise grades and reduce discipline issues.



Oslay Gil

Oslay Gil enters his 10th year in education and first as Interim Principal at Sunrise Middle School after being named the District's top assistant principal, while at Margate Middle last year. Under his leadership, Margate Middle made academic gains in reading, writing and math. In two years, Margate Middle improved its letter grade from a C to an A.

The ACCLAIM (**A**chievement, **C**ommunication, **C**ompassion, **L**eadership, **A**ccountability, **I**nnovation and **M**otivation) Awards were created to honor an outstanding principal and assistant principal each year for their hard work and dedication.

FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS



During the first week of school, your child will bring home a Free and Reduced Price Meals application. The Free and Reduced Price Meals program is a United States Department of Agriculture initiative that provides meals to children whose families meet specific low-income requirements. The plan helps to assure that all children

have access to nutritious food during the school day. Children need proper nutrition to grow, be healthy and learn.

Last year, over 100,000 Broward County students took advantage of the program.

One application per household will be accepted and should be directed to the Meal Benefits Designee at your child's school or the District's Meal Benefits Department.

Information required on the application includes total household income (amount received, type and how often it is received by each household member), names of all household members, the signature of an adult household member and his/her Social Security number.

All information provided on the applications is secure and confidential. Non-citizens and non-residents may also apply for benefits. Once approved, meal benefits are good for the entire school year.

Please contact your child's school or the District Meal Benefits Department at 754-321-0250 with any questions.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION



Broward Schools E-News gives you all the news you can use about Broward County Public Schools - the state's largest 'A' rated school

district, the nation's largest fully-accredited school system and the sixth-largest public school district in the country. All the news comes directly to your E-mail inbox. Sign up today at (www.browardschools.com/enews).



Do you need an informative speaker for your next meeting? Tap into Broward County Public Schools network of administrators and educational experts to learn about issues facing the District and public education. Broward County Public Schools has created a Speakers Bureau comprised of District officials, administrators and other professionals who are willing to share their time and knowledge with community organizations. To request a speaker, call 754-321-2300.

Broward County Public Schools is an active participant in the 2008 Million Father March "I'm Taking My Children To The First Day Of School" nationwide campaign. It is a well-known fact that parental involvement is an essential element in student achievement and success in school. The campaign encourages fathers and all male parenting figures to take children to school on the first day of classes. It is part of an overall effort to encourage parents to become actively involved in the educational process of their children.



ATTENDANCE IS ESSENTIAL FOR LEARNING

We all know that when students miss school, they miss learning opportunities that may impact their achievement. Policy 5.5: **ATTENDANCE** was amended by the School Board to only allow make up work for credit and grades for excused absences. Students who have unexcused absences will no longer be allowed to make up work for credit and grades. Make sure that when your child is going to miss school for one of the eight allowed reasons for excused absences, you let the school know which of the reasons caused the absence—otherwise, unexcused absence: no make up work for credit or grades!



Q&A: SAFE SCHOOLS /HEALTHY STUDENTS GRANT

How did the SS/HS Federal Grant come about?

After reviewing the needs of students, teachers and parents, District representatives recognized that, despite many resources available in the community, a need existed to have prevention, early intervention and treatment services to reduce incidents of violence and substance use/abuse in schools. The School Board approved the District's application for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative, titled Project Bridge, in an effort to connect communities with schools to promote a safer tomorrow. The District was awarded the grant for four years. Different activities and programs associated with the grant will take place at schools throughout the District over that span.

What issues will the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant address and how will students and parents be helped?

The grant will provide services and activities that help create safe school environments, allow students to develop positive mental health and prevent violent behavior and drug use.

The grant will support the District-wide anti-bullying policy and activities associated with a variety of prevention programs focused on violence, substance abuse, underage drinking and drug use. The grant will also provide additional access to prosocial activities such as after-school clubs, positive mental health services and teen parenting strategies.

Why is the grant important to the District?

The overall importance of the grant is the development of a comprehensive school and community partnership that will create

safe, respectful and drug-free learning environments. Research clearly demonstrates that when students feel safe and secure in school, they are more engaged in learning. The social, emotional and behavioral supports and skills available through grant programs will assist students in building stronger foundations, allowing them to reach their highest levels of academic achievement.

What is the ultimate goal of the grant?

The ultimate goal of the grant is to create safe, respectful, and drug-free learning environments in which all Broward County Public Schools students can learn and develop a lifetime of healthy decision-making.

What will be the effect on my child's education?

The programs created through the grant will produce a variety of positive effects on the education of students. They will want to go to school, knowing they will be in a safe educational environment. Students will have their social and emotional needs met and will have the necessary skills to resist participation in substance use and acts of violence. They will be focused on learning and academic achievement every day and overall attendance will improve.



PROFESSIONAL STUDY DAYS

As part of a joint effort between the Broward Teachers Union and Broward County Public Schools, the following high schools, centers and middle school will have scheduled professional study days for staff, as part of the Superintendent's high school reform initiative. Student dismissal times will follow the individual school's exam schedules.

SCHOOL	PROFESSIONAL STUDY DAYS
Anderson, Boyd HS	9/11, 11/18, 11/19, 12/4, 1/29, 2/26, 4/2, 5/21
Coconut Creek HS	9/11, 11/18, 11/19, 12/4, 1/29, 2/26
Cypress Bay HS	9/11, 11/18, 12/4, 1/29, 4/2, 5/21
Deerfield Beach HS	9/11, 12/4, 4/2, 5/21
Ely, Blanche HS	9/11, 12/4, 1/29, 5/21
Everglades HS	9/11, 12/4, 2/26, 4/2
Flanagan HS	9/11, 11/19, 12/4, 1/29, 4/2, 5/21
Fort Lauderdale HS	9/11, 11/19, 12/4, 1/29, 2/26, 4/2, 5/21
Hallandale HS	9/11, 11/18, 11/19, 12/4, 1/29, 2/26, 4/2, 5/21
Miramar HS	9/11, 11/18, 11/19, 12/4
Northeast HS	9/11, 11/19, 12/4, 2/26, 4/2
Nova HS	9/11, 11/19, 12/4, 2/26, 4/2, 5/21
Plantation HS	9/11, 11/18, 11/19, 1/29, 2/26, 4/2
Pompano Beach HS	11/18, 11/19, 1/29, 4/2
South Broward HS	9/11, 12/4, 2/26, 4/2
South Plantation HS	9/11, 11/19, 1/29, 2/26, 4/2, 5/21
Stranahan HS	9/11, 12/4, 1/29, 2/26, 4/2
Dave Thomas Center	9/11, 11/18, 11/19, 12/4, 1/29, 2/26, 4/2, 5/21
Hallandale Adult	9/11, 1/29, 4/2
McFatter Technical	9/11, 11/19, 2/26, 4/2
Whiddon-Rogers Ctr.	11/18, 11/19, 12/4, 1/29, 2/26, 4/2, 5/21
Lauderdale Lakes Mid.	9/11, 11/18, 11/19, 12/4, 1/29, 2/26, 4/2, 5/21

ACTIVE PARENTING WORKSHOPS



The District's Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Department is hosting a pair of free workshop series (six two-hour sessions) titled 'Active Parenting' (for parents of children, ages 5-12) and 'Active Parenting for Teens' (for parents of children, ages 12-18).

The sessions will provide parents with effective ways to use non-violent discipline techniques that improve communication, teach responsibility and other important values, handle problems as they come up, cope with difficult topics (drugs, violence, sex, etc.), defuse power struggles, stimulate independence as children grow older and encourage children to be their very best.

The series of 'Active Parenting' workshops will be held at Fox Trail Elementary (1250 Nob Hill Road, Davie) beginning September 16 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). The 'Active Parenting for Teens' workshops will take place at the South Area Office (1643 N. Harrison Parkway, Building H, Sunrise), beginning September 18 (9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.).

The ESE Department will host over 80 parent workshops during the school year. For more information or to register for the workshops, call 754-321-2211 or visit (www.browardschools.com/ese).

The School Board of Broward County, Florida • Robin Bartleman, Chair • Maureen S. Dinnen, Vice Chair • Beverly A. Gallagher • Jennifer Leonard Gottlieb • Phyllis C. Hope • Stephanie Arma Kraft, Esq. • Robert D. Parks, Ed.D. • Eleanor Sobel • Benjamin J. Williams • James F. Notter, Superintendent of Schools

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Individuals with disabilities requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) may call Equal Educational Opportunities (EEO) at 754-321-2150 or Teletype Machine TTY 754-321-2158.
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