

Let's Talk

BY DR. LESLIE ROSENFELD

NEXT GENERATION

Community Professionals Enhance Classroom Learning

Imagine our youth actively engaged in a conversation with a respected professional member of our community. Through the City of Miami Beach Education Compact and Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce Speakers Bureau, youth throughout our community now have access to community professionals who have volunteered to share their knowledge and expertise with students in our public schools.

At first glance, the Miami Beach Speakers Bureau is a cadre of committed and articulate professionals able to make strong and effective presentations to the youth in our community. A deeper look reveals that it is a tool for building intergenerational bridges of understanding, respect, and trust.

Nautilus Middle School was the first Miami Beach school to access the bureau and invited Erica French, Educate Tomorrow program developer, to speak at their National Junior Honor Society induction ceremony. Abigail Lawrence, teacher and National Honor Society advisor, said, "Her story impacted the students in a major way. They seem to have absorbed a sense of understanding that they can do anything."

Well-qualified speakers bring a wealth of lifetime experience into the classroom. Their often poignant testimony not only affects students deeply, but also creates memories that transcend text chapters and sections. Daniela Guerra, Nautilus eighth grader, said, "French's story made me realize that even the smallest things make a difference."

Speakers provide real-life examples that can never be fully communicated through classroom lecture and discussion. Young people have the opportunity to gain information and insight from speakers in such areas as: career planning, educational options, community resources, organizational skills, job opportunities, and service learning opportunities.

Community speakers also gain an awareness of the interests and needs of youth in Miami Beach. Inviting speakers can substitute for field trips that may no longer be feasible due to budget

cuts. Speakers also break the monotony of daily instruction, something students appreciate.

Miami Beach High School forensic science students recently benefited from a visit by local crime scene investigator, J.C. Pedroso. "The students actually experienced how the skills and techniques they learn in the classroom are applied to a real crime scene," said Luisa Diaz, Miami Beach Senior High teacher.

Many of the students really enjoyed learning the path to their career aspirations. Student Carolina Berdullas exclaimed, "Working side-by-side with specialists during our mock crime scene was thrilling."

Another student, Karina Saenz, continued, "The best way to learn forensics is through hands on experience with a real professional and this is exactly what we did."

The Speakers Bureau is offered as a resource to our school community, providing access to interesting and informed professionals who can increase students' understanding on various topics.



Erica French, program developer of Educate Tomorrow, speaks with Nautilus Middle School students Driany Alfonso and Cora Coleman, during their induction into the National Junior Honor Society.

A list of available speakers has been developed that reflect a variety of subject areas and levels of expertise. Many more professions can be added too. Often, the best source of speakers is our own parents, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members, community professionals, and alumni.

To request a speaker, teachers can consult the speaker's list and determine if a particular speaker might benefit the lesson plan outcomes. Then contact Thomas Kernan, Speakers Bureau liaison, at tkernan@caaconnect.com to receive contact information to determine availability dates and needs. If you are interested in joining the Speakers Bureau, please send your contact information to the e-mail listed below.

For additional information, please visit the City of Miami Beach website and click on the Education tab at www.miamibeachfl.gov or contact Dr. Leslie Rosenfeld at lrosenfeld@miamibeachfl.gov.



COMPACT UPDATE

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