

# School Board Member talks going back to school

By **Dr. Marta Pérez** - August 4, 2020

Our entire community feels the impact of our schools' closing last March 17<sup>th</sup> due to the transmission dangers of the Corona virus. The American Pediatric Association along with many health professionals worry about the deleterious effects of children not attending physical schools. However, these experts also warn of the dangers of re-opening our brick and mortar facilities prematurely. As public servants, our School Board takes responsibility for the highly important issue of how students will be best served in the 2020-2021 school year. Our school Superintendent Alberto Carvalho and his administration work diligently to enable teaching and learning, and at the same time provide the prudent safety necessary during these difficult time.



*Dr. Marta Pérez*

Based on the superintendent's recommendations MDCPS begins virtually on August 31 through the end of September. At that point, local Covid-19 conditions will be reassessed and decisions made whether students return to brick and mortar classrooms—with a target date of October 5th.

Opening of schools was first scheduled for August 24<sup>th</sup>. However, the week of August 24 to 28<sup>th</sup>, called the Week of Welcome, will now be used to acquaint students, staff, and families to the new K-12 online learning program, My Online School (MOS). MOS's organization and efficiency exceeds the remote learning we offered last school year.

Our district's first priority remains student and employee health and safety. MDCPS will return to in person instruction only after we satisfy the 8 recommendations by our district's medical experts committee. These are:

1. A sustained positivity rate of less than 10%, trending toward 5%, for 14 consecutive days,;
2. A reduction in the number of those hospitalized for Covid-19 for 14 consecutive days;
3. A sustained reduction in ICU bed occupancy due to COVID-19 for 14 consecutive days;
4. A continuous reduced total number of virus-positive individuals for 14 consecutive days;
5. An increase in Covid-19 specific viral test availability with decreased wait time to receive a test;
6. A decreased response time for test results to less than 48 hours wait time;
7. An increase in quantity and quality of contact tracing that provides prompt and needed input to decision-makers; and
8. An increased number of general vaccinations for school-aged children that meets the goals of herd-immunity in our community.

We monitor these metrics daily to determine when to safely return our students and faculty back to schools—often, their homes away from home. The public should visit the Miami Dade County Public Schools website for information and updates.

Much of our economy's recovery rides on how responsibly our school district makes decisions for our most precious assets—our students. We lead the nation, not only as the best urban school district, but also in the thoughtful, difficult task of balancing academic progress and safety of our students. We thank our dedicated employees and families for their work and support and look forward to a safe and happy new school year for all.

*Dr. Marta Pérez, Miami-Dade County Public School Board Member, District 8 can be reached at [marta774@bellsouth.net](mailto:marta774@bellsouth.net) or (305) 995-2794*

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**Dr. Marta Pérez**

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