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SENT ON BEHALF OF JOHN SCHUSTER, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR,  
OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

## OPINION OP-ED

# Equip students with the skills of a lifetime

By IRAIDA R. MENDEZ-CARTAYA  
[www.dadeschools.net](http://www.dadeschools.net)

In Miami-Dade we strive to provide today's students with the skills necessary to become tomorrow's leaders, growing and sustaining a workforce that is competitive both locally and globally. Many of the best jobs, including those in fields such as science, health, technology and energy, will require specialized training and education beginning at a young age, and a growing percentage of these emerging jobs require preparation in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and math).



While these opportunities present a bright future for the next generation, they come at a tough time for our educational system, which faces challenges with budget cuts year after year.

Teachers and schools need our community's support. We need to work together on creative funding answers to provide students with hands-on learning opportunities. With the right materials and proper education, students can develop critical skills in problem solving, teamwork, time management, communication and leadership.

Equipping students with these skills will help build a smart, adaptive workforce that can power economic growth.

Parents, other residents and businesses can support schools and students through fund-raising programs and donations. The Foundation for New Education Initiatives, Inc., for example, was created in 2008 by the MiamiDade County School Board to enhance student achievement and community engagement in support of the Parent Academy, Cultural Passport, and other educational initiatives of Miami-Dade County Public Schools not funded through traditional funding sources available to the school district. Those interested can learn more at [giveourstudentstheworld.org](http://giveourstudentstheworld.org). The school district is fortunate to have the support of many large organizations that bolster learning programs through services and direct donations, such as Target, Office Depot, the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, and the Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science, among many others.



MENDEZ-CARTAYA

One example of an innovative approach to supporting local education was initiated by Chevron. Last year through its Fuel Your School program, a collaboration with [DonorsChoose.org](http://DonorsChoose.org), \$500,000 was generated to benefit more than 700 classroom project requests for materials and school supplies at more than 190 schools like Doral Academy, Rockway Elementary and Middle, and Richmond Heights Elementary among others, benefitting more than 76,500 students. The program is taking place again now.

Chevron will donate \$1, up to \$500,000, to help support K-12 public schools when consumers fuel up with eight or more gallons at participating Chevron and Texaco stations during October. DonorsChoose.org, an online organization that makes it easy for anyone to help students in need, allows anyone to contribute any amount, at any time, to a project that inspires them, which are posted online by public school teachers. This allows donors to connect directly with classrooms in need.

We will all need to work together — educators, parents and businesses — to help our students, our future. Teachers can post projects on DonorsChoose.org. Community members can donate to charities and volunteer. And corporations and businesses can contribute to local schools to help prepare students and ensure they are ready for college and the workforce.

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Read more here: <http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/op-ed/article3358986.html#storylink=cpy>

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## **Coral Gables considering paying for more access to local public school**

By Christina Veiga  
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Coral Gables is considering buying seats — set aside just for the children of residents — at a soon-to-be expanded Henry S. West Laboratory public elementary school.

Referred to as West Lab, the Gables school is a magnet program that accepts students from all over Miami-Dade County. That makes it difficult for Coral Gables kids to get into a school in their own backyard, city officials and parents say.

“In my neighborhood, everyone goes to private,” said Dave Kelly, a Coral Gables resident. “It’s not because they don’t want to go to public schools. They just can’t get in.”

To give residents a better shot at landing a seat, Coral Gables officials on Friday discussed paying the school district a one-time fee of \$23,000 per student to establish a separate lottery program just for residents who want their children to attend West Lab. As it stands now, the proposal is to buy between 22 and 44 seats per grade level.

“We believe the school district has an obligation to us to provide enough seats to educate the children in our community,” said Coral Gables Commissioner Patricia Keon.

The arrangement would not be a first. In a deal that was controversial at the time, Key Biscayne paid about \$9 million for an expansion of the nationally-recognized MAST Academy in exchange for local preference.

School Board member Raquel Regalado, who represents the city, said about 16 percent of students currently at West Lab are Coral Gables residents. About half of the more than 500 people on a waiting list for the school are city residents, she said.

“We have to demystify the belief that Coral Gables residents do not go to public schools because they don’t want to,” Regalado said. “The fact that it’s an affluent community does not mean they should not be offered options.”

More than half of the students in Miami-Dade go to a school they picked, such as a charter or magnet program — rather than the neighborhood school dictated by attendance boundaries. Regalado said what’s happening in places like Coral Gables show one downside to that trend.