



Miami Palmetto Senior High

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Janet Hupp, Principal

Miami Palmetto Senior High is a nationally recognized high school located on twenty-three acres in the newly incorporated Village of Pinecrest in southeastern Miami-Dade County. We offer a challenging academic program, while providing stimulating coursework for students of all academic abilities. Currently, our 3400 students have 286 course offerings from which to choose.

Like South Florida itself, Palmetto has changed a great deal in many respects since it was built in 1958. Population growth, trends in real estate, rapid land development, and a hurricane have all contributed to its different face. We serve a diverse population both culturally and socio-economically. 55% of our students are white, 16.5% black, 23.4% Hispanic, and 5.1% Asian/Other. Although the residential property value in Pinecrest is extremely high, only 30% of our students live inside these affluent boundaries. Today, our students come from both urban and suburban neighborhoods.

What has not changed over the years, however, is Palmetto's record for consistently being the flagship of the district in terms of student performance. Palmetto's students invariably score higher on both state and other national assessments than any other standard (non-magnet) school in Miami-Dade County. Based on the number of students taking Advanced Placement exams in American high schools, *Newsweek* magazine, in its March 30, 1998, ranked Palmetto fifth out of one hundred secondary schools administering the greatest number of Advanced Placement exams.

Despite national recognition for our progressive advanced academics, Palmetto remains committed to accepting the governor's challenge to further raise academic standards and assist the students who have not yet met the standards. Careful planning has gone into promoting collaboration among teachers within departments and across the curriculum boosting staff morale to an all-time high. Staff development has focused on incorporating the Sunshine State Standards into classroom instruction, including a school-wide FCAT preparation and motivation campaign, "How the Test was Won." Additionally, a substantial number of our content area teachers have already undergone CRISS (Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies) training, a research-based approach to teaching reading across the curriculum, and many more are slated for training this year. Likewise, the vertical team approach is being explored to address reading deficiencies within the feeder pattern and facilitate better preparation of all students for more advanced level coursework.

We are extremely proud of our aggressive approach to parental and community involvement at Palmetto. In 1998, our PTSA was named the best organization of its kind in Miami-Dade County Public schools. For the past four years, Palmetto has earned the Florida Department of Education's Gold and Silver Awards based on the number of volunteer hours donated by parents and students. Last year, our parents logged 8,402 volunteer hours, and our students logged 6,139 volunteer hours.

An extension of the parental involvement is the ongoing participation of area businesses and community leaders that contribute time, expertise, and the use of their business facilities and

resources to Palmetto students. Our 22 Dade Partners provide activities such as job shadowing, executive internships, curriculum development, student small business ownership training, and career days as just a few of the ways to remove the barriers of classroom walls and extend the learning environment into the community, and vice versa, while creating more meaningful practical application of knowledge.

In the 1999-2000 school year, Miami Palmetto Senior High School won the prestigious honor of being designated as a Five Star School by the Florida Department of Education. This award was designed to recognize schools with exemplary programs focused on integrating five different criteria in order to increase student achievement: the involvement of business partners, families/PTSA, volunteers, student community service, and EESAC. Palmetto is the only high school in the district to receive this distinction.

In the 1999-2000 school year, Palmetto kicked off "It's the Pride," a school beautification project. Numerous surveys and dialogues with stakeholders revealed the growing sentiment that Palmetto's physical appearance should appropriately reflect the myriad achievements for which our school is so well known. This campaign has resulted in many improvements to the school grounds, including the addition of walkways in the courtyard, a ceramic mosaic created by art students, a mural created by art students, the painting of our panther paw symbol by students, faculty, staff, and administration on the sidewalks around the school, and extensive landscaping by students, parents, faculty, staff, administration, and community business partners ("Plant the Pride").

Faculty members have spent much time dialoging, collaborating, and working on consensus-building with one another, sometimes as departments, but primarily in heterogeneous subcommittees. We are extremely proud of how our faculty, staff, students, and parents have come together to work towards a common good, our school's improvement. Miami Palmetto Senior High School provides proof positive that when high standards are an everyday part of the school culture, students learn to put forth more effort and achievement improves.