

HARMONY
HONESTY
HEART HONOR
HUSTLE



Riviera

REFLECTIONS
DEC 2025



Our Mission

Riviera Schools strives to challenge, support, and inspire each student to achieve personal success, act with integrity, and serve others.

Our Values

Harmony

having an open mind and heart to others' views and experiences, fostering an inclusive environment where all can thrive while operating in a spirit of unity, peace, teamwork, and kindness.

Heart

demonstrating passion, purpose, vigor, and enthusiasm while cultivating compassion and a desire to serve others both within and beyond the school community.

Honesty

adhering to ethical standards and values, even when challenging, modeling trustworthiness and reliability, and maintaining consistency between one's beliefs, words, and actions.

Honor

treating all individuals with dignity, protecting their privacy and property, acting with tolerance and courtesy, and prioritizing the safety and well-being of the community and its members.

Hustle

fully engaging in purposeful learning and personal growth, committing to continuous improvement, seeking opportunities to stretch limits, and modeling effort and perseverance in the steady pursuit of excellence.

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Dear Riviera Families,

As we prepare to close out the fall semester and head into a well-deserved winter break, I want to extend my warmest wishes for a joyful holiday season. This time of year is a meaningful opportunity to pause, reflect, and appreciate all that we have accomplished together - and there is much to celebrate!

One highlight of our first semester was welcoming a Learning Review Team to both the Riviera Day School and Riviera Preparatory School campuses in September. Their visit offered valuable insights into the daily learning experiences of our students and affirmed many of the strengths that make Riviera such a special place. Among their findings, they praised the strong, caring relationships between staff and students, the constructive and positive interactions among peers, the deep sense of connectedness across our campuses, and the high levels of student engagement and motivation to learn. They also recognized our commitment to a holistic approach to education as we support the academic, social, and personal growth of students in equal measure.

As we look ahead to the spring semester, our Heads of School, Ms. Bello and Ms. Rivera, will continue to advance our Learning First goals, working closely with teachers through the learning visit process. This important work strengthens instructional practices, deepens student engagement, and ensures that our classrooms reflect the very best of what we want for our learners. We look forward to sharing more about these efforts with you in the coming months.

Thank you for your partnership, your trust, and your support of our students and our school community. May your winter break be filled with rest, joy, and time with the people you love.

Happy Holidays, and we look forward to welcoming you back in the new year!

Kara Locke
Executive Director



Empowering Learning Through Presence and Partnership

Over the past year, Riviera Schools has continued to invest in intentional initiatives that strengthen instructional quality, deepen student engagement, and support academic growth. A central component of this work is our focus on learning visits – purposeful time spent in classrooms observing instruction, student learning, and the overall learning environment.

Being present in classrooms allows us to truly understand the daily experiences of our students and educators. It shows us how curriculum comes alive, how students interact with ideas, and how teachers meet diverse learning needs. This insight enables us to offer more meaningful support, align professional development with what classrooms genuinely require, and recognize the many strengths flourishing across our campuses.

A second priority of our work is ensuring that our entire community, staff, students, and parents, utilizes a common language and shared expectations around what learning truly is. At Riviera, learning is the process of getting better in knowledge, skills, and understanding through deliberate experiences. The process of learning is a process of growth, closing the gap between where we are now and where we hope to be in the future. By embracing this shared definition, we strengthen alignment across both our Day and Prep campuses and create a coherent, connected educational experience for every student. It also allows our families to partner with us more meaningfully, reinforcing the idea that learning is not only something students do at school, but a shared responsibility we all support together.

As we move into the Spring semester, we remain committed to being visible, engaged, and responsive leaders. We will continue to listen, learn, and work alongside our teachers and students, always with the goal of providing the highest quality educational experience possible.

Warmly,

Jeneise Bello & Nicole Rivera

Head of School, Riviera Day School & Head of School, Riviera Preparatory School

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Riviera Schools

1950-2025

Over 7 Decades of Excellence

This year marks an extraordinary milestone in the life of our school – Riviera Schools is celebrating its 75th anniversary. For three-quarters of a century, Riviera has stood as a beacon of academic excellence, character development, and community spirit in the heart of Miami.

What began in 1950 as a small, visionary school has grown into one of South Florida's most respected educational institutions, an enduring symbol of innovation, integrity, and family-centered learning. Our journey from modest roots to a thriving, multi-campus community reflects the enduring commitment of our faculty, staff, students, families, and alumni who have shaped our story across generations.

As we celebrate this remarkable anniversary, we honor the legacy of leadership, learning, and love that has defined Riviera for 75 years. This is more than a celebration of the past – it's a bold step into our future.

Thank you for being part of this historic moment. Your continued partnership and pride in our school are what keep Riviera thriving and make our 75th year a true celebration of what it means to belong to something lasting and meaningful.



75 Years of Riviera Schools: Deep Roots, Limitless Future

Since its founding in 1950, Riviera Schools has stood as a pillar of academic excellence, personal growth, and community leadership in Coral Gables. The story began when the Coppock family transformed their home at 6800 Nervia Street into a school, starting with a small nursery. "The combination home and school makes the youngster's transition easier," shared Mrs. Coppock, wife of Lorin E. Coppock, in a Miami Herald article from 1951.

The love and care that were nurtured in that home can still be felt by everyone who walks the halls of our school today. The fireplace that once stood in what is now a PK4 classroom remains a cherished reminder of Riviera's origins and is fondly remembered by those who have been part of the Riviera family since its earliest days.

Lorin E. Coppock, then Dean of Boys at Miami Senior High School, made the bold decision to resign from his position to pursue a visionary dream – to create a school that blended rigorous academics with the development of character, creativity, and community. That dream became Riviera Day School, and it established a legacy of educational distinction that continues to inspire and uplift students and families to this day.

Over the decades, Riviera's growth has been shaped by leaders deeply committed to creating a learning environment where children can be themselves, feel truly seen and heard, and pursue excellence with confidence, knowing they will be both challenged and lovingly supported along the way. In the 1970s, the Cohen family became an integral part of Riviera's story. In 1972, Lawrence Cohen moved to Miami and acquired the school.



As the Head of School, Lawrence Cohen worked tirelessly to establish Riviera as a school of excellence and a home away from home for its students. His son, Peter Cohen, began his own Riviera journey as a student that same decade, later joining the administration in 1996. Rising through the ranks to associate director and ultimately as the school's director, Peter Cohen embodied the family's enduring dedication and leadership, guiding Riviera into a future as vibrant and forward-looking as its past.

Riviera Schools has always evolved to meet the needs of its students while staying true to its founding ideals. In 1996, the school expanded to create a dedicated middle school. In 1998, the West Building was acquired and given its own name, Riviera Preparatory School, providing a seamless academic journey for students in grades 6–8. By 2011, the preparatory division had outgrown its original campus, inspiring the construction of a state-of-the-art facility for middle and high school students, with the first senior class graduating in 2015. Today, the preparatory campus serves grades 6–12, while the original campus continues to nurture the youngest Bulldogs in preschool through fifth grade.

Today, Riviera Schools thrives as a vibrant and diverse community, with more than 1,100 students across two campuses representing over 50 countries. Signature programs in business, engineering, biomedical sciences, journalism, and the fine and performing arts empower students to explore their passions, while more than 45 athletic programs, 15 honor societies, and extensive extracurricular offerings ensure that every student finds opportunities to excel. What makes Riviera truly special, however, is the sense of family that endures through generations. Many of the students who walk our campuses today are the children and grandchildren of those who first learned and dreamed within our halls – a beautiful reminder that Riviera is not just a school, but a home where families continue to grow together.

Riviera Bulldogs have achieved remarkable success, earning three state championships in basketball, national titles in dance, numerous National Merit recognitions, and awards in Model United Nations, Thespian, and broadcasting competitions, as well as acceptances to Ivy League universities and other top institutions worldwide. Collectively, the Classes of 2015–2025 have earned more than \$86 million in college scholarships. As Riviera looks to the future, it has embraced exciting global opportunities. By joining the International School Partnership (ISP) in 2021, Riviera became part of a dynamic network of 111 private international schools across more than 25 countries, educating over 92,500 students worldwide. This opportunity expands access to global perspectives and resources, positioning the school to continue its legacy of academic innovation, leadership, and community impact.

Through every chapter of its history, Riviera Schools has remained steadfast in its mission: to challenge, support, and inspire students to achieve personal success, act with integrity, and serve others. Guided by our core values of Honor, Harmony, Heart, Hustle, and Honesty, Riviera cultivates a community where students are challenged, supported, and empowered to thrive across every dimension of their lives. Today, Riviera operates as one unified school family across two campuses, seamlessly connecting preschool through 12th grade while honoring its storied past, celebrating its vibrant present, and embracing a bold, globally connected future.



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Legacy Gala

Proud of our history. Inspired by what lies ahead.









Alvin B. Glicksberg Awards

The Alvin B. Glicksberg Awards are presented annually to two individuals who embody the very essence of Riviera's mission and spirit. As the highest honors bestowed upon our faculty and staff each school year, these awards celebrate educators who demonstrate exceptional teaching, unwavering dedication to the Riviera community, and a profound, lasting impact on their students' lives.

Congratulations to our 2025 recipients!



Minerva Aguirre, Riviera Day School

Ms. Minerva Aguirre has spent the past nine years inspiring students through hands-on STEM learning, curiosity, and a strong belief in growth. As both a teacher and a proud Riviera parent of three, her trust in our school runs deep.

In her classroom, Ms. Aguirre fosters collaboration and critical thinking, focusing on the learning process rather than just the right answers. Her popular Grow Tower project brings lessons to life – students plant, care for, and harvest their own food, creating joyful, lasting connections to their learning. Her students describe her as kind, fun, supportive, and even “a second mom,” a reflection of the nurturing, inclusive environment she creates.

Beyond the classroom, Ms. Aguirre is the embodiment of professionalism and teamwork. She's generous with her time, always ready to step in where needed, and brings positivity to every interaction.



Taylin Gonzalez, Riviera Preparatory School

Ms. Taylin Gonzalez has dedicated 13 years to Riviera Schools, growing from a teacher's aide to an instructor of advanced Biomedical Engineering in our Project Lead the Way STEM Program, a true example of growth and lifelong learning.

In her 4th-year courses, Ms. Gonzalez empowers students to take ownership of their learning, guiding them with a student-centered approach that encourages independence and critical thinking. She builds strong relationships with her students, fostering connection through simple but meaningful practices like a “student corner” for reflection and curiosity.

Beyond the classroom, she sponsors the Marine Conservation Club and Women in STEM Club, inspiring students to engage with the world around them. Taylin is known for her positivity, reliability, and team spirit – consistently bringing heart, energy, and excellence to all she does.



Riviera Schools Recognized as a Project Lead The Way Distinguished High School

*An Endorsement of Academic Excellence, Innovation,
and Future-Ready Education*

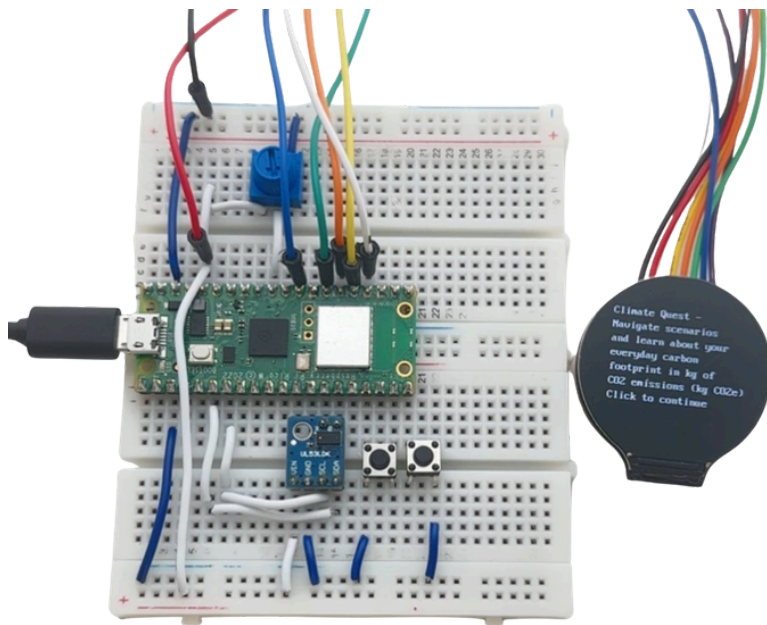
Riviera Schools is proud to announce that Riviera Preparatory School has been named a Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Distinguished High School, a national recognition awarded to schools expanding access to high-quality, hands-on STEM education.

This honor places Riviera among a select group of schools nationwide, empowering students through engaging coursework in Engineering, Computer Science, and Biomedical Science. PLTW programs at Riviera promote real-world problem-solving, collaboration, and innovation.

"Being recognized as a PLTW Distinguished School affirms what we see every day: students actively engaged in future-focused learning," said Nicole Rivera, Head of School, Riviera Preparatory School. "It's a testament to our faculty's work and our students' ambition."

To earn this distinction, Riviera demonstrated high student participation, equitable access, and a commitment to offering multiple PLTW pathways. These programs reflect Riviera's broader educational philosophy, one that encourages exploration, creativity, and leadership.

This recognition reaffirms Riviera's dedication to academic excellence and preparing students to thrive in a rapidly changing world. We celebrate our students, faculty, and families for making this achievement possible.



Turning Ideas into Impact:

Diana Moya Earns MITES Embedded Systems Award

Riviera Preparatory School is proud to celebrate Diana Moya Lapeira, National Merit Semifinalist and member of the Class of 2026, who was recently recognized with the MITES Embedded Systems Achievement Award from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's MITES Semester Program, a nationally renowned initiative that empowers talented students in STEM from across the country.

Diana earned this distinction for her team's innovative project, "Everyday Actions – Climate Quest," developed during the MITES Embedded Systems course. The project invites users to reflect on their daily habits and explore how small, intentional choices can help counter the growing climate crisis. By using computer engineering principles, including time-of-flight sensors, buttons, and interactive screens, the team designed an engaging, hands-on

system that allows users to navigate through real-world scenarios and receive actionable feedback on their environmental impact.

"Our goal was to create something both educational and interactive," Diana explained. "We wanted people to understand that their everyday actions really do matter, and that technology can be a tool for awareness and change."

The MITES Semester Program, part of MIT's broader commitment to equity and access in STEM, challenges students to collaborate, innovate, and apply their technical skills to address global issues. Diana's award recognizes not only her academic excellence and creativity but also her passion for using technology to make a difference.

Riviera Schools congratulates Diana on this outstanding achievement and commends her commitment to innovation, leadership, and global citizenship. Her work exemplifies the values of curiosity, purpose, and impact that we strive to inspire in all our students.



Impact Beyond the Classroom

Camille Rodriguez, Class of '26,
Represents Riviera at the
National Coral Reef Symposium

Riviera Preparatory School is proud to celebrate Camille Rodriguez, Class of 2026, who recently presented at the ReefFlorida Symposium hosted by Frost Science, part of the National Coral Reef Conservancy.

This year, Camille was one of only two high school participants presenting alongside university students conducting master's and PhD research, a remarkable achievement that underscores the level of scholarship and leadership cultivated at Riviera.

Last year, she was the sole high school attendee, highlighting her growing role in the field of marine conservation. For her research, Camille designed and evaluated a curriculum aimed at educating teens about coral reefs and the importance of conservation and restoration. Her work not only contributes to the scientific community but also empowers her peers to understand and act on critical environmental issues.

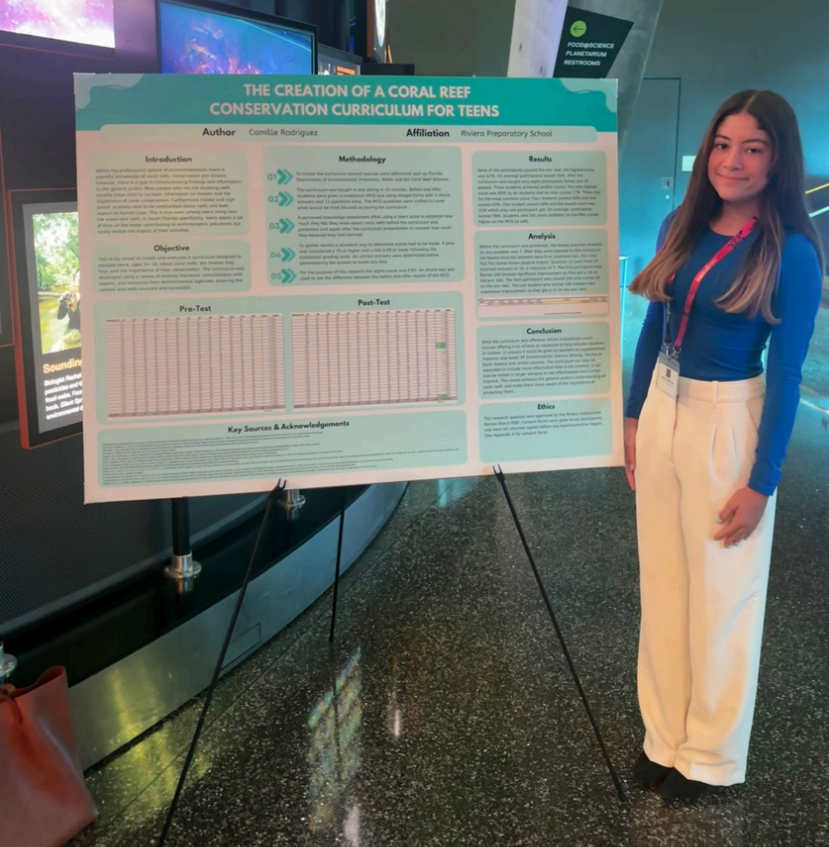
The ReefFlorida Symposium brings together conservation practitioners, researchers, conservation practitioners, researchers, managers, and educators who are actively shaping the health of Florida's Coral Reef. Presenters showcase research, tools, and techniques for reef restoration, as well as initiatives in education and public outreach.

Camille's participation demonstrates Riviera's commitment to fostering leadership, intellectual curiosity, and real-world impact among its students.

We are proud to see our students contributing meaningfully to global challenges while developing the skills, confidence, and vision that will serve them, and the world, well into the future.

"What makes the ReefFL Symposium such an important platform is the number of people sharing their research, which highlights the many factors that influence coral reef growth. The symposium also helps connect researchers – collaborations that lead to even greater advances in conservation."

– Camille Rodriguez



Cultivating Compassion: Turning Passion Into Purpose

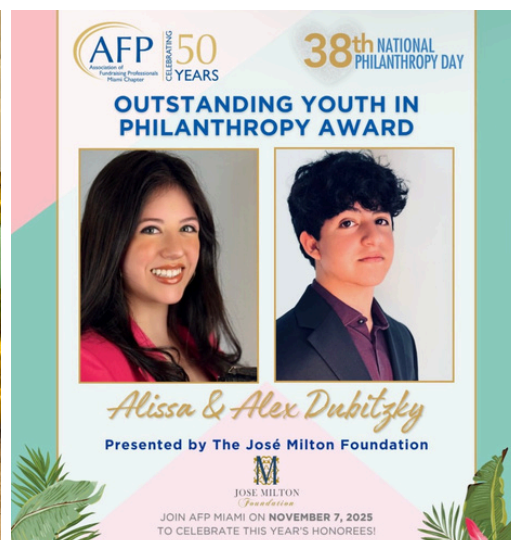
At Riviera Schools, students are encouraged to turn their passions into meaningful impact, and Alissa and Alex Dubitzky exemplify this mission.

Alissa has collected over 650 costumes for children through Ween Dream and Branches FL, where she also leads dance activities and distributes costumes at Branches' annual Pumpkin Palooza. Through her Etsy shop, The CookieBear Crafts, she has raised more than \$750 for Fight Like a Kid. Most recently, she founded NeuroAbility, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that studies how a Montessori-inspired curriculum can benefit seniors living with dementia and Alzheimer's.

Alex has focused on literacy and enrichment, creating three classroom libraries at Branches with 1,500+ books and refurbished furniture. He also assists with NeuroAbility research and organizes Riviera students to assemble snack bags for Branches' children.

It is no surprise that their dedication was recognized with the Outstanding Youth in Philanthropy Award, presented by the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) and the Jose Milton Foundation.

Through their creativity, initiative, and compassion, Alissa and Alex embody Riviera's values of empathy, leadership, and service, inspiring peers and strengthening the community while making a tangible difference in the lives of others.



High Impact Learning

Where Intellectual Curiosity Meets Academic Rigor



At Riviera Day School, our Academic Enrichment Program is one of the many ways we intentionally design our curriculum to challenge students intellectually while cultivating a deep and lasting love of learning. Through rigorous, interdisciplinary experiences, students at Riviera engage in higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and academic inquiry that prepare them for the increasing academic demands of the future.



Beginning in second grade, students participate in a wide range of enrichment lessons that extend and deepen core academic skills. In the *Weather Detectives* unit, students partnered with University of Miami researchers to collect and analyze temperature data, applying scientific methods to study how plants and shade influence their environment. This collaboration introduced students to authentic research practices and reinforced evidence-based reasoning.

In *Miami, My Garden – Gardens on the Go*, students examined urban design and environmental science by reimagining communities across Coral Gables, Brickell, Downtown Miami, Homestead, and Miami Beach as greener, more sustainable spaces. Through research and design, they transformed bridges, sidewalks, and bus stops into lush, vine-covered environments, applying creativity alongside critical thinking and community awareness. In the upcoming *Inventors Workshop*, students will study engineering concepts and forces in motion as they design and refine Rube Goldberg machines, requiring strategic planning, perseverance, and creative problem-solving.

By fifth grade, enrichment increases in rigor, independence, and academic expectations. Students conduct in-depth research on influential artists, analyze techniques and historical context, and present their findings through formal presentations that strengthen public speaking and analytical skills. This year, students are also participating in the Fairchild Challenge, a nationally recognized program that integrates science, sustainability, and design thinking. Through collaborative, project-based learning, students apply research skills, critical thinking, and creativity to address real-world environmental challenges, reinforcing the connection between academic learning and meaningful impact.



The Power of Feeling Seen: How Belonging Shapes Brighter Futures

A conversation with Annemarie Pérez, Director of Admissions, Riviera Day School

When Annemarie Pérez first walked through the doors of Riviera Day School in 2006, she wasn't only looking for a high-performing school; she was seeking the perfect learning environment for her son, Daniel. Riviera was recommended to their family as a school that could challenge him academically while providing the warmth and support essential to his growth.

Annemarie toured the school with Mr. Peter Cohen, and before she even stepped into a classroom, she was greeted by Olga Mestre and Elaine Hughes, two friendly faces who made her feel instantly at ease.

She left that tour knowing she had found something rare.

In 2007, Daniel entered 3rd grade, and

Christopher, Annemarie's second oldest, began 1st. What Annemarie did not yet know was that this simple decision would shape not only her children's futures, but her own. "As a family, we embraced Riviera as it embraced us," she shared. And it did - deeply, fully, and for years to come.

Riviera became the place where all four Pérez children, each uniquely gifted, each with their own challenges and dreams, grew into the people they were meant to become.

Daniel, once a young boy looking for the right environment, blossomed in Riviera's warmth, later earning his master's degree at FSU and now working as a registered dietician at South Miami Hospital. Christopher, supported and stretched by his teachers, became a National Merit nominee, attended UF, and is

now pursuing a PhD in Statistics at FSU.

Their younger twin siblings, Annemarie and Bryan, have carved their own paths within the same nurturing community. Annemarie is now a senior, a Division I volleyball commit to USF. Bryan is awaiting college decisions, aspiring to enter the medical field and become a dentist.

"Four very different children, four very different experiences," Annemarie says. "Riviera met each of them exactly where they were."

As her family grew, so did the realities of raising four children in independent schools. Wanting to keep all her children at Riviera, Annemarie pursued a career opportunity at the newly developing Prep campus in 2010, beginning an 11-year chapter as the Office Manager at Riviera Prep, where she became a beloved presence for countless families. She built relationships, she supported students, and she created connections that lasted long after her own children graduated.

Today, as the Director of Admissions at the Day School, she is back where her family's journey began. It is a full-circle moment she feels deeply.

"I now get to share my story as a mom with families looking for a place to call home," she says. When asked how she would describe the school's culture, Annemarie doesn't hesitate: "Nurturing, caring, familial. It sounds simple, but it's true. Children can be themselves here. They are known, really known here."

This knowing extends beyond academics. The Pérez children were shaped by the encouragement of teachers who saw their potential, and the gentle but firm insistence that they stretch toward growth. They learned resilience. They learned independence. Mostly, they learned that they belonged.

As both a parent and an administrator, Annemarie has come to appreciate the village it takes to make Riviera what it is. "The amount of work that goes into building a cohesive community is incredible," she says.

"When staff and families are aligned, amazing things happen." Her vision of commitment at Riviera is simple yet profound: "Meeting students where they are. Challenging them while supporting them. Giving them good struggles that prepare them for life."

As her children continue their journeys beyond the school walls, Annemarie hopes they carry with them one thing above all: *happiness*. "I want them to remember their years here as happy ones, filled with good friends, great memories, and a sense of extended family that will last a lifetime."

The story of the Pérez family is the story of Riviera itself, one of warmth, dedication, transformation, and belonging. Their journey is a reminder of what makes our community so special: that behind every child is a family, behind every family is a partnership, and behind it all is a school devoted to helping each student grow into their brightest self. And for families who step onto our Day School campus for the first time, it is often Mrs. Annemarie Pérez – the mother, the leader, the gatekeeper – who helps them feel that magic from the very start, just as Ms. Mestre and Ms. Hughes did for her in 2006.



Leading with Legacy:

Introducing Nicolas Cabrera '16,
Chair of the Riviera Schools
Alumni Network

Riviera Schools is proud to announce Nicolas Cabrera, Class of 2016, as the new Chair of the Riviera Schools Alumni Network. A proud Riviera graduate and lifelong Gables resident, Nicolas embodies the spirit of leadership, innovation, and community that defines the Riviera legacy.

The son of Ralph Cabrera, who served on the Coral Gables City Commission for 12 years, Nicolas is forging his own path while honoring a family tradition of civic engagement. As the founder of Flamingo Fling Productions, Nicolas has become a driving force in Coral Gables' small-business and cultural scene. His company hosts the popular Giralda Plaza Artisan Market, a vibrant community gathering that attracts hundreds of visitors each month and contributes to economic development in Downtown Coral Gables.

Beyond his entrepreneurial success, Nicolas launched the Young Associates of the Coral Gables in 2022, a dynamic network of young professionals committed to growth, collaboration, and community engagement. A membership engagement and fundraising organization directly associated with the Coral Gables Museum, the organization hosts networking events designed to connect emerging leaders not only with one another but also with the broader community they serve.



On the first Friday of each month, the Young Associates also host Gallery Night at the Coral Gables Museum, an evening filled with art, culture, music, and community.

Now, as Chair of the Riviera Schools Alumni Network, Nicolas brings that same energy and vision to his alma mater. His goal is to expand alumni engagement, strengthen connections across graduating classes, and introduce high-level events and initiatives that celebrate Riviera's vibrant community.

Through his leadership, the Alumni Network will continue to grow as a space where graduates come together to share experiences, foster mentorship, and uphold the legacy of excellence that defines Riviera. Nicolas Cabrera leads with legacy, honoring Riviera's past, enriching its present, and inspiring a future where connection and community thrive.

"The Riviera Schools Alumni Network is the embodiment of the Bulldog legacy. It embraces our Riviera family long after our alumni have graduated and as they begin to pave their own paths, providing them with a home at Riviera indefinitely."

- Nicolas Cabrera

SOCIAL SKILLS FOR LIFE: *Home Edition*

Belinda Gordon-Battle, MED, MS, LMHC & Dr. Stephanie Romulton

The Power of Belonging: What It Looks Like Through a Child's Eyes

When children walk into school each morning, they're not just stepping into a classroom — they're stepping into a community. For students to learn, take risks, and confidently express themselves, they first need to feel that they belong.

Research shows that a sense of belonging is one of the strongest predictors of academic success. When children feel safe, connected, and valued, their brains are more open to learning — they participate more, ask questions freely, and bounce back from mistakes with confidence.

But belonging isn't something abstract. It's built through small, everyday moments that matter deeply to children. To a child, belonging looks like being greeted by name. It looks like a teacher who notices when they're having a hard morning and offers a smile or a quiet check-in. It sounds like classmates saying, "Come sit with us," during group work. It feels like having a trusted adult who listens without judgment. These brief interactions send a powerful message: You are seen, you are cared for, and you are an important part of this community.

As adults, whether at home or at school, we can nurture a sense of belonging through simple, intentional actions: asking about a child's day with curiosity, sharing family stories, involving them in small responsibilities, and encouraging friendships built on kindness. When we make connections first, everything else follows.

Belonging creates the emotional foundation children need to thrive academically, socially, and personally.

Tips for Families: Helping Children Feel Connected and Secure

- **Create predictable "hello" and "goodbye" rituals.** A quick squeeze, a secret handshake, or an encouraging phrase ("You've got this today!") helps children start and end the day feeling grounded.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Try: "Who made you smile today?" or "What was something kind you did or noticed?"
- **Celebrate effort and progress.** When children know they're valued for trying — not for being perfect — they feel safer taking academic and social risks.
- **Encourage friendships through simple shared time.** Playdates, park meet-ups, or shared hobbies help children strengthen connections in low-pressure spaces.
- **Model belonging at home.** Family routines — game nights, shared chores, cooking together — help children experience what a supportive community feels like.
- **Honor participation over perfection.** Children feel they belong when they are included and actively participate, not just when they perform perfectly. Invite them to join games, classroom tasks, or family projects, and value their ideas and effort. Presence and contribution, even if messy or imperfect, communicate: You matter.

Belonging doesn't happen by accident — it grows when children develop the social and emotional skills that help them feel connected, confident, and understood. When families and schools encourage these skills through small, consistent moments — listening with patience, talking about feelings, practicing problem-solving, showing kindness — children experience the deep sense of belonging that allows them to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Together, we can help every child feel they are an essential part of our community.

– Dr. Romulton & Ms. Gordon-Battle, Your Mental Health Counselors

Riviera Bulldogs Thrive:

A Learning Series for Families



Join us for the first session of our 2025–2026 Learning Series, hosted at our Riviera Prep Campus located at 9775 SW 87th Avenue, Miami, FL 33176.

Anxiety 101: Middle School, High School, and Pre-College
with Cherise Watson, LMHC, and Carolina Costa, LMHC

This engaging workshop will help parents understand the many ways anxiety can show up during the middle school, high school, and pre-college years.

Licensed mental health professionals Cherise Watson and Carolina Costa will share practical tools, strategies, and insights to support students and their families in managing stress, building resilience, and thriving academically, socially, and emotionally.

 Preparatory Campus Library

 Wednesday, January 14

 6:00 PM

OPEN TO ALL RIVIERA SCHOOLS FAMILIES (PK-12)

ABOUT THIS SESSION'S SPEAKERS

Cherise Watson is a dynamic clinical therapist, educator, and speaker with decades of experience in the fields of counseling and education. She currently serves as a Clinical Therapist at FIU Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS), where she provides in-person and tele-behavioral health services, consultations, trainings and workshops, and supervision to campus partners, students, and the South Florida community and beyond. Cherise is deeply committed to raising awareness about the importance of prioritizing mental and emotional health.

She is also the Owner and Lead Clinical Therapist of Cornerstone Center for Counseling, LLC, where she offers compassionate and evidence-based care to individuals and families. Cherise is highly sought after as a facilitator for professional trainings and community presentations. Her speaking engagements have included organizations such as the National Optometric Association, Niznik Behavioral Health, the Risk Less, Do More Campaign, the Miami Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the South Dade and Miami-Dade Chapters of the NAACP, and the Southern Pearls Miami-Dade Chapter of the Top Ladies of Distinction, among others.

Beyond her professional achievements, Cherise is a proud wife and mother of three who finds joy in travel, the arts, and music.



Cherise Watson, LMHC

Carolina Costa, M.S., LMHC, is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and the Clinic Coordinator of the MINT Anxiety Clinic within the Center for Children and Families (CCF) at Florida International University. In her role, Carolina oversees clinical operations and assists in supervising graduate students in the delivery of evidence-based interventions for children and adolescents with anxiety and related disorders. She also coordinates research initiatives at the MINT, including the Kids Face-to-Face and Computer-Enhanced Formats Effectiveness Study for Anxiety and Related Symptoms (Kids FACE FEARS) and the Selective Mutism Intervention Long-term Evaluation (SMILE) project.

Carolina earned both her Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Master of Science in Professional Counseling Psychology from Florida International University. She has extensive experience providing individual and group therapy to children and adolescents presenting with a wide range of anxiety disorders and behavioral challenges, offering services in both English and Spanish. Her clinical work emphasizes close collaboration with parents and caregivers, incorporating them directly into treatment to help maintain progress at home and promote long-term success. She also works closely with teachers and school staff to support children's functioning across settings and ensure consistency in intervention strategies.



Carolina Costa, LMHC



Hello, Rocket 2.0

This school year, we unveiled our new and improved Rocket the Bulldog, our beloved mascot, now with a bold, elevated look that reflects the strength, spirit, and pride of the Riviera community!

This refreshed design is more than just a makeover; it's a symbol of our unity, tradition, and the vibrant energy that defines our students and school culture. Rocket continues to embody the heart of Riviera spirit, and we love seeing our new mascot come to life in fun and meaningful ways across our campuses.

To celebrate, don't forget to check out our Riviera merchandise featuring Rocket's new look! Feel free to shop these exciting items online and in-store, perfect for showing off your Riviera pride in style.

A Landmark Fall Season for Riviera Prep

Riviera Prep celebrated one of the most successful fall seasons in school history, with three of our four varsity fall sports advancing athletes or teams to the State Championships, and our girls' volleyball team reaching the State Sweet 16.

Varsity Girls Golf

- For the first time in program history, the entire team advanced to the Regional Championship.
- Danica Ortega earned a spot in the State Championship following an outstanding performance at Regionals.
- It was a record-setting season, the most successful year ever for Riviera Prep Girls Golf.

Varsity Cross Country

- Sabrina Martinez qualified for the State Championship for the fourth consecutive year, an exceptional and seldom-achieved milestone.

Varsity Swimming

- Julian Lozano advanced to the State Championship for the fourth consecutive season, marking an outstanding milestone in his Riviera Prep career.
- Riviera Prep's relay team also secured a spot in the State Championship, adding another historic achievement to the program's legacy.

Varsity Girls Volleyball

- The team advanced to the State Sweet 16, capping off a standout season.
- Two seniors also committed to continue their athletic careers at the collegiate level, both earning full athletic scholarships: Mariel St. John to Tulane University and Ann Marie Perez to the University of South Florida.

ATHLETIC HIGHLIGHTS



2025 Riviera Day School **CAMPUS ENHANCEMENTS**

At Riviera Schools, we understand that a thoughtfully designed environment enhances the student experience, strengthens family engagement, and enriches school culture. We are proud to announce a series of exciting campus enhancements – each one a reflection of our continued investment in excellence, community, and the future of our school.

Riviera Day School Swimming Pool

Our stunning new pool, a state-of-the-art addition that enhances both student life and the overall campus experience.

Designed with functionality and beauty in mind, the pool provides a premier space for swim instruction, recreation, and fun.

Surrounded by sleek, modern finishes and located just steps away from our two brand-new playgrounds, it helps create a vibrant, stimulating area where students can play, explore, and enjoy their time on campus.



Riviera Day School Mural

We are delighted with our beautiful new mural at our Riviera Day School campus. This vibrant artwork is more than just a visual addition – it represents the deep connection and continuity that define Riviera Schools. With a complementary mural also displayed at our Preparatory School, both campuses now share a unified symbol of our mission, values, and community spirit.

Together, the murals celebrate who we are: two campuses, one school, grounded in shared purpose and a commitment to inspiring every student who walks through our doors.



Riviera Day School Classroom Enhancements: STEM & Music

Our Music classroom has been refreshed with new furniture and portable risers that allow us to create a stage anywhere on campus – ideal for student performances and pep rallies. The space has also been repainted and brightened to reflect the energy and creativity of our growing music program.

In our STEM classroom, students will now benefit from updated lab desks, flexible furniture, and a new teacher demonstration station designed to model experiments and support hands-on instruction. We've also introduced a vertical grow tower to enhance our environmental and life science curriculum, giving students an engaging opportunity to explore real-world applications of science.



2025 Riviera Preparatory School **CAMPUS ENHANCEMENTS**

Riviera Prep Guardhouse

We are pleased to announce the addition of a new guardhouse at the entrance of our Prep campus, further strengthening Riviera's commitment to the safety and security of our students, families, faculty, and visitors.

This enhancement allows for more efficient monitoring and management of campus access, ensuring a welcoming yet secure environment throughout the school day.

We are grateful for the continued trust and support of our families as we invest in improvements that enhance the Riviera experience and uphold the standards of care our community expects.



Riviera Bulldogs Tony Shahbaz Court

We are proud to announce the opening of our new Tony Shahbaz Court in honor of Anthony Shahbaz, Riviera Preparatory's Assistant Athletic Director and an outstanding leader in our athletic community.

Coach Shahbaz's impact on Riviera has been nothing short of extraordinary. A five-time Miami-Dade Coach of the Year and three-time Florida Coach of the Year, his dedication, leadership, and unwavering passion for student-athletes have left a lasting legacy.

This court stands as a tribute to his commitment to excellence and the countless lives he's inspired both on and off the court. We are honored to recognize Coach Shahbaz with this lasting symbol of our appreciation.



Riviera Preparatory Band and Broadcasting Equipment

With the generous support of the Parents' Club, we have invested in new instruments and equipment to elevate the student experience in music and media.

Our band program now features upgraded instruments, enhancing sound quality and performance opportunities for our student musicians. In broadcasting, new technology, including MacBook Pros, Blackmagic Studio equipment, and Adobe Premiere licenses, will support high-level production and creative exploration.

We are grateful to the Parents Club for their partnership in advancing these programs and empowering our students to develop their talents with professional-grade tools.





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