



Riviera
REFLECTIONS
MAY 2026



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.



Table of Contents

05

Message from
our Executive Director

06

Message from
our Heads of School

07

Class of 2026
Accomplishments

08-09

Class of 2026
College Acceptances

10-11

A Steady Compass in an
Evolving College Landscape

12-13

Valedictorian Spotlight
Diana Moya Lapeira '26

14-15

A Conversation with our Salutatorian
Sofia Torres Perez '26

16-20

Riviera Preparatory
Awards and Recognitions

21-22

Riviera Preparatory
Environmental Club

23

An Aspiring Author, Already at Work
Dhir Mirpuri '29

24-25

Defining His Own Course
Antonio Sevillano '26

26

Expanding Pathways
of Distinction

27-28

Breaking Barriers Behind the Game
Meadow Anderson '28

29-30

Riviera Preparatory
Athletic Highlights

31

Growing Together Through the Game
Day School Basketball

32

Alumni Highlight
Santiago Lardiez '25

33-34

Social Skills for Life:
Home Edition

35

Learning Beyond the Classroom
Field Trips at RDS

38

Summer
at Riviera Schools



Dear Riviera Families,

As we begin to close out another wonderful school year, I find myself reflecting with deep appreciation on all that our students, faculty, and families have accomplished together. It has truly been a year filled with growth, perseverance, and so many moments that remind us what makes our Riviera community so special.

In this installment of *Riviera Reflections*, we are excited to share just a glimpse of those moments celebrating the many wins across our entire school, from our youngest learners at three years old to our graduating seniors. These accomplishments span academics, college acceptances and scholarships, athletics, the arts, and the everyday milestones that matter just as much. Each one reflects not only the hard work of our students, but also the guidance of our faculty and the support of our families.

What makes these achievements even more meaningful is the journey behind them, the curiosity sparked in our early childhood classrooms, the confidence built through new challenges, and the sense of belonging that carries our students forward year after year. It is this shared experience, rooted in our values, that continues to define the Riviera family.

As we head into the summer months, I hope you are able to enjoy time to rest, recharge, and be with those you love. Thank you for your partnership and for the trust you place in us each day.

We are already looking ahead with excitement to the year to come, confident that it will bring even more opportunities for our students to learn, grow, and achieve great things.

Wishing you and your family a safe and happy summer.

In partnership,

Kara Locke
Executive Director



As we gather to celebrate the many milestones that mark the close of the academic year, we are reminded of what defines the Riviera Schools experience at its core. It is an education grounded in intellectual rigor and elevated by a deep commitment to the development of the whole student, academically, socially, and emotionally, within a community that values character, curiosity, and purposeful exploration.

Across both campuses, we see the outcomes of this philosophy come to life. From the earliest years at Riviera Day School to the culminating achievements at Riviera Preparatory School, there is a clear and intentional continuity, a synergy that supports our students as they grow, evolve, and define their path. Along this journey, students are encouraged to step into their authentic selves, trying new things, exploring unfamiliar pathways, and discovering what truly aligns with their passions and sense of purpose. It is in these moments of exploration and self-discovery that confidence is built and identity begins to take shape.

Each day, we witness our students challenged to think critically, supported as individuals, and inspired to pursue their interests with intention. They are given the space to take risks, to grow through both success and uncertainty, and to become not only accomplished scholars but self-aware individuals. This is what distinguishes Riviera. Our success is measured not solely by college acceptances, but by the caliber of young people we graduate – thoughtful, resilient, and prepared to lead lives of meaning and impact.

Warmly,

Jenise Bello & Nicole Rivera

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

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.



Class of 2026:

A Distinctive Legacy of Achievement

What they have
accomplished.



155

They earned
acceptances into
155 colleges and
universities.

30

Their college
acceptances
represented 30 states.

33,063

They completed over 33,000
community services hours.

5

Their college
acceptances
represented 5
countries.

45

45 were recognized by
the National School
Recognition Program.

60

60 were recognized as
AP Scholar, AP Scholar
with Honor, or AP
Scholar with Distinction.

22

They earned over \$22
million in scholarships.

15

15 were Silver Knight
Nominees.

26

26 earned AP Capstone
Diplomas.

College and University Acceptances

Our college acceptance list is growing daily and, as of May 1, the Class of 2026 has secured over 22 million dollars in scholarship funds!

Congratulations to all of our scholars for their incredible accomplishments.

Alfred University
American University
Arizona State University (Tempe)
Auburn University
Babson College
Barry University
Belmont University
Bentley University
Boston University
Brandeis University
Brevard College
Carnegie Mellon University
Catholic University of America
Cedar Crest College
Clark University
Clemson University
Coastal Carolina University
College of Charleston
Colorado School of Mines
Colorado State University (Fort Collins)
CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Drexel University
East Carolina University
Eckerd College
Elon University
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (Daytona Beach)
Emmanuel College
Emory University
Flagler College
Florida Atlantic University
Florida Gulf Coast University
Florida Institute of Technology
Florida Memorial University
Florida Polytechnic University
Florida Southern College
Florida State University
Fordham University
Fordham University
Fordham University
Fordham University
Fordham University
Fordham University
Fordham University

Full Sail University
Furman University
Georgetown University
George Washington University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Harvard University
Haverford College
High Point University
Hofstra University
IE University
Indiana University (Bloomington)
Iowa State University
Lehigh University
Liberty University
Long Island University (Post)
Louisiana State University
Loyola University Chicago
Loyola University Maryland
Loyola University New Orleans
Lynn University
Marymount University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
McGill University
Mercer University
Miami University (Oxford)
Miami University (Oxford)
Michigan State University
New Jersey Institute of Technology
New York Institute of Technology
New York University
North Carolina State University
Northeastern University
Nova Southeastern University
Penn State University (University Park)
Pepperdine University
Pratt Institute

Class of 2026

College and University Acceptances

Princeton University
Purdue University (Main Campus)
Rhodes College
Rice University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Roger Williams University
Rollins College
Russell Sage College
Rutgers University (New Brunswick)
Saint Leo University
Saint Louis University
Salem State University
Seton Hall University
Southern Methodist University
Spring Hill College
St. John's University
Stetson University
Stonehill College
SUNY Alfred State College of Technology
Syracuse University
Tecnologico de Monterrey
Texas Christian University
Texas State University
The American University of Paris
The Ohio State University
The University of Alabama
The University of Tampa
The University of Tennessee (Knoxville)
The University of Tennessee (Martin)
The University of Texas at Austin
The University of West Florida
Thomas Jefferson University
Tufts University
Tulane University of Louisiana
Universidad Europea
University of Alabama at Birmingham
University of Amsterdam
University of Arizona
University of California (Berkeley)
University of Central Florida
University of Colorado Boulder
University of Colorado Denver
University of Connecticut
University of Denver
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Houston
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Kentucky
University of Louisville

University of Maine
University of Maryland (College Park)
University of Massachusetts (Amherst)
University of Massachusetts (Boston)
University of Miami
University of Michigan
University of Mississippi
University of Missouri (Columbia)
University of North Carolina at Asheville
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
University of North Florida
University of North Florida
University of Notre Dame
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh)
University of Rochester
University of San Diego
University of San Francisco
University of South Carolina
University of South Florida (Main Campus)
University of Southern California
University of Utah
University of Waterloo
Vatel Hotel & Tourism Business School
Virginia Commonwealth University
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Wake Forest University
Wentworth Institute of Technology
West Virginia University
Wilkes Honors College of FAU
Xavier University
Yale University





A Steady Compass in an Evolving College Landscape

A conversation with Marie Castellanos, Director of Academic & College Counseling

When families speak about the college process at Riviera Schools, one quality surfaces again and again: steadiness. It is a quiet confidence, rooted in trust, preparation, and deep relationships, qualities that define the leadership of Riviera's Director of Academic and College Counseling, Marie Castellanos.

In an increasingly complex and ever-evolving college landscape, where admissions trends, institutional priorities, and expectations shift constantly, Ms. Castellanos brings both fierce steadiness and expert insight. Her calm, strategic approach helps families navigate the process with clarity, while her deep knowledge ensures Riviera students remain highly competitive and marketable in a rapidly changing environment.

Through individualized guidance, thoughtful planning, and a commitment to student success, Ms. Castellanos works with the Academic & College Counseling team to position students not only for college admission, but for long-term opportunity.

Ms. Castellano's journey to Riviera Schools began in August 2012, just one year after the Preparatory

campus opened. She recognized an opportunity to help shape something meaningful from the ground up. A conversation led to an interview, and soon after, a role that would grow alongside the school itself, evolving into something profoundly impactful.

Her leadership style is calm and unassuming, yet deeply influential. "I get to know our parents and students very well," she explains. "Because our approach is individualized, families come to trust not just the process, but the guidance behind it."

What distinguishes Riviera's college counseling program is its early and intentional design. College and academic counseling begins in sixth grade, an uncommon model that allows counselors to grow alongside students, understanding their academic patterns, interests, challenges, and aspirations over time. By senior year, the relationship is already firmly established, built on years of shared conversations and guidance.

This long-term connection allows for honesty paired with reassurance, an essential balance in today's increasingly complex college admissions landscape.

"It's important for families to understand the reality of college admissions," she says. "We look at the big picture – data, trends, statistics – but we also look at the student's own data over the years. We're realistic, but we also encourage students to reach for their goals, as long as we're honest about what it will take to get there."

The college journey can be emotionally charged, and Riviera's counseling team is intentionally positioned as a steady presence during vulnerable moments. Each counselor works closely with their assigned students, and the department's collaborative approach ensures that every student feels supported.

"Knowing that we are here for them, consistently, matters," she reflects. "Being that stable person at school during such a pivotal season can make all the difference."

College counseling at Riviera extends far beyond applications. Conversations span course planning, academic roadmaps, grades, and future career paths—the good, the challenging, and everything in between. "I never want to be seen as a disciplinarian," she notes. "I'm their advocate. Our role is to understand students in many dimensions and guide them toward the right path."

Central to Riviera's philosophy is the concept of *fit*, not just where students can be admitted, but where they will genuinely thrive. Early and frequent college exploration is encouraged, with students guided to reflect on school culture, academic support, campus size, and personal preferences. "We want students to flourish," she says. "Every child is different, and parents are pivotal partners in these conversations. Looking at the big picture ensures we're setting students up for long-term success, not just short-term outcomes."

Some of the most affirming moments come not during celebrations, but during challenges. "When a student is overwhelmed, and you help talk them through it, and later they come back and say thank you, that matters deeply," she shares. "And then there's the joy of acceptance letters. Seeing their faces reminds you why this work is so important."

Parents experience the college process alongside their children, often with equal emotion. At times, the counselor becomes a bridge—helping families navigate differing perspectives while keeping the student's voice central. While most Riviera families are aligned, especially by junior and senior year, thoughtful mediation ensures that each student's aspirations are honored.

The work also extends into moments of redirection. When academic or socio-emotional challenges arise, the counseling team works closely with Riviera's mental health and academic departments, ensuring students are supported holistically. "These are tough conversations," she says, "but they're necessary to help students transition successfully into their next chapter."

Counselors are accessible throughout the day, before and after school. Students regularly sit side-by-side with counselors completing applications, attending workshops, preparing for standardized testing, and engaging in seminars – support that extends to every student, not just a select few. "This is not a transactional process," she emphasizes. "We dive deep with all of our students."

That commitment is reinforced by the broader Riviera community. Teachers, advisors, counselors, and families collaborate continuously, recognizing that student success is a shared responsibility. Academic preparation, research skills, writing, emotional resilience, and social development are woven together intentionally.

When alumni return to share where life has taken them, her hope is simple yet profound. "Students often feel overwhelmed by small moments," she reflects. "Learning to step back and see the bigger picture – that skill will carry them far."

As students move on to become doctors, lawyers, leaders, and innovators, she hopes they remember that perspective, and that Riviera will always remain a place they can return to for guidance and support.

In a season defined by milestones and acceptances, her quiet force reminds us that success is built not only on outcomes, but on relationships, integrity, and the steady guidance that helps students navigate what lies ahead.





Valedictorian Spotlight:

Diana Moya Lapeira '26

Riviera Preparatory School proudly celebrates Diana Moya Lapeira, valedictorian of the Class of 2026, whose journey reflects the very best of a Riviera education: academic excellence, intellectual courage, authentic leadership, and a commitment to growth.

Diana graduates as a National Merit Finalist, AP Scholar with Distinction, and a highly accomplished student. This fall, she will attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she plans to study Electrical Engineering, with interests in finance, management, and entrepreneurship.

Yet beyond the accolades, Diana's story is one of transformation.

She arrived at Riviera in eighth grade, by her own admission, "absolutely clueless." What followed was not an overnight rise, but years of persistence, discipline, and discovery. She credits many of her defining memories not only to the classroom but to the friendships she built and the countless afternoons and late nights spent studying alongside those who became her support system.

"I'm leaving a much more confident version of myself," Diana reflects. "I went from having a vague idea of what I wanted my future to look like to feeling like I have a solid idea of what I want to do."

That confidence was cultivated in a school culture that encourages students to stretch beyond perceived limits. Early in her Riviera journey, Diana accelerated her math pathway by taking Algebra II in eighth grade, later advancing to AP Calculus BC as a sophomore. Riviera's willingness to personalize and elevate her academic experience became a catalyst for deeper confidence and ambition. "Deciding to challenge myself was the first step in realizing I was capable of accomplishing difficult things," she shares. That mindset only deepened.

By junior year, Diana embraced one of the most rigorous schedules imaginable, including Multivariable Calculus, AP Physics C, AP Chemistry, Biomedical Sciences, and multiple additional AP courses. Rather than shrink from a challenge, she leaned into it.

When asked what drove her consistency, Diana's answer reveals a grounded wisdom beyond her years: "My goal from the start was simply to do my best. I took high school day by day—each assignment, each test, each project."

This perspective speaks directly to Riviera's belief that excellence is built not through pressure, but through purposeful habits, resilience, and joy in the process of learning.

Diana defines success in deeply personal terms: "Success to me is being able to think of my childhood self and knowing beyond doubt that she'd be proud of me." That childhood self, growing up in Costa Rica, once told others she wanted to attend Harvard and become the CEO of Apple. Many dismissed it as unrealistic. Diana never forgot. "I want to prove to that little version of myself that her ambitions weren't that far off."

Her journey also reflects Riviera's culture of leadership through service and collaboration. Diana serves as President of HOSA, Co-President of Mu Alpha Theta, President of the Crochet Club, and Vice President and Co-Founder of Women in STEM.

She defines leadership not as status, but as awareness: "Leadership is paying attention to those around you and learning to adapt and apply their strengths for the team's benefit."

Perhaps no word captures Diana's Riviera experience better than the one she chose herself: Adaptability. That ability to adapt, persevere, and continue growing is exactly what prepares students not only for college, but for life.

As she prepares for her next chapter at MIT, Diana is most excited to join a community of equally driven peers, pursue research and entrepreneurial opportunities, and remain open to new passions she has yet to discover. "I hope my interests change during college," she says. "Who knows—I might take a class in aerospace engineering and absolutely love it."

Her advice to younger Riviera students is simple and powerful: "Don't be scared of hard work or difficult classes. Enjoy the challenge. Find something you really love, and explore it. Be curious."

When asked what legacy she hopes to leave, Diana's answer once again centers on others: "I hope I can inspire underclassmen to believe in themselves...to show Riviera students that this is possible with enough effort."

Diana Moya's story is more than one of exceptional outcomes; it is a reminder of what can happen when talent meets opportunity, when challenge is embraced, and when a student is empowered to become the fullest version of herself.

We congratulate Diana on her extraordinary accomplishments and look forward to the impact she will undoubtedly make in the years ahead.



"Success to me is being able to think of my childhood self and knowing beyond doubt that she'd be proud of me."

- Diana Moya Lapeira '26



TOP 5 COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

Harvard | UPenn | Yale
Princeton | MIT

A Conversation with Our Salutarian: Sofia Torres Perez '26

As Riviera Preparatory School's Salutarian, Sofia Torres Perez reflects a balance of intellectual rigor and self-awareness that defines the Riviera experience. A National Merit Finalist, AP Capstone Candidate, and AP Scholar with Distinction, Sofia's academic achievements are complemented by a thoughtful, grounded perspective on growth and success. Her accomplishments have earned her acceptance to a range of highly regarded institutions, including the University of Florida Honors Program, Georgia Institute of Technology, McGill University, University of Miami, and the University of Central Florida Honors Program.

Looking back, what defining moments shaped your time at Riviera?

My first math competition stands out. I got there and realized I only knew how to solve two of the questions. It was humbling. But afterward, I went home, talked to my dad and my teachers, and worked to learn what I hadn't fully understood in Algebra II. That experience taught me independence, how to take ownership of my learning, and push forward when something feels unfamiliar.

How has your understanding of success evolved?

Success, to me, is about being satisfied and being happy, but not in a passive way. Just being "comfortable" can feel limiting. I think it's about dreaming big while also setting manageable expectations, and learning how to balance the two.

What makes Riviera distinct in the way it develops its students?

At Riviera, there are always options. If a student is willing to put their mind to something, there's a path to achieve it. The system is designed to support you, not hold you back. That makes a big difference.

In what ways has Riviera challenged you?

It hasn't just allowed me to be "good"—it's pushed me toward excellence. It's encouraged me to try things I might not have otherwise explored and to hold myself to a higher standard.

Where did you find the most unexpected growth?

Socially. Through Model UN, especially. I used to be much more reserved, but over time, I found myself actively seeking out conversations and new connections. I've become much more confident in how I interact with others, and I genuinely enjoy it now.

What subject has most shaped the way you think?

Math. It gives you a framework for approaching problems—not just in the classroom, but in life. It showed me how much there is to understand in the world and gave me tools to start making sense of it.

How have your academic interests evolved?

Taking chemistry and physics really solidified that I'm drawn to logic-based subjects—areas where understanding goes beyond memorization. I like working through problems and understanding how things connect.

What does leadership mean to you now?

Leadership is about being reliable and present. It's about creating structure, but also knowing when to step back. A good leader doesn't do everything—they empower others, delegate, and make space for different voices.



What was one of the most challenging moments of your high school journey?

AP U.S. History was difficult for me. It wasn't my natural strength, and I struggled at first. But I took time to reflect on what I needed to improve, and I worked through it. In the end, it was one of the most rewarding experiences because it pushed me outside my comfort zone.

What has failure or uncertainty taught you?

To try again. When I don't understand something, I've learned to slow down, sit with it, and really internalize the lesson. Growth comes from that process.

What does "community" mean to you after your time at Riviera?

It's about people who genuinely care for one another; you show up, support each other, and go out of your way to help. It's not about perfection; it's about collective growth.

What excites you—and challenges you—about the next chapter?

I'm excited to dive into what I love studying and to experience something new. At the same time, it's going to be challenging to be away from home. I'll miss my family and important moments, but I'm ready for that change.

**How do you hope to grow in the next four years?**

I want to become more me. I want to fully understand who I am and be able to live that out confidently and authentically.

What advice would you give the younger generations at Riviera?

Don't be afraid to do hard things. Most of the time, it's more intimidating in your head than it is in reality. Try things because they interest you, not just because they're comfortable or expected. Ultimately, you have to trust yourself. That inner voice that says, "You can do it"—listen to it.

What does it mean to you to graduate as salutatorian?

It means I did my best. It represents the work I put in over time.

What defines a Riviera graduate?

Someone who enjoys what they do and is good at it. A Riviera graduate takes the time to understand who they are and then puts that into practice.

Awards & Recognitions

RIVIERA PREPARATORY CAMPUS



At Riviera Schools, achievement is measured not only by results, but by the dedication, character, and pursuit of excellence that lead to them. We are proud to celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of our students, whose talents and hard work continue to distinguish them in academics, leadership, and the arts.

The Riviera Press

The Riviera Press earned a distinguished SNO Badge, a national recognition awarded for outstanding scholastic reporting. Nearly four years after its launch, this milestone reflects the steady growth, resilience, and ambition of our student journalists.

Our team has expanded its impact, publishing more stories, launching podcasts, and adding the WRIV broadcast to keep our community informed and connected. After countless revisions and submissions and a steadfast commitment to elevating every detail, one of our stories was selected for national publication.

The featured piece, "Reyes Wins 2026 Baynanza T-Shirt Contest," written by Sofia Bordas '26, highlights the remarkable achievements of one of our teachers and her talented students—an inspiring example of the excellence unfolding across our campus each day.



Dance

The Riviera Rockettes delivered a remarkable season. For the first time in school history, our varsity team attended UDA Nationals, where both routines advanced to the final round—an extraordinary achievement that reflects the continued rise of Riviera's dance program on the national stage. At UDA Regionals, the varsity hip-hop routine earned 3rd place in a highly competitive division, finishing ahead of several long-established programs.

Success continued throughout the season at the Contest of Champions Nationals, where the middle school team captured 1st place with their jazz routine, the varsity team earned 1st place for its open routine, and the JV team secured 1st place for its contemporary routine. Impressively, every Riviera Rockettes team earned first-place recognition in at least one category this year.

Individual performances were equally outstanding. Varsity captain Becky Bigorra '26 placed 2nd in Senior Solo among more than 80 entries at Nationals, while co-captain Grace Williams '26 earned 9th place. Both dancers were selected to perform their solos at the closing ceremonies—an honor reserved for the Top 10 finalists. These accomplishments reflect the discipline, talent, and leadership that continue to define the Riviera Rockettes.



WRIV Broadcasting

Our broadcasting students proudly represented Riviera Preparatory School at this year's Florida Scholastic Press Association Spring Convention in Orlando. They demonstrated exceptional creativity, technical skill, and professionalism, earning an Honorable Mention for their video short, *Falling for Ya*. They also competed in the 2026 Florida Scholastic Press Association (FSPA) Spring Digital Contest, where our students were recognized among the honorees representing top broadcast journalism programs across the state.

These accomplishments reflect the strength of Riviera's broadcasting program, where students develop their voices as storytellers, creators, and media professionals through hands-on, real-world experiences. We celebrate the continued success of our WRIV team and commend their dedication to excellence in journalism, production, and digital media.



Health Information Program (HIP)

The Health Information Program is proud to share that its Peer Health Educators have earned the Excellence in Training Award for Miami-Dade County, competing against 55 public high schools and several leading private institutions, including Gulliver, Ransom, and Cushman.

This distinguished recognition reflects the students' dedication, professionalism, and impact as peer educators and leaders. Their ability to engage and educate others speaks to both the strength of the program and their commitment to making a difference.

We are incredibly proud of these students and the culture of excellence they continue to build. Please join us in congratulating our Peer Health Educators on this outstanding achievement.



HOSA - Future Health Professionals

We are proud to recognize our HOSA members for their outstanding achievement at the HOSA State Leadership Conference. This year, Riviera Preparatory School was represented by 26 students competing across a range of events, demonstrating exceptional dedication to the biomedical sciences and future healthcare leadership.

Among this talented group, our Mental Health Promotion team earned distinction as one of the top competitors in Florida for their project, The Wellness Wave, a thoughtfully developed social media campaign focused on raising awareness about mental health and promoting positive coping strategies among peers.

In one of the state's most competitive student leadership arenas, this recognition reflects the innovation, compassion, and purpose-driven leadership that define Riviera students.

DECA

Fourteen Bulldogs proudly represented Riviera Schools at the Florida DECA State Competition alongside more than 1,500 students statewide.

Competing in business strategy and presentation events, our students demonstrated confidence and professionalism, reflecting the strength of Riviera's growing entrepreneurship program.

Congratulations to our top finishers:

- Sofia Bordas '26 — 2nd Place, Hospitality & Tourism Professional Selling
- Dylan Bibeau — 8th Place, Principles of Marketing

Both ranked among the top competitors in Florida.





Architecture and PLTW Civil Engineering

We are proud to celebrate the exceptional achievements of our Architecture and PLTW Civil Engineering students at the Miami-Dade Youth Fair Drafting Competition. Through months of dedication, precision, and creative vision, Riviera students submitted an impressive body of work, earning Riviera Preparatory School the distinction of Most Outstanding High School in Drafting in Miami-Dade County.

This recognition reflects not only the talent of our students but also their commitment to excellence, innovation, and the discipline required to bring complex ideas to life. We congratulate our award-winning students for their remarkable accomplishments and for representing Riviera with such distinction.



Visual Arts Program

Riviera Prep celebrates an exceptional season for our student artists, with each recognition reflecting both individual talent and the strength of our visual arts program.

Julia Gjinali '28 was selected to exhibit at the Dalí Museum Surrealism Student Art Exhibition, with Jose Bravo '26 and Sofia Guerra '27 also recognized in the museum's online gallery. Elina Diaz '30, Isabella LaGrand '27, and Johan Luis '28 showcased their work at the University of Miami Beaux Arts Student Showcase at the Lowe Art Museum. In addition, Johan Luis received the Myrna Palley Award for his self-portrait and was honored at the awards ceremony. Samantha Garcia '28 and Kaydence Pruett '28 were selected from more than 200 submissions for the Bass Teen Art Exhibition, with work exploring themes of identity, memory, and time.



Thespians

Riviera Preparatory School is honored to announce the outstanding achievements of our High School Thespian Troupe. Our students competed alongside thousands of performers from across Florida in a wide range of events at the State Festival—an especially meaningful milestone as it marked our school's first year participating with a high school troupe.

Since the start of the school year, our students have demonstrated exceptional dedication in preparing their pieces, earning an impressive two Superior ratings and three Excellent ratings. Competing—and excelling—at this level is a significant accomplishment, reflecting not only their talent, but their discipline, creativity, and commitment to their craft.

Our Jr. Thespian troupe (middle school) also delivered an exceptional performance this season, earning two Top Honor awards at Districts—an achievement signifying perfect scores from every judge in their room. In addition, the troupe received 10 Superior ratings and 6 Excellent ratings. Competing against 837 students from 37 schools across the district—including magnet programs—makes these accomplishments all the more impressive.

We are incredibly proud of our Thespians at every level and look forward to the continued growth of this program.



Model United Nations

Riviera Preparatory School's Model United Nations program delivered an outstanding season. This year, our delegates attended eight conferences as a team, including the prestigious MUNUM Conference at the University of Michigan, competing against talented students from across the country.

Throughout the year, Riviera students earned recognition at every conference attended, a remarkable testament to the strength, preparation, and depth of the program.

Delegates received honors including Best Delegate, Outstanding Delegate, Honorable Delegate, Best Position Paper, Diplomatic Commendation, and Verbal Commendation. In addition, Riviera earned the distinguished Best Delegation Award at ACADAMUN, highlighting the team's collective excellence.

Christopher Baldwin '27 and Sofia Torres Perez '26 were also selected to serve as Committee Chairs at ISP VMUN, an honor that reflects the respect Riviera students have earned as leaders within the Model UN community.

Beyond awards, Model United Nations offers Riviera students meaningful opportunities to travel, think critically, engage global issues, and refine the communication and leadership skills essential for success in college and beyond. We proudly celebrate the continued rise of Riviera's MUN program and the professionalism, intellect, and confidence with which our students represent the school.

Riviera Preparatory Environmental Club:

Cultivating Science, Sustainability, and Impact Through the Fairchild Challenge

The Environmental Club is led by a dedicated team of student and faculty leaders committed to advancing sustainability and scientific exploration on campus.

Co-Presidents: Sofia Bordas '26, Martha Iriarte '26

Vice President: Elena Banulescu '26

Faculty Advisor: Ms. Sanchez

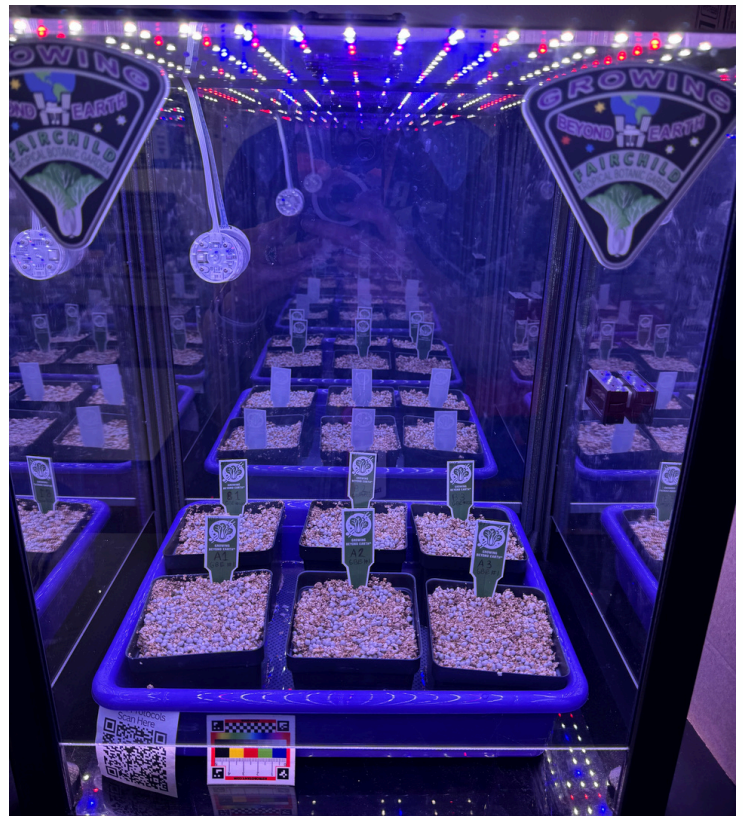
"The Environmental Club has impacted my life in numerous ways, shaping my passion for sustainability through Fairchild challenges and debates and introducing me to some of the most meaningful friendships I'll carry with me beyond graduation. As President, it has been so rewarding to see our club grow and members achieve our collective goals." – Sofia Bordas '26

At Riviera Preparatory School, the Environmental Club continues to redefine what hands-on learning looks like, bridging classroom science with real-world research, global collaboration, and environmental stewardship. Through participation in the year-long Fairchild Challenge, students engage in meaningful scientific inquiry that extends far beyond campus, connecting them to pressing ecological questions and emerging fields of study.

One of this year's most ambitious projects connects Riviera students directly with NASA-related research exploring how crops respond to space-like conditions. Students are currently studying plant resilience through controlled trials involving red tomatoes and mizuna, collecting data to determine which species can withstand extreme environments. This work offers students an authentic entry point into scientific research, where observation, experimentation, and analysis are applied in real time. All projects can be applied to real life, which is what makes it meaningful.

On April 11, students presented their findings at the Fairchild Research Symposium, showcasing months of experimentation, collaboration, and data collection. Their work will be further recognized at the upcoming awards ceremony in May. In addition to their scientific research, Riviera students have also participated in nationwide Environmental Debate tournaments, strengthening their ability to articulate, defend, and refine solutions to complex environmental challenges.

This year marked a historic milestone for Riviera Preparatory School. For the first time, two students advanced to the finals of the Environmental Debate Tournament, earning 3rd place nationally.





Sofia Bordas '26 and Martha Iriarte '26 represented Riviera among 57 schools across Florida, Puerto Rico, and Canada, securing a top-three national finish. Their achievement reflects exceptional preparation, collaboration, and intellectual rigor, positioning Riviera among the leading programs in the competition's history. "Their dedication, teamwork, and hard work truly stood out," mentions Ms. Sanchez.

In addition to this national recognition, Riviera has officially earned enough points to secure the Fairchild Challenge Award for the fourth consecutive year.

With two challenges still remaining before the May ceremony, the Environmental Club continues to build on a year defined by consistency, innovation, and excellence.

Beyond research and competition, the Environmental Club has transformed parts of campus into active learning ecosystems. The butterfly garden serves as both a conservation space and a living laboratory, where students are working with endangered orchids, including *Oncidium ensatum*. Early trials examine how varying soil conditions impact plant growth, with some orchids thriving while others struggle—offering valuable insight into conservation science and environmental sensitivity. In parallel, students cultivate herbs such as rosemary and sage, creating a sustainable garden that also serves the broader school community. A student-designed garden structure, built by Carlos Jonhson, Head of Facilities, further reflects the club's commitment to hands-on innovation and collaboration. "We are trying to bring endangered plants back and understand how they survive in different conditions." Extending their impact beyond the garden, students have also launched a podcast documenting their environmental work. The series highlights ongoing projects, community engagement, and the challenges of sustainability, providing a platform for students to share both process and discovery.

What distinguishes Riviera's Environmental Club is its commitment to relevance and application. Each project—from space agriculture research to plant conservation—translates academic learning into tangible, real-world impact. Through the Fairchild Challenge, students are not only studying the environment—they are actively shaping how it is understood, protected, and sustained. As the club continues to grow, so does its impact: cultivating not only scientific understanding but a deeper sense of stewardship, innovation, and responsibility.

Zaina Abusad '26, a Riviera student since kindergarten, has made a meaningful impact through her Girl Scout Gold Award project focused on raising awareness about the dangers of synthetic fertilizers. Inspired by her work with Miami Waterkeeper, she collaborated with Riviera's Environmental Club and Ms. Sanchez to expand these efforts on campus, while also developing the initiative into a broader public awareness campaign in partnership with Mayor Levine and other community leaders. This fall, Zaina will attend the University of Florida, where she plans to study political science and continue her work through sustainability-focused programs such as Gators Going Green.





An Aspiring Author, Already at Work

A conversation with Dhir Mirpuri, Class of '29

Dhir Mirpuri, Class of 2029, joined Riviera Schools in fourth grade during an uncertain time marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. As his family searched for the right academic home, and with his sister already thriving at the Prep campus, Riviera quickly became the place where Dhir found both stability and inspiration.

Born in Dubai and having lived in the Cayman Islands before settling in Miami at a young age, Dhir brings a global perspective shaped by movement, curiosity, and adaptability. At Riviera, he found a campus culture that resonated deeply with him, one defined by openness, inclusivity, and a sense of belonging. "A lot of people can feel at home here," he shares, noting the diversity and welcoming atmosphere that make Riviera feel like more than just a school.

That sense of belonging helped spark a creative journey that began four to five years ago, when Dhir decided to write his first book. Aspiring to become a professional writer, he chose to start early, aware of the competitive nature of the publishing world and determined to give himself every opportunity to succeed. Inspired by legendary creators like Stan Lee, Steve Ditko, and Jack Kirby, Dhir turned to storytelling that felt authentic. "They always say, 'write what you know,'" he explains. "So I wrote about a teenager, and something I love, superheroes."

His debut novel centers on a young protagonist who unexpectedly gains superpowers just as a dangerous threat emerges. But rather than focusing solely on action, Dhir explores the emotional weight of responsibility. Unlike many traditional heroes, his character is afraid, overwhelmed by the consequences of failure and the pressure of being responsible for others' lives. "He's just a regular person," Dhir explains, "suddenly carrying a huge responsibility." That realism, he believes, is what makes a story resonate.

For Dhir, the heart of writing lies in character. "The hardest thing is getting readers to care," he says. With a realistic setting rooted in the real world, he focused on building complex characters and authentic friendships—those quieter, in-between moments that bring a story to life. "That's what makes a book special," he notes. "Everything in between." Looking ahead, Dhir plans to publish his second book by next school year and hopes to intern with publishing companies to gain firsthand experience with the industry. He's eager to understand every stage of the process, from editing to marketing, recognizing that success often depends on standing out in a crowded field.

His advice to younger writers is thoughtful and encouraging: take time to develop your story beyond the outline. "The smaller, quieter moments matter," he says. "That's where characters grow and where readers truly connect." Through creativity, determination, and a deep understanding of storytelling, Dhir Mirpuri embodies Riviera's spirit of curiosity and ambition. His journey is just beginning, and it's one worth watching.





Defining His Own Course

Antonio Sevillano '26

For Antonio Sevillano, Class of 2026, the journey to success has never been about following a prescribed path; it has been about carving his own.

Antonio's connection to Riviera Preparatory School began with intention. After attending McGlannan School, where he navigated early academic challenges, including dyslexia, he and his family sought an environment that would not only support him but also allow him to thrive. Riviera stood out immediately.

"I knew it would be a great landing ground," Antonio shares. "The level of support, especially from the academic and college counseling team, made a real difference." What he found at Riviera was more than support; it was community. "Riviera is a smaller, close-knit environment," he says. "You're known here. That matters."

While Antonio's academic journey took shape at Riviera, his athletic path was deeply rooted long before high school. Rowing is part of his family's legacy. His grandfather helped found the Miami Rowing Club in the 1970s alongside fellow Cuban athletes. "It's always been a part of my life," Antonio explains.

He formally joined the sport in seventh grade. He quickly progressed through the ranks, from middle school rowing to the novice team, and ultimately to varsity competition with the Miami Rowing Club. By ninth grade, he was already competing at the highest levels.

His rise has been nothing short of exceptional:

- First novice athlete to qualify for nationals
- National Champion (U17 Double) as a freshman
- State Champion in the Junior Singles as a sophomore
- Multiple-time state and regional champion in the Varsity Single
- Top-four finisher at the U.S. National Team Selection Regatta

Yet for Antonio, rowing is about far more than accolades. "Rowing is unique," he says. "You're completely connected to the person in front of you and behind you. It forces you to be a team player."

As a two-year team captain, he leads with a simple but powerful philosophy:

"Whatever makes the boat move faster."

It's a mindset rooted in trust, accountability, and collective effort, values that extend well beyond the water. Balancing the demands of a rigorous academic environment with an elite athletic schedule requires discipline few can sustain. For Antonio, it came down to consistency and time management. "Practice ran from 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm, and I wouldn't get home until around 8:00 pm," he says. "You learn quickly how to manage your time."

That structure and the willingness to embrace challenges have shaped his growth both as a student and as an athlete. "Rowing teaches you that it's going to be hard no matter what," Antonio reflects. "But that's the point. The more you grow, the more it pushes you. That's how you get better."

At Riviera, Antonio found the freedom to explore his interests without limitation, an experience that ultimately shaped his academic future. Originally drawn to architecture, he discovered through coursework that his interests extended elsewhere. "Riviera gave me the chance to explore different subjects," he says. "I realized I wanted to understand how the world works, how different cultures interact."

That curiosity has led him to pursue International Relations at Tufts University, where he will also continue his rowing career at the collegiate level. "It keeps a lot of doors open," he explains. "Law, economics, journalism, education, it allows me to grow in different directions."

As Antonio prepares for the next chapter, his story reflects a defining Riviera quality: the confidence to step outside the expected. "Don't be afraid to step out of the fold," he advises. "Even if it makes you different. Do things because they're hard, that's what helps you grow." It's a perspective shaped by resilience, discipline, and a willingness to embrace challenge, both in the classroom and on the water.



At Riviera, students are encouraged to explore, to question, and to define success on their own terms. Antonio Sevillano has done exactly that, building a path marked not only by achievement, but by purpose. And in doing so, he reminds us that growth rarely comes from comfort but always from the courage to push beyond it.



Expanding Pathways of Distinction

Riviera Schools is consistently committed to expanding curricular opportunities that challenge students, deepen engagement, and prepare them for meaningful success beyond the classroom.



Law Program

Riviera Preparatory School's new Law Track reflects a dynamic approach to learning—one where theory meets practice in meaningful and measurable ways. Beginning with Introduction to Law Studies Honors, students engage with the foundational structures of the American legal system while developing essential skills in analysis, argumentation, and public speaking.

As they progress into advanced coursework such as Law Studies 2 Honors, the experience deepens into applied legal study, where students take on authentic roles in mock trials and appellate simulations, navigating complex concepts like constitutional law, procedure, and evidence. Designed to expand each year, the program will continue to evolve in both depth and scope, offering students an increasingly sophisticated pathway into legal thinking, ethical reasoning, and real-world application.



Percussion Ensemble

As a new addition to Riviera's growing music program, the Percussion Ensemble course is a performance-based ensemble designed to develop students' skills across a variety of drums, mallet instruments, and auxiliary percussion. The course incorporates beginning through advanced levels of music reading, instrumental technique, and ensemble rehearsal practices, providing students with a strong musical foundation while fostering collaboration and discipline.

In addition to classroom instruction, participants take part in District Solo and Ensemble Festivals, Honor Bands, and other performance opportunities that enrich their musical experience.



Breaking Barriers Behind the Game

with Meadow Anderson '28
Riviera Preparatory's Assistant Athletic Trainer

Long before the buzzer sounds and the crowd rises, there is a quiet, critical presence ensuring that athletes are ready, not just to play, but to perform at their highest level. For one Riviera Preparatory School sophomore, Meadow Anderson, that responsibility has become both a calling and a defining part of her journey.

Having joined Riviera in seventh grade, she stepped into the role of assistant athletic trainer during her freshman year, an experience that began unexpectedly but quickly evolved into something far more significant.

What started as a simple suggestion from her father—encouraging her to connect with Riviera's Head Athletic Trainer, Gretel Briand—soon became an immersive, hands-on education. Under the mentorship of Briand and alongside the entire athletic coaching staff, she was introduced to the demands of the role in real time. "I was thrown into the fire," she reflects. "Injury after injury, I learned by doing. Confidence became everything—you have to be confident when you're working with someone in pain."

That early exposure accelerated her growth. With each practice and game, she developed not only technical skills but the awareness and decisiveness required to anticipate athletes' needs before they arise. What began as learning the basics quickly became a deeper understanding of consistency, follow-through, and the long-term care required to support athletic performance.

A typical day is anything but simple. From preparing hydration, therapy equipment, and recovery tools to coordinating with coaches and trainers, her role begins well before the first whistle. On game days, she ensures everything is in place—from stretching routines and muscle preparation to injury prevention and in-game support. Whether on the sidelines or in the locker room, her focus remains constant: keeping athletes ready, supported, and performing at their best.

Yet her impact extends beyond the physical. She has become a trusted presence for many student-athletes, particularly younger JV players

navigating the pressures of competition and academics. “I check in on them—not just about their performance, but about everything,” she says. “Their grades, what’s going on at home, what might be holding them back. It’s about helping remove those barriers.”

That level of care has not gone unnoticed. In high-pressure moments—such as Riviera’s state championship run—her presence became essential. Despite personal challenges, she ensured she was there, preparing athletes behind the scenes as they stepped onto the court. “I may not be the one scoring,” she reflects, “but I’m making sure they’re ready to.”

Through this work, she has developed a leadership style rooted in action. In a role where she is often one of the youngest—and one of the few women—she has learned to lead with both confidence and clarity. “You have to make yourself present,” she explains. “In this field, respect isn’t always given automatically. You have to earn it through consistency, knowledge, and how you carry yourself.”

Her experience has also shaped her ambitions. Looking ahead, she envisions a future in professional sports, working behind the scenes at the highest level—whether in the NBA or WNBA—supporting elite athletes through preparation, recovery, and performance. “I want to be part of what it takes to win,” she says. “I love being there before it all happens.”

At Riviera, she has found both opportunity and recognition—earning respect within the community and gaining confidence in her ability to take on meaningful responsibility at a young age. The athletic culture at Riviera, she notes, is defined by discipline and consistency, where early mornings and long days are simply part of the commitment to excellence.

Reflecting on her journey, one word comes to mind: advanced. Not simply because of



One of her first milestones was preparing an ice bag on the sideline for an injured soccer player, a small but essential behind-the-scenes role.

the level at which she works, but because of how quickly she was challenged to rise. “Being in that environment, working with high-performing individuals from the beginning, showed me that I’m capable of more than I thought,” she says. “It pushed me to grow.”

Behind every successful performance is a network of individuals who make it possible. At Riviera Preparatory School, she stands among them—not in the spotlight, but in the moments that matter most—quietly redefining what it means to lead, to serve, and to belong behind the game.



Riviera Prep celebrates after defeating Santa Fe Catholic in for the FHSAA Class 2A Boys High School Basketball State Championship at the RP Funding Center in Lakeland, Florida on Saturday, March 1, 2025. PHOTO BY AL DIAZ adiaz@miamiherald.com

Riviera Prep: Where Champions Are Forged

Tennis

The girls' tennis team has been ranked among the top 15 programs in the nation this season. Sisters Sasha and Leyla Kilgour captured the state doubles championship, while the team also secured a district title. The boys' tennis team also enjoyed its most successful season in over a decade, reflecting the continued growth of the program.

Basketball

Our girls basketball program continues its strong upward trajectory as we transition to the varsity level. The middle school girls team had a record-breaking season, led by standout Eva Jones, and the entire program is motivated and poised to make significant strides next year.

On the boys' side, Riviera once again competed at an elite level, earning a national ranking and holding a top-two position in the state for much of the season. While the team fell short of a fourth consecutive state title, they finished among the top teams in Florida, with several players set to continue their careers at the collegiate level.

Soccer

Our girls soccer team delivered the best season in program history, becoming the first team to qualify for the state tournament—a major milestone for Riviera Athletics.



ATHLETIC HIGHLIGHTS

Track & Field

Track and field continues to thrive at Riviera. Our middle school team is the largest in program history, and the varsity squad has delivered impressive performances throughout the season. Several athletes are well-positioned to qualify for the state championships in the upcoming meets.

Baseball

Our varsity baseball team has been highly competitive, with multiple players ranking among the top performers in Florida.

Flag Football

This spring marked the launch of our girls' and boys' flag football programs. While both were intramural, the response and participation were outstanding. The enthusiasm and engagement of our student-athletes have laid a strong foundation for the future of the sport at Riviera.

Beach Volleyball

Our girls varsity beach volleyball team competed in its first official FHSAA season, marking an exciting milestone for the program. Looking ahead, Riviera is currently building new on-campus beach volleyball courts, which will significantly enhance training and competition opportunities.

Riviera Prep receives FHSAA Fred E. Rozelle Sportsmanship Award Nomination

Riviera Preparatory School is proud to be recognized with a nomination for the FHSAA Fred E. Rozelle Sportsmanship Award, one of the highest honors in high school athletics. This distinction reflects far more than competitive success—it speaks to the integrity, respect, and character our student-athletes demonstrate in every contest.

At Riviera, athletics are an extension of our educational mission. Our students compete with discipline and intensity, while upholding the values of sportsmanship, accountability, and respect for teammates, opponents, and officials. This nomination is a testament to a community that prioritizes not only how the game is played, but how it is represented.

We commend our student-athletes for embodying what it means to be both competitive and principled—well-rounded individuals who lead with character on and off the field.



Growing Together Through the Game

Riviera Day School Basketball

"For me, this experience is especially meaningful, not only because my son is part of the program, but because it gives us the opportunity to help coach and mentor the next generation of Bulldogs while building relationships with them beyond the court. The goal of our youth program is to foster a genuine love for the game at an early age by creating a positive and encouraging experience, regardless of wins or losses. We place a strong emphasis on the values, character, and life lessons that team sports instill, and I am incredibly grateful to be part of something that has such a lasting impact on our students."

- Anthony Shahbaz, Head Coach
3x FHSAA Class 3A State Champion & 5-Time Miami-Dade Coach of the Year



A quick chat with Maverick, RDS basketball player

Maverick is the third player from the right.

What has been your favorite part of being on the first-grade basketball team?

My favorite part is that we have really nice coaches and teammates.

How have your coaches and older Riviera players helped you grow as a player and teammate this season?

By teaching us to how to steal passes, be a better teammate, and prepare for our games.

A quick chat with Maverick's parents

As a parent, what growth have you seen in your child through the first-grade basketball program this season?

We have really enjoyed watching his enthusiasm for the game grow as well as his confidence in his abilities. Also seeing him develop an understanding of what it takes to be on a team, having that sense of commitment to your coaches and teammates, is really fostering a love for the game, his school, and athleticism.

What has it meant to your family to be part of a Riviera program where younger students are supported by coaches and older student-athletes across both campuses?

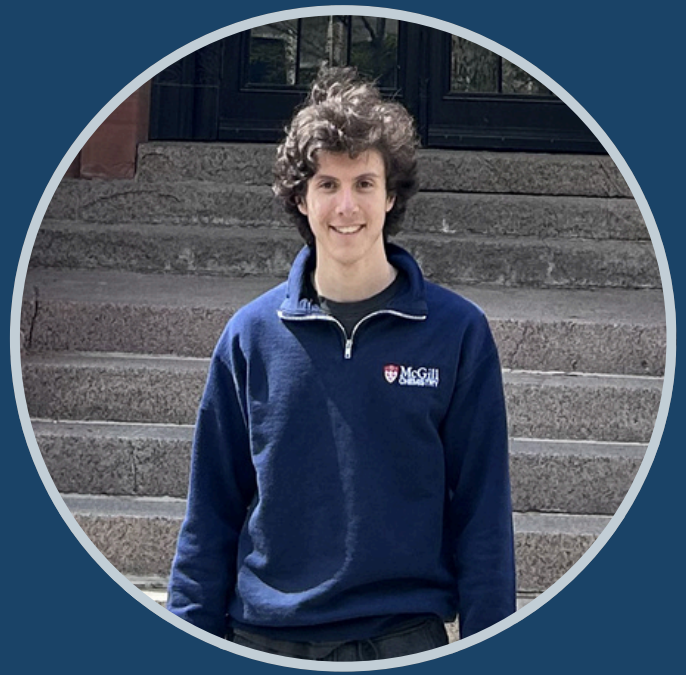
The support from the coaches and older student athletes really reinforces to us the strong sense of community and family that Riviera has. It is encouraging and reassuring to see this mentorship start at an early age, providing positive role models for Maverick, and making it about more than just basketball – there is a sense of belonging to something connected and supportive across both campuses.



Alumni Highlight

Santiago Lardiez '25

From Riviera to McGill University, a journey defined by curiosity, research, and academic excellence.



Riviera Schools is proud to highlight alumnus Santiago Lardiez '25, whose academic journey reflects the spirit of curiosity, discipline, and ambition that defines a Riviera education. Santiago is currently studying at the prestigious McGill University, where he continues to thrive in a highly competitive academic environment. Recently selected for a prestigious summer research fellowship, his continued success is a powerful example of how Riviera students are prepared to excel well beyond graduation.

During his time at Riviera Preparatory School, Santiago embraced rigorous coursework while developing the independence and time-management skills essential for college success. He credits advanced classes such as AP Seminar and AP Research, along with participation in school athletics, for helping him learn how to manage demanding schedules, work efficiently, and take ownership of his learning.

One of Santiago's most notable accomplishments was having his AP Research paper published, an extraordinary achievement for a high school student. His project examined the effects of Yerba Mate on planaria flatworms, specifically exploring how the compound could protect the nervous system and stimulate regeneration. Combining biology, chemistry, and advanced data analysis, the research required cultivating specimens, processing more than 800 video files, and applying computer vision techniques to interpret results.

In a close-knit academic environment, teachers and mentors invested deeply in his growth. He cites faculty members such as Ms. Otero and Ms. Romero as transformative influences who helped strengthen his research skills, scientific thinking, and confidence. He also shared that the support of administrators and staff made complex, long-term projects possible.

Equally impactful was the mentorship he received beyond the classroom. Santiago shared that his cross country coach, AJ, was a major source of motivation, consistently pushing him to grow not only as an athlete, but as a person. He credits that guidance with helping him develop the confidence and drive to pursue ambitious goals. Santiago notes that Riviera's smaller community created opportunities that may have been difficult to replicate elsewhere. Access to faculty guidance and a collaborative culture allowed him to pursue meaningful work at an advanced level while still in high school.

Today, Santiago continues to pursue his passion for science through university research and advanced study. His advice to current Riviera students is both simple and powerful: if you have an ambitious idea, start. Once you begin, momentum and motivation often follow.

Santiago Lardiez's journey reflects what happens when talent meets opportunity, mentorship, and courage. Riviera Schools proudly celebrates his accomplishments and looks forward to all he will continue to achieve in the years ahead.



Social Skills for Life: *Home Edition*

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

From Early Beginnings to Lifelong Foundations: *The Riviera Journey*

On the first day of school, a preschooler walks through Riviera's gates with small hands, wide eyes, and a world of possibility ahead. They are just beginning to learn how to share, how to express their feelings, and how to be part of something bigger than themselves. At that moment, success isn't measured in grades or accolades, it's reflected in confidence, connection, and the early beginnings of self-awareness. At Riviera, we believe those early moments matter just as much as the milestones that come years later.

Our commitment to developing the whole child means that learning extends far beyond academics. While students grow intellectually, they are also guided in developing emotional awareness, social skills, resilience, and a strong sense of identity. This is where Social Skills for Life (SSL) becomes an essential thread woven through every stage of the Riviera experience.

In the early years, SSL looks like learning to name feelings, practicing kindness, and building trust with teachers and peers. As students grow, so does their capacity for empathy, self-reflection, and responsible decision-making. By middle and high school, these foundational skills evolve into leadership, collaboration, and the confidence to navigate complex challenges. Over time, something remarkable happens.

That same preschooler becomes a confident fifth grader who can advocate for themselves. Then a thoughtful middle schooler who understands the importance of perspective-taking. Then a high school student who not only excels academically but leads with integrity, communicates effectively, and contributes meaningfully to their community. We often celebrate students whose journeys unfold within our Riviera community whether they begin in kindergarten, join in middle school, or arrive in ninth grade. Their paths reflect something deeper than academic success. They embody the character, empathy, and emotional intelligence that are intentionally nurtured here every day. While this growth is cultivated at school, it is strengthened through the meaningful partnership between school and home.

Supporting Social-Emotional Growth at Home

No matter a child's age, the development of social-emotional skills is ongoing. During school breaks and unstructured time, these practices become even more meaningful. These moments offer opportunities for children to build independence, strengthen relationships, and apply their social-emotional skills in everyday life. The goal is not perfection, but consistency. When children experience aligned support between school and home, their confidence and emotional growth deepen. At Riviera, we are not only guiding students through their academic journey, we are helping them become thoughtful, capable, and compassionate individuals, prepared to navigate life with confidence and purpose.



Tips for Supporting Social-Emotional Growth at Home

Normalize Emotions

Reinforce that all feelings are valid, while guiding children and adolescents in how to respond to those feelings in healthy, constructive ways.

Model What Matters

From managing stress to resolving conflict, children of all ages learn by observing how adults communicate, cope, and connect.

Embrace Growth Over Perfection

Emphasize effort, progress, and resilience rather than outcomes alone.

Prioritize Connection

Create regular opportunities for meaningful conversation, whether it's at the dinner table, during a car ride, or through a simple daily check-in.

Encourage Independence with Support

Allow children to take on age-appropriate challenges, make decisions, and learn from both successes and setbacks.

Foster Reflection

Help children think about their experiences: What went well? What would they do differently next time? What did they learn about themselves?

Build Empathy and Perspective

Encourage awareness of others' experiences, opinions, and feelings, an essential skill in school, relationships, and beyond.

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Field trips at RDS

December 2025

The Nutcracker at the Jackie Gleason Theater - Grades 4-5

January 2026

Miami Metro Zoo - Grade 1
Pinecrest Gardens & Library - Kindergarten

February 2026

Environmental Congress - Grade 5 (NEHS)

February 19

FIU Steam Day - Grades 4-5
Universal Studios - Grade 5

April 2026

Biscayne Nature Center - Grade 3
Actor's Playhouse: Ms. Nelson is Missing - Grades 1-2

May 2026

Miami Children's Museum - Kindergarten
Miami Roller Rink - Grades 2-6



SUMMER

at Riviera Schools



www.rivieraschools.com/summer





MAY | 2026