13TH ANNUAL FUTURE EDUCATORS OF AMERICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE



November 20

8AM - 1:30PM • FIU GRAHAM CENTER

Future Educators Association® Florida International University

FIU Arts, Sciences & Education



Rafael Villalobos

Keynote Speaker

SUPERINTENDANT MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Rafael A. Villalobos serves as Superintendent of Schools for Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), one of the nation's largest public school systems and the school district that helped shape his own life. A proud M-DCPS graduate, he began his career as a teacher at South Dade Senior High School in 1994 and, over more than three decades, has served at virtually every level of the organization—from classroom teacher and principal to Region Superintendent and Superintendent of Schools. A former M-DCPS Principal of the Year, his commitment to education was shaped in part by witnessing the profound impact educators had on his brother, who was blind and autistic—an experience that helped define his life's work: ensuring that every child is seen, supported, challenged, and given the opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential.

As Superintendent, Mr. Villalobos is focused on ensuring that M-DCPS remains a premier educational organization and the best choice for every child and family in Miami-Dade County. His vision combines academic excellence with innovation, exceptional employees, safe and welcoming schools, fiscal responsibility, modern facilities, expanded career and educational opportunities, and strong partnerships with the community. At the heart of his leadership is a simple conviction: great schools do more than educate students—they strengthen families, build stronger communities, and help create a stronger society and nation. For Mr. Villalobos, leading M-DCPS is both a privilege and an opportunity to give back to the school system and community that shaped his life while building even greater opportunities for the generations that follow.



Kyndall Brown
Guest Speaker

2027 FLORIDA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Kyndall Brown is the 2027 Florida Teacher of the Year and Florida's Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education. As an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Harmony Middle School in Osceola County, she has transformed learning into an experience that extends far beyond the classroom. Through hands-on agricultural projects, student leadership opportunities, and partnerships with local farms, Kyndall has created spaces where students build confidence, discover their strengths, and find a genuine sense of belonging. She also founded Harmony Middle School's first Fishing Club, bringing students across grade levels together through a shared love of the outdoors. Kyndall has a passion for agriculture, creating unique learning opportunities for students, and encouraging both teachers and students to be the best versions of themselves. She believes education is about planting seeds of possibility that can grow far beyond the classroom.



Dr. Saima Sanaullah
Guest Speaker

2026 BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Dr. Saima Sanaullah is the 2025–2026 Broward County Teacher of the Year, an accomplished educator, instructional leader, and passionate advocate for student success. With extensive experience in science education, teacher mentorship, professional development, and schoolwide leadership, she is dedicated to empowering educators and creating meaningful opportunities for students.

Dr. Sanaullah holds a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) and has served in numerous leadership capacities, including Science Department Chair, Professional Learning Community Facilitator, and School Advisory Council Chair. She is also a graduate of Broward County Public Schools' LEAD leadership development program.

Her contributions to education and community service have earned her numerous recognitions, including being named City of Sunrise Teacher of the Month twice, receiving the 2026 World Humanitarian Day Recognition Award, and being recognized as part of BCPS's Fraternity of Excellence.

Having transitioned from a career in dentistry to education, Dr. Sanaullah brings a unique perspective on purpose, perseverance, and the transformative power of teaching. She believes that educators do more than deliver instruction—they inspire possibilities, shape futures, and create lasting change.



Roberto Rabelo
Guest Speaker

2027 MDCPS FRANCISCO R. WALKER TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Roberto Rabelo is entering his 38th year as an educator with Miami-Dade County Public Schools and is the 2027 Francisco R. Walker Teacher of the Year. Throughout his career, he has made students' social-emotional well-being a cornerstone of his teaching, believing that academic success begins with students recognizing their own abilities and potential.

His signature TWAH Method—"Thoughts, Words, Actions, Habits"—and DWOW ("Do What Others Won't") Mindset of Success combine positive thinking, executive functioning skills, purposeful student engagement, and innovative instructional strategies to empower students to feel LIMITLESS. His classroom practices include daily student and parent communication, individualized support, purposeful seating, guided notes, technology integration, and movement-based learning designed to make civics engaging and accessible to all learners.

These approaches have helped his mixed-ability civics students, including ELL and ESE learners, consistently exceed district and state proficiency rates. As he approaches four decades in education, Mr. Rabelo hopes to share his passion, experience, and effective teaching strategies with current and future educators.

Agenda At A Glance

8:30 AM - 9:30 AM — GENERAL SESSION 1

GC Ballrooms

OPENING REMARKS & WELCOME
Ms. Chloe Kerr, President, Future Educators Association, FIU
Dr. Michael Heithaus, Dean, College of Arts, Sciences & Education, FIU
Dr. Elizabeth Bejar, Provost, Executive Vice President, and Chief Operating Officer, FIU

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Mr. Rafael Villalobos, Superintendant, M-DCPS

9:40 AM - 10:20 AM — BREAKOUT SESSION 1

GC 140
The TWAH Method and DWOW Mindset of Success
Mr. Roberto Rabelo, 2027 M-DCPS Francisco R. Walker Teacher of the Year

GC 305
When Learning Doesn't Look Like Sitting Still: Rethinking Engagement in Early Childhood
Ms. Aynour Soliman, Graduate Student, Educational Leadership, FIU

GC 316
Navigating Financial Aid and Opportunities for Higher Education: Preparing Future Educators to Support College and Career Readiness
Mr. Roi Ji and Mr. Emmanuel Mallah, Graduate Students, Curriculum Development and Instruction, FIU

GC 150
College Ready: What You Need to Know Before You Apply Panel
FIU Admissions, Connect 4 Success, Faculty, and Student Panel

10:30 AM - 11:10 AM — BREAKOUT SESSION 2

GC 140
Beyond the Classroom: The Power of One Teacher to Inspire, Lead, and Transform
Dr. Saima Sanaullah, 2026 BCPS Teacher of the Year

GC 305
School Psychology Unpacked: What We Do & Why It Matters
Ms. Leah Oppel, Graduate Student, School Psychology, FIU

GC 316
Beyond the Classroom: How Movement, Creativity, and Interaction Shape the Way We Learn – Finding Your Voice as a Future Educator
Ms. Daria Lapeka, Graduate Student, Curriculum and Instruction, FIU

GC 150
Where Can Teaching Take You? Panel
FIU School of Education & Human Development (SEHD) Faculty Panel

FEA REGIONAL CONFERENCE AT FIU
NOVEMBER 20, 2026

Agenda At A Glance

9:40-11:10 AM — **BREAKOUT SESSION 1 & 2**

COMPETITIVE EVENTS

GC 289	Job Interview Competition
GC 279A	Public Speaking Competition
GC 355	Spotlight on Education Competition
GC 355	Creative Writing and Illustration Competition
GC 288	Leadership in Education Competition
GC 287A	Ethical Dilemma Competition
GC 287B	Researching Learning Challenges Competition
GC 243	Chapter Display Competition

GC Pit

PROGRAM FAIR

Explore FIU's education programs, connect with faculty and students, and discover exciting pathways to a future career in education!

Featuring:

Florida Education Association
FIU After-School All-Stars
FIUteach
Music Education & Music Therapy
School of Education & Human Development Undergraduate Programs
School of Education & Human Develoment Graduate Programs

11:20 AM - 12:05 PM — **LUNCH BREAK**
GC Ballrooms

12:10 PM - 12:45 PM — **GENERAL SESSION 2**
GC Ballrooms

Planting Seeds: Shaping Florida's Future
Ms. Kyndall Brown, 2027 Florida Teacher of the Year

12:50 PM - 1:30 PM — **CLOSING CEREMONY/AWARDS**
GC Ballrooms

CLOSING REMARKS
Dr. Aaron Kuntz, Executive Dean, School of Education & Human Development, FIU

FEA REGIONAL CONFERENCE AT FIU
NOVEMBER 20, 2026

Breakout Sessions

Breakout Session 1 — 9:40 - 10:20 AM

GC 140

The TWAH Method and DWOW Mindset of Success
Presenter: Mr. Roberto Rabelo
2027 M-DCPS Francisco R. Walker Teacher of the Year

Description: Success begins with a positive mindset and the determination to achieve your goals. Drawing on 38 years of teaching experience, Robert Rabelo, Miami-Dade County Public Schools' 2027 Francisco R. Walker Teacher of the Year, introduces his TWAH Method and DWOW Mindset of Success, two approaches that have inspired student achievement in his classroom.

The TWAH Method demonstrates how our Thoughts shape our Words, Actions, and Habits, ultimately shaping our future. Combined with the DWOW Mindset ("Do What Others Won't!"), these strategies emphasize positive affirmations, perseverance, and essential executive functioning skills. Through practical insights and classroom success stories, attendees will discover how these approaches can empower both students and educators to overcome challenges, achieve their goals, and embrace a LIMITLESS mindset.

GC 305

When Learning Doesn't Look Like Sitting Still: Rethinking Engagement in Early Childhood
Presenter: Aynour Soliman
Graduate Student, Educational Leadership, FIU

Description: Higher education plays a vital role in shaping students' futures, providing opportunities for academic growth, personal development, and career success. Yet, research shows that students thrive most when they feel a strong sense of belonging within their campus community. In this workshop, participants will explore why belonging is essential to the college experience, with a focus on practices used at Florida International University to foster inclusion and student success. Students will reflect on their own educational paths, gain insights into how belonging impacts persistence, and learn practical ways to create welcoming, supportive spaces. This session equips future educators to understand the importance of higher education while developing strategies to inspire connection and community for every learner.

Breakout Sessions

Breakout Session 1 — 9:40 - 10:20 AM

GC 316

Navigating Financial Aid and Opportunities for Higher Education: Preparing Future Educators to Support College and Career Readiness
Presenters: Roi Ji & Emmanuel Mallah
Graduate Students, Curriculum Development and Instruction, FIU

Description: In this interactive session, we will equip students with the practical knowledge and strategies needed to successfully navigate the financial aspects of pursuing higher education. Students will explore financial aid opportunities, including FAFSA, scholarships, grants, work-study programs, and other funding resources. Through engaging activities and guided discussions, students will identify financial aid options relevant to their educational and career goals and learn how to access them.

GC 150

College Ready: What You Need to Know Before You Apply Panel
Panelists: FIU Admissions Representative, TBA; FIU Connect 4 Success Representative, TBA;
Dr. Jennifer Mirabal, Director of Teaching & Learning Undergraduate Programs; Dr. Leslie Nisbet, Associate Director of FIUteach; Chloe Kerr, FIU FEA President; Chacour Thomas, FIUteach student representative

Description: College applications can feel overwhelming—but they don't have to be. Hear from FIU experts and current students about what colleges look for, how to strengthen your application, financial aid and scholarships, choosing the right major, and what to expect as you transition from high school to college. Get practical advice, common mistakes to avoid, and tips you can start using now—no matter where you ultimately choose to attend college.

Breakout Sessions

Breakout Session 2 10:30 - 11:10 AM

GC 140

Beyond the Classroom: The Power of One Teacher to Inspire, Lead, and Transform
Presenter: Dr. Saima Sanaullah
2026 Broward County Teacher of the Year

Description: Teaching is more than a profession—it is an opportunity to inspire, empower, and transform lives. In this engaging presentation, Dr. Saima Sanaullah shares her journey from dentistry to education, the lessons learned along the way, and the experiences that shaped her into an award-winning educator and instructional leader.

Through personal stories and practical insights, she explores the power of educators to inspire students, lead with purpose, and transform lives beyond the classroom. Future educators will leave encouraged to embrace their unique journeys, recognize their leadership potential, and understand the lasting impact one teacher can have on generations of students.

GC 305

School Psychology Unpacked: What We Do & Why It Matters
Presenter: Leah Oppel
Graduate Student, School Psychology, FIU

Description: Have you ever considered a career working with children and adolescents, supporting their academic, behavioral, and social-emotional development, and making a meaningful impact in schools? School psychology may be a career path for you! This workshop will introduce the field of school psychology, including what school psychologists do, the different roles they can have, and why their work matters. We will also explore the different graduate programs and pathways available, ways to gain relevant experience, and how to connect with professionals in the field. Whether you are familiar with school psychology or hearing about it for the first time, this workshop will give you a better understanding of the field and where to begin.

GC 316

Beyond the Classroom: How Movement, Creativity, and Interaction Shape the Way We Learn – Finding Your Voice as a Future Educator
Presenter: Daria Lapeka
Graduate Students, Curriculum and Instruction, FIU

Description: What makes a teacher memorable? Is it what they know, how they explain it, or how they make students feel involved? This interactive workshop explores how movement, creativity, and interaction can shape the learning experience. Participants will hear about one educator's journey across language teaching, movement, and performance, take part in a short experiential activity, and reflect on how their own interests and experiences could influence the way they teach. The session invites future educators to experiment, reflect, and begin discovering what their own teaching voice might look like.

Breakout Sessions

Breakout Session 2 — 10:30 - 11:10 AM

GC 150

Where Can Teaching Take You? Panel
Panelists: Dr. Ashley Floyd, Assistant Professor, Higher Education; Dr. Tiberio Garza, Department Chair, Counseling, Recreation, & School Psychology; Dr. Martha Meyer, Teaching Professor, Educational Policy Studies; Dr. Andy Pham, Professor and Program Leader, School Psychology; Dr. Jessica Pouranfar, FIU Area Coordinator of Music Therapy, Assistant Professor; Dr. Galaxina G. Wright, Assistant Professor, Counselor Education

Description: If you enjoy working with young people, education offers more paths than you might think. Teaching gives you firsthand experience helping students learn and grow—and that experience can open doors to other ways of supporting students, leading schools, and shaping education.

Join FIU faculty to explore careers in school psychology, counseling, music therapy, educational leadership, higher education, and education policy. Panelists will share how their work connects to teaching and learning, what their career paths have looked like, and how you can begin exploring your own.

Breakout Session 1 & 2 — 9:40-11:10 AM

Competitive Events

GC 289	Job Interview Competition
GC 279A	Public Speaking Competition
GC 355	Spotlight on Education Competition
GC 355	Creative Writing and Illustration Competition
GC 288	Leadership in Education Competition
GC 287A	Ethical Dilemma Competition
GC 287B	Researching Learning Challenges Competition
GC 243	Chapter Display Competition

GC Pit — **Program Fair**

General Sessions

General Session 1 — 8:30 - 9:30 AM

GC Ballrooms

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Mr. Rafael Villalobos
Superintendant, M-DCPS

General Session 2 — 12:10 - 12:45 PM

GC Ballrooms

Planting Seeds: Shaping Florida's Future
Presenter: Kyndall Brown
2027 Florida Teacher of the Year, Osceola County Public Schools

Description: What if the most important seed an educator plants is one they may never see bloom? In Planting Seeds: Shaping Florida's Future, Kyndall Brown, 2027 Florida Teacher of the Year, connects plant growth to growth through education and encourages teachers to grow together. Through heartfelt stories from her own journey, Kyndall explores the power of mentorship, meaningful learning opportunities, and the importance of lifelong learning. This inspiring keynote challenges educators to discover their next "why" and keep planting seeds of confidence, curiosity, compassion, and resilience along the way.

Thank You

FROM YOUR FIU FEA E-BOARD MEMBERS

We are so grateful to all of our advisors, school chapters, presenters, judges, volunteers, and attendees for making this year's *Teaching Is My Jam* FEA Regional Conference such a meaningful and unforgettable experience!

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