Open letter to Orlando Sentinel readers

May 24, 2017 - Regarding the recent article posted by Orlando Sentinel reporter Annie Martin, Orange County Public Schools would like to share facts not represented in Ms. Martin’s article. Ms. Martin was presented with this document well before the article was printed in today’s newspaper.

- Please know the Orange County School Board does have a board member who is of Spanish heritage. District 2 School Board Member M. Daryl Flynn is Spanish.

- Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) is proud of significant gains made by our Hispanic students including, but not limited to:

  - **Graduation Rate**
    - In the 2015-16 school year, the graduation rate for Hispanic students increased by 5.1 percentage points. This is larger than the 2.0 percentage point growth of white students.
    - Since 2013, the graduation rate for Hispanic students has increased by 6.1 percentage points.
    - The Hispanic graduation rate in OCPS at 80.8 percent is now **higher than the state overall graduation rate for all students**.

  - **Advanced Placement (AP) Course Participation**
    - Since 2011-12, there has been a 119 percent increase in the number of Hispanic students taking an AP course.
    - Hispanic student participation has grown nearly twice as quickly as the district average.

  - **Advanced Placement (AP) Course Performance**
    - Since 2011-12, there has been a 101 percent increase in the number of Hispanic students scoring 3 or higher in at least one AP course.
    - Hispanic student performance in AP has improved over twice as quickly as the district average.

- The district has 30,092 English Language Learners (ELL) learners which is 15 percent of the total student population. Of the 30,092 ELL students, 19,324 are native Spanish speakers.
• Resources for Parents of ELL Students

As part of the resources for parents of ELL students, OCPS has made available the software InSync. The program provides resources in multiple languages for class and home to support the academic achievement of every student. The link to the software is available at the Multilingual Student Education Services department website, and is provided here: https://www.insyncedu.com/en#how.

• Two-Way Dual Language Expansion

Based on the success of the Helios VPK Two-Way Dual Language Program, OCPS will expand the program at six schools (Chickasaw ES, Apopka ES, Zellwood ES, Ventura ES, Wetherbee ES, John Young ES). In addition, we will be opening a new VPK Two-Way Dual Language program at Union Park ES and Washington Shores Primary Learning Center. The objective of this evidence-based program is for students to learn to speak, read, and write in both languages, helping students to become bilingual and bi-literate.

• Each school has a Multilingual Parent Leadership Council (MPLC) comprised of parents of ELL students who facilitate opportunities for parental involvement and decision making at their school. In addition, the District MPLC, comprised of representatives from school-based MPLCs, share feedback on services provided to our students. When parents participate in the school or district MPLC, they receive information about the services provided to ELL students within OCPS, parents are encouraged to become actively involved in their child’s education, and parents are empowered to become advocates within their community.

• We hold Parent Academies every month during the school year in which messaging goes to parents in three languages – English, Spanish, Haitian-Creole, Portuguese, and Vietnamese.

• OCPS Superintendent Barbara Jenkins recently received the Hispanic-Serving Superintendent of the Year Award from the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS). The award is given to superintendents who have shown growth in the achievement rate of Hispanic students.

• The district has certified interpreters available for parents or guardians to connect with in order to speak with principals, teachers, or other school-based employees.

• Our website www.ocps.net is translated into seven different languages including Spanish.

• Schools with high Spanish-speaking student populations regularly communicate ConnectORANGE messages in both English and Spanish.