

TO OUR READERS

# ABC's of covering education

These stories are vital even if you don't have schoolchildren.

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Two weeks into the school year and The Miami Herald education team has as much on its to-do list as most children returning to school.

The Miami-Dade school system is putting a \$1.2 billion bond referendum before voters, money that would be used to repair aging schools and upgrade technology. The Broward school district is struggling with a troubled transportation system that has left scores of children without rides. The embattled Florida education commissioner resigned weeks before the start of a new term.

Few topics we cover have as broad an impact as education.

"Anyone who has a child in school feels so close to the news," said Charlene Pacenti, The Miami Herald's education editor. "Does my school have a leaky roof? Does my child's classroom have the technology it needs? Is my child's bus going to come on time? — these are the issues they care about."

Beyond the parents of school-age kids, what happens in the classroom and at the school district touches the entire community, from the homeowners whose property taxes support our educational system to the business community, which has made education a touchstone of economic growth.

No one is better poised to provide substantive, unbiased schools coverage than The Miami Herald education team. Our coverage is led by Pacenti, a 20-year news veteran with school-age daughters. She also oversees [MomMiami.com](http://MomMiami.com), which she helped launch.

Reporter Laura Isensee covers the Miami-Dade school district and Michael Vasquez covers Broward schools and higher education. Both bring years of experience in government reporting to the education beat, as well as an ability to explain how local, state and national policies affect children, parents and teachers. For live coverage, follow Isensee on Twitter at [@Lauralsensee](https://twitter.com/Lauralsensee) and Vasquez at [@mrmikevasquez](https://twitter.com/mrmikevasquez). Pacenti tweets using [@MomsMiami](https://twitter.com/MomsMiami).

Parental engagement in education issues has risen dramatically, Pacenti said, fueled by cuts to school budgets across the state.

"Parents are getting involved like I have never seen," she said. "They have an appetite for this news. They are sharing it and they are acting on it."

This year's coverage will focus on three key issues: the Miami-Dade bond referendum and the state of schools in Broward; the introduction of new federal "common core" standards as the FCAT is phased out; and the role of technology in education.

"Education is fundamental," Isensee said. "It's so important how well we're educating students and preparing the next generation. I care about those things. It's why I wanted to be a journalist in the first place, to tell stories that shape people's lives."

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