

# SIMPLY THE BEST

## A School District Worthy of an A+ Reputation

**S**arasota County Schools (SCS) demands only the best education for its students. This strong determination is evident in the district's renowned success as a top performer in the state.

SCS has earned a prestigious ranking of No. 2 out of 67 total districts in Florida for student performance. This is no small feat for a district of its size either, with 42,000 students and 5,000 employees spanning 52 schools.

How does SCS do it? For starters, the entire community is involved.

"We are fortunate that our community is so supportive of its public schools," says SCS Superintendent Lori White. "The many contributions of parents, volunteers, business leaders, foundations and other local organizations help us create a positive, educational climate that attracts and maintains excellent teachers, administrators and support staff. We all work together to contribute to our primary mission: educating young people and helping them become happy, healthy, productive adults."

Secondly, SCS offers a wealth of learning opportunities. Teachers implement interactive activities with cutting-edge technology, which help pupils learn to work together at all grade levels. In addition, middle schools

are outfitted with STEMsmart TechActive Classrooms and high schools are equipped with Technology Enhanced Learning Studios to help establish a creative, collaborative educational environment. Taking high-tech even further, scholars have online access to assignments, course materials and resources.

Pupils have the option of taking honors, dual enrollment and advanced placement courses, as well as participating in extracurricular activities such as athletics.

SCS is also expanding and upgrading with development projects currently underway. Booker High School is in the final stages of its rebuild, which includes a new media center, baseball and softball fields and tennis courts. This is after the school added two classroom buildings, a courtyard and outdoor eating areas, a renovated gym, and locker and weight rooms in 2013.

Venice High School is nearing completion after several phases of construction over the course of four years. The almost 50-year-old high school was mostly rebuilt to make room for more students and opportunities. The new school includes a three-story classroom wing, science labs and a performing arts center.

Sarasota High Schools West Campus is under a multiyear renovation, which will include improvements to two historic buildings, a media center, a cafeteria, a new





Photo courtesy of Sarasota County Schools

At Sarasota County Schools, teachers make learning fun and engaging through exhilarating and thought-provoking assignments.





Photo courtesy of Sarasota County Schools

With a dedication to academic success, SCS is one of the top districts in the state.

gymnasium, a bus loop and more.

With a strong commitment to academic achievement and room to accommodate even more, it's no surprise that Sarasota has earned its place as a top district in the state. ▲ by Mallorie Ann Ingram

## Partnering for Preparation

### Linking Schools With Employers

Sometimes the smartest recruiting takes place at home. Local schools, businesses and organizations like The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce know this to be true. That's why they've banded together to support a "cradle to career" approach that encourages young people to stay in the region and helps fill the skills gap that currently exists in the workforce.

One such initiative this concept has fostered is called Talent4Tomorrow (T4T). Through this initiative, tools are developed that help students obtain the skills they need to be highly sought after workers. That means that employers will be able to obtain exceptional employees from the area who can help them to stay competitive.

In order to do this, community leaders are working to develop education programs and increase the number of ready-to-work

high school and college graduates.

"Educators have long understood the importance of a holistic approach," says The Chamber's Young Professionals Group Coordinator Mimi Fleck, who assists with the initiative. "It's great to see the business community at the table, too."

T4T is helping to support more student mentorships and business-led apprenticeships. It additionally provides



Photo courtesy of Sarasota County Schools

Pupils have the opportunity to pursue pathways where they will gain skills for the careers they want.

resources such as a web-based portal detailing information about the local labor market for use by schools, employers and jobseekers. This will ensure that the area is positioned to remain the Capital of the Creative Coast for years to come. ▲ by April Corbin

## Scholastics With Structure

### Moral Values Add Clout to Classes

Sarasota is filled with a wide range of alternative schools for students of all ages and abilities. There's no shortage of options to fit each family's unique needs.

**Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School** immerses its 500 students in ninth through 12th grade in Gospel values as well as a core curriculum. By participating in honors and advanced placement courses, scholars are also prepared to enter college. In addition, all students are required to take one course in the arts.

At **Dreams Are Free Catholic School** at Bishop Nevins Academy, courses are tailored to students with special learning needs in K4 through eighth grades. From Autism Spectrum Disorders to Attention Deficit Disorders, Asperger Syndrome and many others, children are met with compassion and comprehensive academics that enable them to succeed. All classes have 12 or fewer students for individualized attention. Pupils also benefit from on-site occupational, physical and speech therapies.

**Imagine Schools Palmer Ranch** is a public charter school educating more than 600 children, from 6 weeks old through eighth grades. Its rigorous standards-based curriculum is centered on key areas such as critical thinking, problem-solving, interdisciplinary studies and more. The



Photo courtesy of Imagine Schools Palmer Ranch

Students at Imagine Schools Palmer Ranch develop a lifelong love of learning.

school's personalized method of teaching allows students to have the time they need to grasp challenging concepts.

The Palmer Ranch campus received an A rating from the state of Florida in 2012 and 2013, and was additionally honored as a high-performing charter school by the state.

**Incarnation Catholic School (ICS)**, geared toward students from prekindergarten through eighth grade, provides a Christ-centered