

"We need everyone to be involved. Parents. Teachers. Taxpayers. Retirees. Business partners. I am asking your generation to help the next generation of learners succeed." -- Dr. Norris

ne^xt generation
LEARNING

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Sarasota County Public Schools
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“The goal is to move ALL children up. We will place EVERY child on a path to succeed, whatever that path may be.”
 — Dr. Gary Norris, Superintendent



Dr. Gary Norris, pictured at left with students and staff, began his tenure as Superintendent on April 1, 2004. The Strategic Vision on these pages reflects a year of data-gathering, public engagement and staff collaboration. The School Board and Superintendent are proud to present:

NeXt Generation Learning: A Strategic Vision for Sarasota County Public Schools

Accomplishments

- Sarasota County students perform exceptionally well in the state and nation on various assessments, including FCAT, Florida Writing Assessment, SAT and ACT tests.
- Two independent firms have rated Sarasota County Public Schools at the top of the state and nation in terms of sound financial management and the state acknowledges its low administrative costs.
- The School Board was one of only two in the country to be honored by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National School Boards Association for its outstanding support of high-quality arts education.
- Community and business support flourishes, including more than 19,000 registered volunteers, the Education Foundation of Sarasota County, and the successful passage of a tax referendum in 2002.
- The school district is the only one in Florida to receive a Gold Medal from a national publication that evaluates school districts based upon criteria important to business and industry.
- Sarasota County Public Schools consistently wins the “What Parents Want Award” from an independent school auditing firm.

“I am enormously proud of our community where we expect and achieve excellence. We have the will and the wherewithal to infuse excellence in every school, every department and every interaction.”
 — Dr. Norris



School Board of Sarasota County, clockwise from upper left, Laura Benson, John Lewis, Frank Kovach, Dr. Carol Todd and Dr. Kathy Kleinlein.

Greatest Challenges

- Closing the achievement gap, especially with low socio-economic and minority students.
- Improving graduation and dropout rates.
- Enhancing career and technical education programs so students graduate with skills necessary for the 21st Century workforce.
- Providing necessary resources in facilities, technology, competitive teacher salaries and quality programs for a growing and diverse student population.
- Keeping students and staff safe and secure.
- Establishing a sustainable funding source that responds to a public demand for accountability as well as organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

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PILLARS TO NEXT GENERATION LEARNING

The formula for success is to focus our efforts. The five pillars provide that focus and the foundation for structure and strategies from which we build.

QUALITY

PEOPLE

SERVICE

RESOURCES

SAFETY

What is NeXt Generation Learning?

It is a vision of education that adapts to today's reality and tomorrow's needs. It acknowledges changes in our economy, our workplace and our world. It embraces the next generation with its diverse face, digital upbringing and independent thinking. It treats every child as an individual, every educator as a professional and every parent as a customer. It requires total community support, while holding the school district accountable to taxpayers. It represents a new direction, a new hope, a commitment to the success of every child and a promising future for an effective, efficient organization.

1
quality

"Naomi Stevens is missing high school and getting hopelessly behind. Her older neighborhood "friends" encourage skipping school and no one is home during the day to check on her. However, in her small learning community at school, teachers and friends notice she's missing so they check on her. Teachers collaborate to come up with a plan, aligning her studies and technical training with her career interests. Fellow students provide encouragement and Naomi is back on track.

We believe that ALL children can learn at significantly higher levels. Focused, quality instruction develops high-achieving students. Teaching with an eye on relevance and personal interest keeps students engaged, enabling every student to graduate ready for post-secondary training or education. Each school will personalize this focus with its own approach. Here are some districtwide quality goals:

- Close the achievement gap in targeted academic areas through alignment of curriculum, monitoring instructional practices and frequently assessing student progress at all grade levels.
- Reduce the dropout rate and increase the graduation rate through the creation of a smaller, personalized learning environment responsive to individual needs.
- Infuse rigor, relevance and relationships into all aspects of K-12 instruction.
- Provide all students with instructional pathways that support development of a career interest.
- Provide technical training opportunities that culminate in a gold seal endorsement or certificate.
- Implement district assessment practices and teaching tools to ensure data supports instructional and organizational decision making.
- Emphasize reading success for all students by using research-based programs.

"Many students today are not engaged in learning and are just aimlessly coming to school. We need to understand the individual child's needs and make learning relevant. We need to help them see the connection between the curriculum, their interests and the world of work." — Dr. Norris

2
people

*Fourth grade teacher * Robert Donovan is assigned a special needs student who disrupts the class and rarely completes assignments. Mr. Donovan seeks assistance from the school's Intervention Assistance Team, which includes an exceptional student education teacher, social worker and the school psychologist. He and other colleagues also attend a series of professional development workshops where they learn new strategies. Workshop leaders visit his class to demonstrate effective behavior interventions. A plan is developed for the student that includes weekly consultation with the behavior specialist. The student's behavior improves and the teacher develops new skills.*

Organizations improve as people improve. The School Board of Sarasota County – the county's largest employer – will invest significant resources in its people, creating a Professional Learning Community. That means staff collaborates and learns from each other. It's a culture of sharing and a dedication to learning for continuous improvement. It's quality, job-embedded professional development based on research. Specifically, the goals include:

- Proven leadership development programs for teacher leaders as well as school and district-based administrators.
- Improved recruitment, selection and retention processes, including a clear pathway to increase salary and benefits.
- Research-based professional development opportunities for staff aligned with the goals of the district.
- Improved and more frequent performance-based appraisals.
- Full participation in Professional Learning Communities, where teachers learn NeXt Generation teaching strategies such as differentiated instruction, cooperative learning and project-based instruction.

"We want to raise the entire district to new heights. Raise the expectations of all administrators. Raise the competence and collaboration of all teachers. Raise the performance of all students." — Dr. Norris

3
service

**Emily Carter, a single mom, is raising three children while working two jobs. She received her middle school child's report card and discovered for the first time that he is failing reading and math. She blames the teachers for not communicating earlier and angrily confronts the Assistant Principal. The AP treats her with respect, courtesy and listens to her concerns. Together they meet with the child's teachers to brainstorm ideas, including her access to daily assignments on the team's website and before-school tutorials for the child. Mrs. Carter feels supported and her suggestions are valued.*

People who work for the school system view students, parents and taxpayers as "customers" and treat everyone with respect. A "Code of Civility" is evidenced in all interactions. All district employees will consider themselves part of the education of students. The acclaimed "Organizational Excellence Program" at Sarasota Memorial Hospital will serve as the model for a similar program in the school district. Five of the key components are:

- Students, parents, citizens and district employees will be treated with the utmost respect and dignity.
- We will frequently ask our customers how we are doing.
- Our employees will consistently receive high marks for excellent service and for providing a warm and welcoming climate.
- People who serve our customers will be recognized for their contribution.
- Technological advances will allow schools to keep parents better informed and more involved in their children's education on a daily basis.

"We are a service organization. We will provide the same standard of service we have come to expect from a first-class business." —Dr. Norris

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resources

**Yvette Jacobs is an 11th grade student attending a newly built high school. The marine biology teacher discovers her interest in sharks and photography. The teacher writes a grant for an underwater camera. He arranges for Yvette to job shadow a shark expert at Mote Marine Laboratory, assist a photographer and communicate with a world-renowned scientist in Hawaii by way of video conferencing. The teacher creates an interactive simulation in the school's state-of-the-art science lab to extend her learning. A retired scientist is enlisted to mentor Yvette and help build her confidence to seek college scholarships.*

When voters in 2002 agreed to increase their property taxes by 1 mill, they put their faith and trust in the school system. By all measures, the School Board has spent the added revenue as promised according to a recent report by the Financial Advisory Committee, an independent group of local business leaders.

In addition, Sarasota County citizens are rich in talent, knowledge and skills that can be offered as student mentors, advisory committee members and business partners. Looking ahead, the school district must:

- Continue to spend money wisely and efficiently with community oversight.
- Obtain funds sufficient to support a high quality and rigorous instructional program.
- Pay competitive salaries to attract and retain the best teachers.
- Build state-of-the-art school facilities to strengthen instructional programs.
- Enhance access to technology tools for instructional and operational improvement.
- Tap community volunteers to serve as mentors for all at-risk students, support small learning communities and foster "real world" learning.
- Increase collaborative planning and shared services with community partners.

5
safety

"Darrell Smith is a bully who threatens younger students on the playground. A parent files a complaint with the School Resource Officer. The officer calls Darrell into his office and tells him that bullying is not tolerated on the school campus and explains the consequences. The principal is alerted and she institutes a schoolwide campaign against bullying. The campaign includes teacher, parent and student awareness trainings, student-generated posters, television commercials and tougher consequences established in partnership with the local Teen Court. Darrell's peers help him realize it's no longer cool to be a bully.

School safety is everybody's business. Whether it's prevention, security systems or crisis communications, the keys are good planning, excellent equipment and education. The district has an obligation to ensure a safe and nurturing school environment. It will be enhanced by the following goals:

- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of all safety issues.
- Review and implement recommendations of security reports.
- Train all staff in safety and security processes.
- Establish GPS tracking of buses and students.
- Train students in conflict resolution techniques.

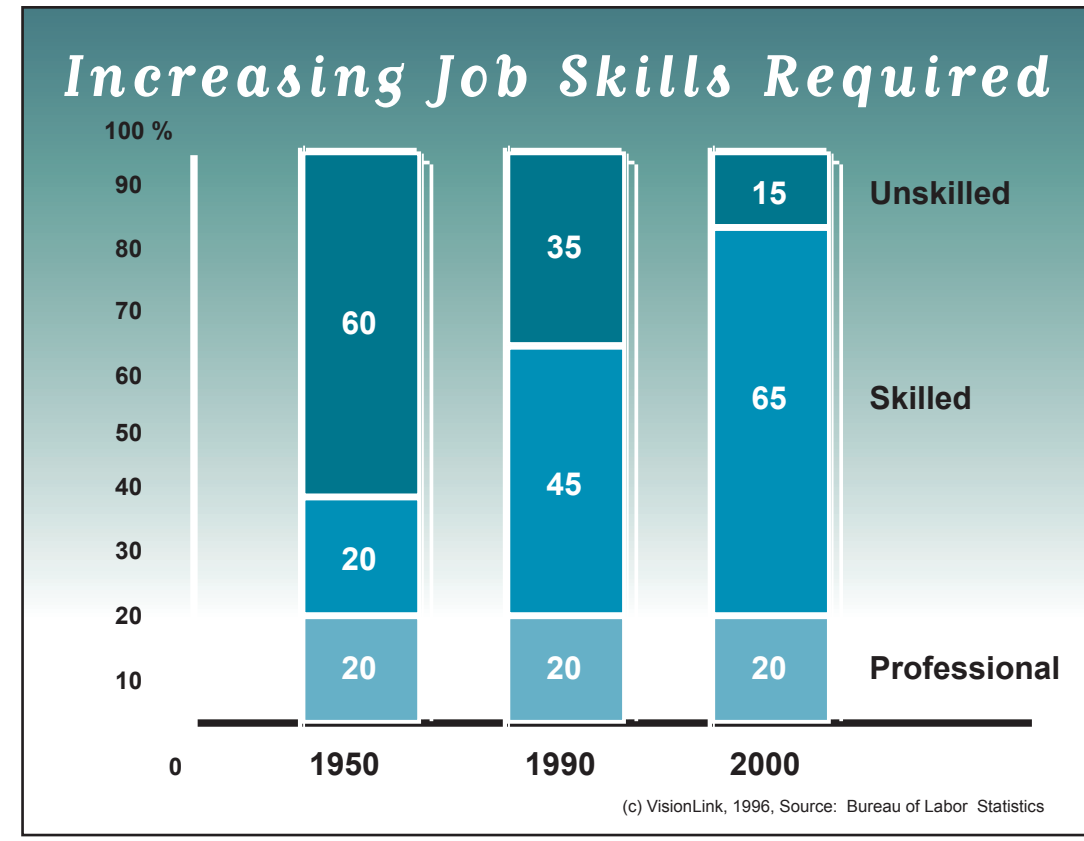
" We must continue to earn the support of our community every day."

--Dr. Kathy Kleinlein, School Board Chair

* Denotes fictitious names



Why is it necessary to teach differently to NeXt Generation Learners?



Nearly every occupation requires highly skilled workers!
We must teach to their future, not our past.

"The generation of factory workers are being replaced by high-tech workers. Constant change is the norm. We must prepare students to adapt, equipping them with the tools and knowledge essential to their success." – Dr. Norris

What is the difference in the NeXt Generation Classroom?

1950s Education

- * Passive
- * Receive knowledge
- * Learn alone
- * Learning content
- * Replicate
- * Teach all the same

NeXt Generation Education

- * Active
- * Construct knowledge
- * Learn together
- * Learning to learn
- * Innovate
- * Adapt to learning styles



Environmental Sciences' students study marine life in Sarasota Bay.

