

MARION NAMED 'INNOVATIVE DISTRICT' BY MODEL SCHOOLS ORGANIZATION

MARION COUNTY – Marion County Public Schools has been named an “Innovative District” by the prestigious International Center for Leadership in Education. As a result, the district will present at this year’s innovative Model Schools Conference in Orlando June 24-27.

Marion is the only public school district in Florida invited to present, and one of only 10 districts nationwide recognized this year. District leaders will present on “Implementing a Career Pathway Model” to conference attendees. This invitation gives the district national recognition and exposure and showcases the many ways it links the worlds of education and business.

The International Center for Leadership in Education challenges, inspires and equips today’s educators to prepare students for lifelong success. The Model Schools Conference is the nation’s premier event for rapidly improving K-12 schools and districts.

“We are proud to honor and showcase this future-focused district for implementing a rigorous and relevant curriculum that engages and challenges students to think beyond the classroom to solve real-world problems,” said Dr. Willard R. Daggett, founder and chairman of the International Center for Leadership in Education.

“We are honored to be recognized as an Innovative District and embrace the opportunity to share on a national level how our Career and Technical Education programs are connecting with business and industry,” said Mark Vianello, executive director of Career and Technical Education with the district.

“Our focus on student choice and relevancy enables us to help meet the community’s workforce demands and economic development needs by creating a strong talent pipeline. Such partnerships are worthy of attention and replication,” Vianello added.

Partnering with workforce organizations also results in career awareness and the development of training that’s targeted to industry and specific skills.

“Their development of career path programs exemplifies their commitment and dedication to responding to, and supporting, the skill needs of Marion County’s business community,” said Rusty Skinner, chief executive officer of CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion.

“We congratulate them on their selection,” Skinner said.

Innovative Districts are selected annually based on criteria including substantive, data-validated growth year over year; evidence of a strong culture putting students at the center of learning; and dedication to transforming instruction to meet the needs and demands of the future.

“Talent development is one of our signature missions,” said Kevin Sheilley, president and CEO of the Ocala/Marion County Chamber and Economic Partnership.

“We have partnered with Marion County Public Schools to help them relaunch innovative and meaningful Career and Technical Education programs. These pathways allow us to retain our best talent right here at home. The district’s hands-on approach is certainly worthy of this recognition,” Sheilley added.

“This year, we celebrate 26 years of empowering educators to implement effective best practices rooted in rigor, relevance, and relationships,” said Dr. Daggett. “At the Model School Conference, Marion County Public Schools will have the unique opportunity to share inspiring ideas for innovating and transforming teaching and learning to better prepare students for the world in which they will work and live.”

Over the past 26 years, the Model Schools Conference has attracted thousands of educators who come to learn about exemplary elementary, middle, high schools, and districts.

For more information, contact Mark Vianello, executive director of Career and Technical Education, at 352.671.6868.

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About Marion County Public Schools

Situated 75 miles northwest of Florida’s theme-park center, Marion County Public Schools educates 43,000 students each year. With more than 7,000 employees, the district is the county’s biggest employer. Geographically, the district covers more land than the state of Rhode Island and features 52 public schools plus four charter schools. Superintendent Dr. Heidi Maier leads the district with such measures as a “no homework” policy for elementary students, expanded Career and Technical Education opportunities for high school students, and dozens

of school choice options for parents wanting their children to attend schools outside their normal attendance zones. The district's \$537 million annual budget is the largest of any governmental agency in the county.

About the International Center for Leadership in Education

The International Center for Leadership in Education, established in 1991 and located in Rexford, N.Y., is one of the most influential education consulting companies in America. It is best known for identifying and disseminating successful practices to assist all students in achieving higher standards. Dr. Daggett and his team of consultants have assisted numerous state education agencies and hundreds of schools and districts in their improvement initiatives. For more information, please visit www.LeaderEd.com.

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