

The Circus Arts Conservatory

Circus Arts Conservatory's Magnet School Program Expansion for Booker Middle and Sarasota High Schools

A vital part of our community since 1997, The Circus Arts Conservatory's (CAC) mission is to engage and educate students using unique and innovative learning programs and to advance the extraordinary legacy and heritage of the circus. Consistent with this mission, its proposed ***Circus Arts Conservatory's Magnet School Program Expansion for Booker Middle and Sarasota High Schools*** initiative will expand its Magnet Program at Booker Middle School, a Title I school, and Sarasota High School.

The total initiative budget of \$260,000 includes the \$109,500 of the Impact100 SRQ grant, which will fund two additional coaches, class material and training attire. The \$150,500 over our grant amount is committed, with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, two private grants and its dedicated ticket sales paying for advertising, existing staff, equipment and maintenance. In 2024 there were 150 students enrolled in this program, with a waitlist of 200 students. This expansion will allow 100 students from the waitlist to join.

Launched in 2020, the Magnet School Program is the first and only four-year circus arts program certified by the Florida Department of Education and the only one of its kind in the nation. This innovative curriculum allows students to excel in an environment that values their unique talents and interests while providing an established set of academic benchmarks to achieve.

This educational program particularly benefits under-resourced and at-risk students, providing them with tools for personal growth, skill enhancement, creativity, physical skills, and improved social integration, at no cost to their families. This alternative pathway for high school graduation credits caters to students who do not thrive in traditional learning environments.

Ninety percent of the participating high school students have a 4.0 GPA or higher. Dropout rates are nearly zero, with most students continuing from year to year through graduation.

In its 5th year of classes, this program has continued with the full support of school administration and the financial backing of CAC. To sustain this initiative, funding for this program is expected to come from local community foundations and individual donors, as well as from CAC circus ticket sales revenue. With expansion, word will spread further into the community, expanding support.

CAC's Magnet School Program is not just an educational initiative; it is a transformative journey that empowers students to unearth their potential and achieve success in their academic and personal lives. This transformation is deeply rooted in Sarasota's cultural history of the circus arts, making it a unique and inspiring experience for the students.