



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New K-8 Public Charter School Approved by Marion County School Board

Ocala, Florida – The Marion County School Board has approved the plans for a new K-8 public charter school. Ina A. Colen Academy will open its doors to welcome students in August of 2022. Located in Southwest Ocala east of 80th Avenue and south of 38th Street, Ina A. Colen Academy will offer an opportunity to Marion County students through an educational program focused on project-based learning with an emphasis on social emotional learning.

The school was named in memory of Ina A. Colen. Mrs. Colen was a social studies teacher. She loved education and cared deeply about her students. A reflection of the Colen family's values, the academy was founded to honor her memory and carry on her legacy of creating passionate learners capable of making the best decisions for themselves and for the society in which they live.

Robert Colen, nephew of Ina A. Colen, is Chairman of the Governing Board for the academy. "Today is a great day for Marion County and those of us with the Ina A. Colen Academy. By signing the Charter School Agreement with the Marion County Public Schools, we have made a substantial step forward in providing a transformational educational experience for our future students. Our heartfelt appreciation to every member of the School Board and staff for their support." The governing board has members with strong community ties and their primary role will be to lead the academy to achieve its mission and vision while setting forth the philosophies and values that guide school operations.

Ina A. Colen Academy will be located in Calesa Township, a new family community for all ages encompassing 1,500 acres with up to 5,000 homes. The academy will be easily accessible for families moving to Calesa Township. The community will include an extensive trail and tunnel system so there will be minimal interaction with cars on the road. Calesa Township will also be home to a new aquatic center for competitive and recreational swim.

The Colen Family Charitable Trust has been working with Collaborative Educational Network, an educational consulting firm, to create and produce an educational program unique to Ina A. Colen Academy. The program will entail high quality standards-based instruction, project-based learning, incorporating social emotional learning and physical health and well-being of students

and staff. The program is designed to meet the needs of all types of learners. The search for a principal will begin later this year.

The academy will include larger classrooms and common spaces to foster creativity and collaboration through project-based learning. The overall school will be one and two-story segments with a series of interior courtyards. Each classroom will be approximately 800 square feet with a ratio of approximately 75 square feet per student, larger than the standard classroom. The exterior walls of several classrooms will include garage door type openings to connect indoors to the outdoors. The facility will include a gymnasium, cafetorium, skills lab, art and music rooms, exploration lab, and a media center with production lab.

The academy will follow a phased build-out approach for student enrollment. It will open in August 2022 with an estimated 214 students in kindergarten through grade 6, adding a grade per year to serve the full K-8 range. At full enrollment, anticipated to be in year 6, the academy anticipates enrolling 982 students.

For more information about Ina A. Colen Academy, please visit IACAFL.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter (@IACAFL).



Conceptual Outdoor Assembly Area and Seating