



PRESS RELEASE

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Chautauqua and Bay High Recognized Nationally as 'Canopy Schools' by Gates Foundation Initiative

In partnership with Bay High School, Chautauqua Learn and Serve Charter School has been nationally recognized by the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as one of America's Canopy Schools. This designation honors schools going above and beyond to care for all students and the broader community.

Chautauqua is a one-of-a-kind school serving adults with special needs and differing abilities, where students learn through acts of service, both locally and globally. From maintaining a regular homeless outreach program and serving meals in the community, to acquiring workforce skills by cleaning Bay High School, Chautauqua students are making meaningful contributions every day. Beyond Bay County, Chautauqua students have traveled the world, advocating for inclusive education and helping school districts across the globe replicate the Chautauqua model, which is a unique blend of service, dignity, and purpose for students of all abilities.

The Canopy Schools designation reflects the shared values and long-standing partnership between Chautauqua and Bay High School. For more than a decade, the two schools have collaborated to create inclusive opportunities, uplift diverse learners, and build bridges between traditional and charter education models.

Superintendent Mark McQueen applauded the announcement, stating, "This recognition is a powerful reflection of the heart of Bay District Schools. Chautauqua and Bay High show what is possible when we commit to community, collaboration, and compassion. We are honored by this national spotlight."

Cynthia McCauley, founding principal of Chautauqua, reflected on the recognition with gratitude and humility, saying, "This award speaks to the quiet power of doing what's right, of standing beside students others may overlook and helping them become leaders in their communities and around the world. We don't do this work for attention. We do it because it matters. But to be recognized as a national model of what's possible in public education is a deeply meaningful affirmation."

CRPE's Canopy Project highlights schools that are redefining what education can look like by prioritizing equity, responsiveness, and community engagement. Chautauqua and Bay High join a select group of schools across the country working to ensure all students are seen, supported, and celebrated.

You can read more about the project and this prestigious designation at <https://canopyschools.org/school/chautauqua-charter-school/>

To schedule interviews with McCauley and her students, please reach out to Chautauqua at 850-785-5056.