

The School District of Osceola County, FL
Blaine A. Muse, Superintendent

Press Release

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Cypress Elementary School in Osceola County is First School in Florida to Earn National Honors from the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network

The Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network selected Cypress Elementary in Osceola County as one of only five schools in the nation to be named as a Creative Ticket National School of Distinction for the 2005-2006 school year in honor of their outstanding school arts programs. This marked the first time in history any Florida school has received this award, which recognizes schools that have done an outstanding job of making the arts an essential part of the education of their students. The other schools joining Cypress Elementary this year for the honor include: Paradox Valley School (PreK-8) in Colorado, The Chicago Academy for the Arts (9-12) in Illinois, The *da Vinci* Academy (K-5) in Colorado, and Chattanooga High School Center for Creative Arts (6-12) in Tennessee.

This isn't the first time Cypress Elementary has been recognized at both the state and national levels for their arts-infused curriculum model. All kindergarten through fifth grade students at the school are engaged in self-motivating, life-long learning experiences through the performing arts program. School-wide, the students receive a sound academic education, but also an education rich in the visual arts, drama, music, theater, dance, and chorus. "We have found that incorporating all children into the arts helps each child seek out his or her own unique gifts," said Cypress Elementary Principal Stacy Burdette. Assistant Principal Tracy Shenuski adds, "We challenge our students to become believers in their own destiny for greatness."

Teachers at Cypress Elementary not only integrate the arts into their teaching, but also guide additional after-school performing groups, often in partnership with parents. The school boasts ten dynamic performing groups, including a dance troupe of children in wheelchairs. The school has been featured at many high-profile events, and has been involved in projects that serve as models throughout the state.

As a Creative Ticket National School of Distinction, Cypress Elementary performed on the Millennium Stage at the Kennedy Center on March 27, 2007. The school worked together to raise the estimated \$36,000 needed for 36 students, five teacher, and one administrator to travel to Washington, D.C. to perform in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.