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## Jewish Federation grants \$15,000 to school behavior initiative

SARASOTA COUNTY – The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee has provided a \$15,000 grant to the Sarasota County Schools to expand a program called Restorative Strategies designed to improve student engagement in school and reduce suspensions. The process focuses on helping students who behave inappropriately and those who are harmed by that behavior to discuss what happened in a safe environment where all sides can better understand how to make amends and prevent the behavior in the future. The grant will support the program in four Sarasota County middle schools during the 2016-17 school year.

District Superintendent Lori White said: “Students perform better in school when they feel safe in their environment, are interconnected with their teachers and peers, and when they can confidently engage in their educational surroundings. The Restorative Strategies initiative will build on the district’s successful Positive Behavior Support program, in which students are taught appropriate behaviors and are rewarded for practicing such behaviors.

“Positive Behavior Support teaches students to set expectations, solve problems, and resolve conflicts,” she said. “Restorative Strategies adds lessons on showing empathy, working in small groups to address problem behaviors, and identifying alternative actions.”

The Education Foundation of Sarasota County has been a partner in developing the Restorative Strategies initiative. EFSC Executive Director Jennifer Vigne said: “The aim of Restorative Strategies is to build and repair relationships as a means to strengthen the school community environment. We don’t want any student to feel either unsafe, misunderstood, bullied, or overwhelmed.

“The program helps students choose appropriate behaviors and resolve interpersonal conflicts before behavioral problems develop. It also helps reduce absences lowering anxiety about attending school and by decreasing out-of-school suspensions.

Howard Tevlowitz, the executive director of the Jewish Federation said: “The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee is proud to be a part of this partnership, which will help teach empathy and utilize community-building circles to strengthen student engagement. Students cannot succeed to the best of their potential if they are subject to difficult and confrontational situations, particularly as it relates to online and in-person bullying, racism and anti-Semitism. We believe this investment will help mitigate that problem.”

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### About the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee

The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to strengthen Jewish life and identity in the Sarasota-Manatee community, provide for Jewish

people in need, and to promote support for Israel. In addition, the Federation is responsive when worldwide catastrophes occur. **For more information, call 941-371-4546 or visit [www.jfedsrq.org](http://www.jfedsrq.org).**

#### **About the Education Foundation of Sarasota County**

The Education Foundation of Sarasota County is a supporting partner that exponentially enhances the educational experiences available to the children of Sarasota County. Its mission is to strengthen the community by investing in educational opportunities for the students, teachers, and schools. The Foundation works to match donor's passions with high-impact projects and initiatives that help every child in Sarasota County rise to their full potential. The Education Foundation of Sarasota County and its philanthropic investors are champions for students, teachers, and schools. **For more information, call 941-927-0965 or visit [www.edfoundation.net](http://www.edfoundation.net).**