



## NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2024 ISSUE NO. 2

### Welcome...

Public Education Network, Sarasota has been actively engaged in the community's effort



to protect and preserve public education in Sarasota county. Over the past 12 months we onboarded 12 partners to the organization. These partners share in our mission to support public education, teachers, and students. We have successfully completed three short term goals within the Network starting with the election of Liz Barker as the next school board member. Barker replaces Karen Rose on the school board. It is PEN's expectation that Barker will refocus the school board on initiatives that better serve teachers and students. Additionally, PEN was actively engaged in ensuring the millage referendum was passed. We secured funding from Gulf Coast Community Foundation which supported a postcard initiative to distribute

informational postcards to over 1,500 households encouraging voting Yes on the referendum. The referendum successfully passed in Sarasota county with over 80% of community support! Finally, we launched a successful campaign in distributing information through television interviews, social engagements, public speaking events, and social media posts encouraging the community to vote **No** on Amendment 1 to keep school board elections nonpartisan. Amendment 1 failed which is a victory to PEN. We look forward to working on future goals including encouraging more partners to participate in our advocacy of defending public education, looking forward to the school board elections of 2026, and the continued effort in raising funds to support our vision. We look forward to your continued support and collaboration.

We wish you happy holidays,

Dr. Theoni Soublis  
Public Education Network Sarasota, Chair

**OUR PARTNERS**



Your Organization  
 Could Be Posted  
 Here!

Your Organization  
 Could Be Posted  
 Here!

Your Organization  
 Could Be Posted  
 Here!


**NEXT PARTNER MEETING (IN PERSON AND VIRTUAL)  
 JANUARY 13, 2025 – 11:30AM-1PM**

**OUR PARTNERS' GET OUT THE VOTE EVENTS:**

With a Sarasota School Board election in August (and the swearing in of the winners in November), as well as the state-wide and municipal Referendums and elections in November, the PEN-Sarasota partners were exceptionally busy in the second half of the year.

**Get Out the Vote and Voter Education Activities of LWVSRQ June through November 2024**

- Registering voters at 38 events throughout the county.
- Offering election related programs including 32 Speaker's Bureau presentations.
- Hosting candidate forums for School Board, Hospital Board, County Commission, Charter Review Board and North Port City Commission.
- Ensuring that [vote411.org](http://vote411.org) provided information on all local candidates and races.
- Compiling and distributing digital and printed voter guides despite the disruption of Hurricane Milton.
- Distributing throughout Sarasota County more than 1,500 1Mill Referendum palm cards
- Distributing throughout Sarasota County more than 1,000 trifolds on Amendment 1



**Turn Out to Vote Locally!**



**www.SarasotaVotes.gov**

- Check your Voter Status
- Verify your VBM Status
- Discover the Candidates


*(no internet) Call or Visit*  
**Office Hours Monday - Friday**  
**8:30am - 5:00pm**

**Terrace Building (Sarasota)**  
101 S. Washington Blvd.  
Phone: (941) 861-8600

**Robert L. Anderson**  
Administration Center  
**(Venice)**  
4000 S Tamiami Trail, Rm 114  
Phone: (941) 861-3760

**Biscayne Plaza (North Port)**  
13640 Tamiami Trail  
Phone: (941) 423-9540


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**www.VoteManatee.com**  
**Manatee County Supervisor of Elections** (Bradenton)  
600 301 Blvd. W, Suite 108  
**Phone:** (941) 741-3823  
**Office Hours:** Mon-Fri  
8:30 am - 5:00 pm

**Suncoast Women of Action**

**www.theRight2Vote.net**

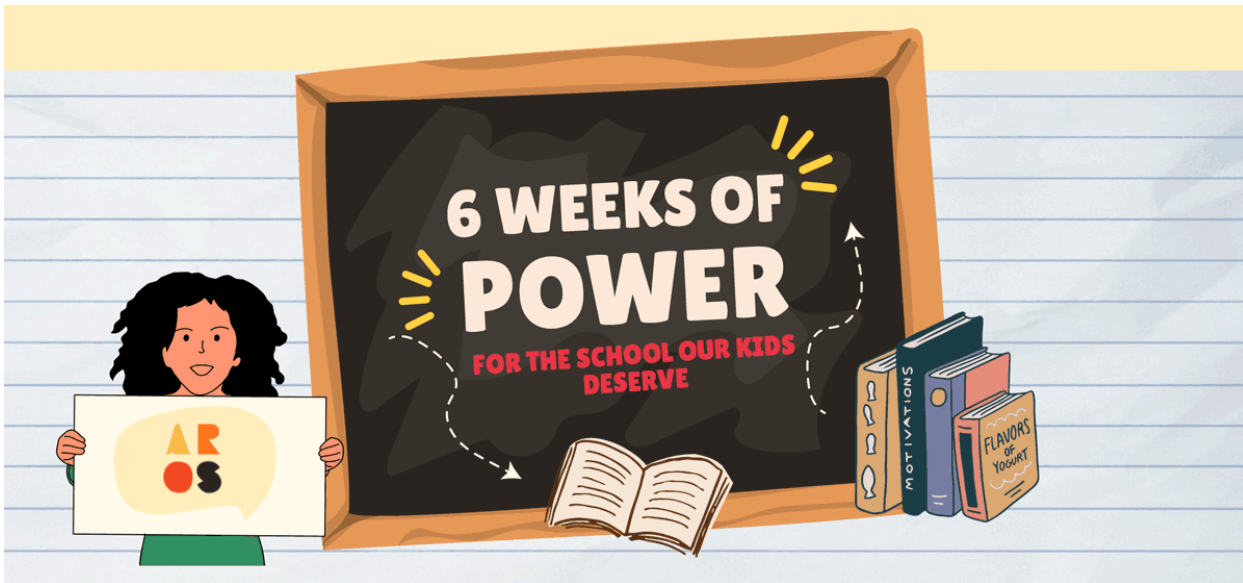
 [swoa2](#)  [swoa\\_ivote](#)

GULF COAST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



**Congratulations to Our  
Recently Elected  
School Board Members  
*Liz Barker AND Tom Edwards***

# PEN-Sarasota Invites You to Ramp Up...



## NO COST ORGANIZING TRAINING FOR PEN-SARASOTA PARTNERS

### What is it?

Starting January 21<sup>st</sup> the *Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools* (AROS) is launching [6 Weeks of Power](#), a free and virtual training on the art and science of organizing, base building and running powerful campaigns.

The training has **two parts**: the first two sessions will cover the basics of organizing and base building. The third session, which everyone is expected to attend, will focus on building effective coalitions. The last 2 sessions will focus on building and expanding powerful campaigns. **You are welcome to apply to just the organizing or campaigns sections, or BOTH.**

We highly encourage participants to join as a team with at least one other person, and to meet with their teams before the first session to set goals and discuss how to integrate the training with your local work. The training series is highly interactive and requires a commitment to be present for all selected sessions. For more info on session topics for the winter 2025 series [click here!](#)

Apply Today **for 6 Weeks of Power!** The deadline is Dec 20<sup>th</sup>.

PEN-Sarasota Partners should apply by contacting:

Damaris Allen at [damaris@strongflschools.com](mailto:damaris@strongflschools.com)

Subject Heading: **6 Weeks of Power Training**

**SESSION DATES:** January 14, 21, 28, and February 4, 11, and 18, 2025

**TIME:** 7p – 9p ET

**DEADLINE TO APPLY:** December 20, 2024

...or Kick Back and Relax!

Tickets also available at:

[https://app.aplos.com/aws/events/ht\\_2025](https://app.aplos.com/aws/events/ht_2025)

From Our Partners at American Association of University Woman

# PASSAGE OF THE REFERENDUM FOR SARASOTA SCHOOLS AFFECTS TEACHER QUALITY!

## In-Field Teacher Certification and School Choice

Jill Lewis-Spector, Ed.D.

Sarasota's recent passage of the 1mill Referendum means our school district can continue to offer teacher pay that is higher than nearly every other school district in Florida. This is a good thing. Importantly, it aids Sarasota in the statewide competition for the most highly qualified teachers – those teachers who have the appropriate certification for the subjects they are assigned to teach. Recognizing how important in-field teachers are to student achievement, the district recently confirmed a clear policy that allows it to hire a teacher out-of-field only if an in-field teacher for the subject cannot be found and requires that the out-of-field teacher become certified within 12 months (ARTICLE XII, K, 7.) Thus, nearly all teachers in our traditional schools will be teaching in-field. This has been our district's goal for some time. In fact, Sarasota's traditional public schools for the 2023-2024 school year had just 4.2% teaching out-of-field.



Unfortunately, Florida statutes don't call for the same teacher standards at charter schools. While out-of-field charter teachers are required to be working toward the proper certification in their assigned subject areas, there doesn't appear to be any timeframe for completing this. Thus, Sarasota's charter schools for the 2023-2024 school year show a large pool of out-of-field teachers, teaching subjects that they may not know in depth. For example, out-of-field percentages for some of our charters are:

- Sarasota Military Academy, 12.1%
- State College of Florida Collegiate School-Venice, 16.7 %
- Suncoast School For Innovative Studies, 17.4%
- Imagine School at Palmer Ranch, 30.2%
- Sky Academy Englewood, 35.2%

For private schools, the question of teaching qualifications is even more concerning, especially for anyone making school choice decisions. Private schools, including those that accept vouchers paid for with public funds, are not required to provide such data to the public. Thus, the public currently has no way of knowing whether teachers at private schools have obtained the standard certification required for teaching a specific subject.

Recent legislation signed by Governor DeSantis suggest that some legislators realize teacher certification and in-field teaching may be important in school choice considerations and attempted to settle the issue with the passage of the Education bill, CS/CS/HB 1285. This legislation is a sham, and no one should be fooled. It offers a Classical Teaching Certificate to teachers at classical schools (e.g. Sarasota Classical Academy and perhaps Sarasota's new charter, Sarasota Classical Preparatory Academy). The only requirement for this certificate is a B.A. degree in any field and a background check. Despite these minimal requisites, those holding it are to be considered teaching in-field for just about any subject. A Classical Certificate teacher, for instance, would be rated as teaching in-field when, during a single school year, is assigned to teach classes in French, algebra, social studies, and chemistry, without having deep knowledge in any of these subjects or any preparation for teaching them.

Does the certification difference matter? YES! Teachers with a deeper understanding of the content they teach aren't limited to rote explanations but can spontaneously offer creative perspectives tailored to the needs of the moment and make sometimes difficult concepts clear. They know their material in depth and are more confident in their teaching. In-field teachers can address student misconceptions, respond to student questions more effectively, provide relevant examples and ask questions that promote critical thinking. Teachers lacking subject-specific expertise may struggle to provide clear explanations or discuss controversial topics in depth.

Some of the difference between in-field and out-of-field teachers results from their education. Teachers certified in their subject area have typically undergone subject-specific training, making them more adept at using best teaching practices tailored to that discipline, which helps in delivering the content in ways that are developmentally appropriate and aligned with best practices, leading to better classroom management and higher student engagement. Out-of-field teachers are less familiar with the subject and may feel less sure of the material, and may be unable to offer deeper insights, creative lesson plans, or real-world applications. There is also evidence that more in-field teachers stay on as teachers at the same school than out-of-field teachers, contributing to a more stable school environment. These differences are critical to student achievement.

PEN-Sarasota partners support our traditional public schools. We also understand that not every parent wants their child to attend them. But when parents are choosing schools, they should be fully informed about the strengths and weaknesses of each choice and should consider who will be teaching their children. Sarasota's traditional schools offer a better choice if parents are looking for teachers who know their subject matter and have been certified that they are qualified to teach it.

## **PARTNERS' EVENTS CALENDAR**

We are beginning to post events for the coming year.  
Check our website for additional events.

**<https://pensarasota.org/>**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION</b>
12/7/2025	Holiday Lunch with LWVUS President Dianna Wynn	11:30am - 1:30pm	Stoneybrook Golf & Country Club	League of Women Voters	<a href="http://lwvsrq.org">lwvsrq.org</a>
1/18/2025	Membershi p meeting "Moving Forward"	10:15am - 11:45am	Gulf Gate Library, Sarasota	League of Women Voters	<a href="http://lwvsrq.org">lwvsrq.org</a>
1/27/2025	"Florida and Israel: Past and Present"	4:30pm	On ZOOM	Suncoast Jewish Alliance & Florida Humanities	suncoastjewishalliance@gmail.com
1/29/2025	"Finding the Way to a Healthy Bay" Sarasota Bay Estuary Program	5:30pm - 6:30pm	Gulf Gate Library, Sarasota	League of Women Voters	<a href="http://lwvsrq.org">lwvsrq.org</a>
2/14/2025	In Love with Venice Home Tour	Through out the day	Various historic homes in Venice	AAUW-VENICE	Tickets available at: venice-fl.aauw.net





## **Board of Directors (2022-2024)**

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Jill Lewis-Spector   Vice Chair

Pam Hart              Secretary

Nancy Swart          Treasurer

Shawn Bartelt

Scott Dennis

Lesley Sachs

Lisa Schurr

Katrina Ward

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David Spector

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