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## Denise Miller : Green and Golden

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Alumni



**DENISE MILLER, PH.D.**

**BA, SPECIAL ED: BEHAVIOR DISORDERS '79**

**MA, SPECIAL ED: BEHAVIOR DISORDERS '82**

**PH. D., SPECIAL EDUCATION '91**

A born educator and the oldest of five children, Denise Miller honed her teaching and supervisory skills early on in her daily family life. Her innate educational instincts served her well at home and in her future career choices.

Currently, Denise is the first and only principal of the lauded James B. Sanderlin PK-8 IB World School, which opened in 2003 in south St. Petersburg. The school's IB World status was achieved through Denise's tenacious and indefatigable leadership. With over 30 years of experience in Pinellas County Schools, she is recognized as a skilled, innovative, and compassionate educator. Denise has consistently fostered school environments built on respect, responsibility, common values, and diversity- relentlessly placing students first. She is

also a representative for IB Americas on the development committee for the IB Primary Years Programme, headquartered at IB Global Centre in The Hague, Netherlands.

In her early professional life, Denise was a special education teacher and then Behavior Specialist in the Safety Harbor ESE Center. From there she moved to the USF Florida Mental Health Institute, ultimately directing Research, Training and Consultation. After that leadership role, she also served as Project Director for the Florida Autism Task Force and returned to Pinellas County Schools. Denise was named assistant principal at Blanton Elementary in 1991 in which she led a team in expanding student learning through technology. Consequently, Blanton was one of four local schools to receive a grant for hardware and software.

As principal of St. Petersburg Challenge, a dropout prevention center, Denise cultivated new strategies and resources beyond those offered in a traditional classroom in order to inspire her students. Once again she was able to increase student achievement through instructional technology provided by a grant. Along the way, Denise was nominated for and received numerous national awards, including the Outstanding Professional Performance International Award from the International Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders in 1990 and the USF Pinellas County Alumni Chapter's Distinguished Alumni Professional Achievement Award in 2001.

At Sanderlin PK-8 IB World School, Denise has consistently demonstrated her strong belief that empowering students to use technology as a cognitive tool levels the playing field for all students. And she is adamant that students learn WITH technology and not merely FROM technology. She encourages innovation and creativity in her students and staff. Denise is also adept in motivating parents, teachers and staff to work collaboratively through Family Fun Nights, the Edible Peace Patch Garden, and many student and school-based initiatives from the IB emphasis on global citizenship and taking action toward a more peaceful world for all.

Denise entered USF St. Petersburg in 1977, armed with a sharp focus and commitment to improving the world through education. A highly regarded student leader, she was presented with the Outstanding Graduate Award for USFSP upon her graduation in 1979. Denise continued her academic studies, working on a Master's degree while teaching in local schools. In 1991, she became the first doctoral candidate in the College of Education to defend her dissertation at USFSP.

Denise has dedicated her life to inspiring the love of learning in others. She has



also taught classes in the USFSP College of Education and served as a mentor to both her colleagues and to future teachers. Invited to participate in the USFSP Vision 20/20 Strategic Plan, Denise relished the prospect of helping to plot her Alma Mater's future.



An animated and expressive individual, Denise has performed with the USF St. Pete Singers since her days as an undergraduate in 1977. A theatrical troupe that forwards creative expression through social service, the Singers are on the road all over Pinellas County. The genial and gifted Dr. Miller has played a wide assemblage of characters, from Melba, a cleaning woman with ambitions in the Roaring '20s, to Rosie O'Grady in "Irish Spring: The Soap Opera," to Lisa Douglas from TV's Green Acres. Among other highlights for Denise, the Singers were invited to serenade Jean Kennedy Smith, sister of President John Kennedy, with Irish songs during her visit to campus in 2001.

Denise lives in St. Petersburg with her teenage son Antonio and maintains an intensive school and family schedule. How does she manage to harness her rigorous responsibilities into a functional whole? The passionate school principal exhales for a quick moment—and chuckles: "It's elementary! Well, in my World, PK-8!"

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Heidi Hamlin, Alumni Relations Officer (727) 873-4259 - [HHamlin2@usfsp.edu](mailto:HHamlin2@usfsp.edu)

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