



**Florida's Local Education Foundations
Honor Manatee County Educator
With Statewide 2026 'Invested in Excellence' Award**

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Cliff Dawson, Manatee County's 2026 Educator of the Year and Director of Bands at Braden River High School, received statewide recognition and a \$5,000 award from the [Consortium of Florida Education Foundations](#) (Consortium) and [Florida Power & Light Company](#) (FPL) at the Florida Department of Education Teacher of the Year Gala in Orlando on July 23.



Dawson was selected from among Florida's county-wide teacher of the year honorees as the Consortium's annual "Invested in Excellence" recipient for building a program where student achievement, community partnership, and opportunity move in rhythm.

As Director of Bands, Dawson leads the seven-time state champion Marching Band of Pirates and teaches concert band, jazz, percussion, and music technology to 165 students. He has grown the program through local business sponsorships, a dedicated volunteer booster association, fundraising support, and scholarships that help students participate and succeed.

He also brings professional musicians into the classroom for instrument-specific coaching, giving students access to real-world expertise and helping them see how the fundamentals they practice every day connect to future opportunities.

"Cliff Dawson understands that excellence is not built in isolation," said Amity Schuyler, President and CEO of the Consortium. "He has created a culture where students are challenged, supported, and connected to a community that believes in their potential. That is the kind of investment that changes lives."

The Consortium represents Florida's school district-wide local education foundations, including Manatee Education Foundation. Established in 1987, the Consortium now represents 62 member foundations with 1,200 business and community leaders serving as volunteer board members. Collectively, they raise more than \$124 million annually to innovate learning, power potential, and celebrate success in local public schools.

Photo (L-R): Amity Schuyler, President & CEO, Consortium of Florida Education Foundations, Cliff Dawson, Mariota Theodoris, STEM Sports Coach/STEM Project Manager, Florida Power & Light Company.

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