

Bethune Academy School History

Bethune Academy, formally known as Bethune Elementary, was a neighborhood school until it was transformed into a Magnet School for Haines City, Davenport, Lake Hamilton, Poinciana and Dundee in 1993. The school was renamed Bethune Academy with a theme focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (currently STEM).

Bethune Elementary was named after Mary McLeod Bethune, founder of Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach.

The Haines City schools have been part of the desegregation plans ordered by the Federal District Court in Tampa, Florida since the original suit in 1963. The School Board of Polk County entered into a Consent Decree from the Federal District Court with two other parties, The U.S. Justice Department and the League Defense Fund, who represented the plaintiff in the original suit.

The Haines City Desegregation Committee was established in November 1992 to develop recommendations for desegregating the elementary schools in the Haines City area, including the communities of Loughman, Davenport, Dundee, and Lake Hamilton. The purpose of the Haines City Desegregation committee was to develop a plan for Haines City that would effectively desegregate the elementary schools in alignment with the Consent Decree for the U.S. District Court.

To accomplish this purpose the committee worked to accomplish two goals.

- A. Balance the K-5 school enrollment in the Haines City area schools in order to desegregate Bethune Elementary School.
- B. Develop an elementary magnet school in the Haines City area.

The committee recommended that Bethune Elementary School be the site for the magnet school. The committee then endorsed the name "Bethune Academy" The committee also unanimously agreed that Bethune Academy be a traditional academic school with special emphasis on mathematics, science and technology.

The plan was recommended and submitted to the Polk County School Board at the February 9th, 1993 meeting for approval. Polk County School Board set the public hearing at Haines City High School February 25, 1993 and the plan was approved and implemented according to the implementation of the recommendation.