



EDUCATION

# The fourth-best high school in the nation is in Miami, says U.S. News and World Report

BY COLLEEN WRIGHT

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Students at School for Advanced Studies in Homestead organized a student protest on March 14, 2018, following the deadly school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. The teens are pictured with Advanced Placement Government teacher Cody Kimmel. The school was named the top school in Miami-Dade County according to U.S. News and World Report's best high school rankings.

School for Advanced Studies (SAS) in Miami-Dade is on a meteoric rise to the top.

The SAS schools were named the fourth-best public high school in the nation and got the honor of the top public high school in Florida, according to the 2020 U.S. News & World Report Best High Schools Rankings released Tuesday. [Last year](#), SAS rose to the second-best high school in the state and 26th in the nation.

“It’s an incredible accomplishment,” said Principal Omar Monteagudo. “We’re known as the dream factory, and that’s because we truly try to transform our students not only academically but socially and emotionally.”

The report’s rankings don’t parse out the five campuses of SAS, which are based at five Miami Dade College campuses — a decision made by U.S. News and World Report. These selective, dual-enrollment schools with just juniors and seniors offer students the opportunity to graduate with a high school diploma and an associate’s degree from Miami Dade College.

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A total of 786 students are enrolled at SAS, but Kendall is the largest campus with 258 students. Of those, 65% of students are female. Monteagudo said all students are on track to graduate with an associate’s degree this year.

SAS was bested nationally only by Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, Virginia; Academic Magnet High School in North Charleston, South Carolina, and Merrol Hyde Magnet School in Hendersonville, Tennessee, in that order.

“We’re not into rankings, but rather the rankings is an indication or byproduct of the work we get in,” Monteagudo said. “It’s great we get validated, but our drive is not by a number.”

He said that while some assume that the county’s best students flock to SAS ready for the challenge of taking high school and college courses simultaneously, that isn’t the case. Monteagudo said the school has been working on an intervention program that tutors students in math, reading and writing. The school has been laser focused on data and professional development for its teachers, the “most important variable,” he said.

“We’ve had a game plan on how we’re going to take SAS to the next level,” Monteagudo said. “We have never rested on our laurels. We use the accomplishments of SAS as a building block. Our best days and our best years are still ahead of us.”

Six schools in Miami-Dade County ranked in the top 10 in Florida and top 100 nationally. Young Women’s Preparatory Academy, third best in the state, ranked 52nd nationally. The others are Design and Architecture Senior High (sixth in Florida, 72nd nationally), Archimedean Upper Conservatory Charter School (seventh and 74th), International Studies Charter High School (eighth and 83rd), and Jose Marti Mast 6-12 Academy (ninth and 94th). Just outside this group was iPrep Academy at 11th and 104th.

All of those schools are either selective magnet schools or charter schools. You have to go far down the list to find a neighborhood school ranked. The first one up in Miami-Dade is Miami Palmetto Senior High, ranked 2,012th nationally and 117th in Florida.

Public schools in Broward County had a weaker showing in this year’s rankings. Somerset Arts Conservatory in Pembroke Pines ranked 18th in the state and 155th nationally. Pompano Beach High School, a neighborhood high school, ranked 21st in the state and 221st nationally.

U.S. News and World Report’s annual high school rankings are based on six criteria: college readiness, reading and math proficiency, reading and math performance, underserved student performance, college curriculum breadth and graduation rates. College readiness measures participation and performance on Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams. More than 17,700 public high schools were ranked this year.

[See where your school ranks here.](#)

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Colleen Wright returned to the Miami Herald in May 2018 to cover all things education, including Miami-Dade and Broward schools, colleges and universities. The Herald was her first internship before she left her hometown of South Miami to earn a journalism degree from the University of Florida. She previously covered education for the Tampa Bay Times.

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