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EDISON

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Others agreed. "I think a lot of parents of children at our school would be interested in the high school," said Karen Wedemeyer, head of school at Good Shepherd Day School, Punta Gorda. "As presented the philosophy parallels our educational philosophy. It would be a seamless transition for our students."

The philosophy, as outlined by Wedemeyer, included a heavy emphasis on academic achievement in a culturally diverse setting, where children are taught to be successful no matter their IQ or standardized test scores.

"The Edison Collegiate High School would serve students with a rigorous curriculum to allow them to earn an associates degree at the same time they graduate from high school," said Steve Atkins, Charlotte campus dean. "It would not be just for honor students. We would include students who are capable but may not do well in a traditional high school setting."

The Edison College-backed school would be a complement to the existing public school system, not a competitor, Atkins said. Serving average, gifted and first generation college students would be the goal.

The School Board of Charlotte County became open about the proposal even if it lost some state funding due to students attending the collegiate high school.

Although likely a charter school, the Edison-run school would also be a publicly supported school. Books, tuition, and transportation costs would come from the school system.

"If (Edison) can fill a need for a seg-

ment of our student population," said Rene Desjardins, board assistant superintendent, "that's a good thing. The bottom line is what is best for the boys and girls."

The school could eventually serve about 400 students, 100 in each grade. It would have its own teachers and administration without eliminating other advanced programs at the college.

As an example, the dual enrollment program has been in effect for about 30 years. It would not change.

The idea of having a high school and college reside on the same campus has attracted other county colleges such as Broward County to start programs.

Closer to Lee, Collier and Charlotte counties, Florida Gulf Coast University offers early admission programs and dual enrollments. It also has an FGCU Collegiate High School.

The school's spokeswoman, CarolAnn Popovich, saw no competition between the colleges for high school students.

"The Florida Gulf Coast University Collegiate High School was established (as an early admission program) to provide an educational opportunity to the region's 'best and brightest' students so that they may fully utilize their junior and senior years of high school to their advantage," Popovich said.

"Students enrolled in the (early admission) program take between 12-15 credits a semester and may take advantage of summer sessions. Each may earn up to two years of college credit and/or a possible AA degree and receive free tuition if coming from a public high school and book fees." ■

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