

A portrait of Kamela Patton, a woman with short blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a black top and a large, multi-strand necklace with silver circles and discs. The background is a dark, textured grey.

## KAMELA PATTON

### SUPERINTENDENT, COLLIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

---

"Most people have defining crossroads in their life, and for me, that was stepping out of my comfort zone, moving to Florida, and going to work for the Bee Gees," says Kamela Patton, who also traveled around the world with the iconic pop music group before settling in Naples six years ago. "The second crossroad was my decision to become a superintendent."

Aside from serving on the boards of numerous nonprofits, including Champions for Learning, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, and the Shelter for Abused Women & Children, Patton is driving innovation in public schools. She and her team have introduced a focus on engineering and an entrepreneurship program to the county's high school and middle school students, and plan to expand it to elementary schools.

"I'm so proud of our administrators who have become these 'educational surgeons' using data to assist our students and teachers," says Patton. "I believe this focus has helped move our school system from thirty-third to fifth in 67 districts, and increase our graduation rate 14.2 percent in just six years." She also helped add a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) focus throughout the district, among other initiatives. "I want to develop today's students to become tomorrow's leaders," says Patton. "Graduation is my favorite day each year, and I want each student to graduate with a pathway." —A.B.