

Location:

Marina Jack A Dock #31

2 Marina Plaza, Sarasota, FL 34236

Contact: Megan Ehlers

megan.ehlers@sarasotacountyschools.net

CarefreeLearner@gmail.com

Work (941) 955-0181 ext. 64652

Cell (941) 223-4644

Carefree Learner Field Trip Guide for Teachers

BACKGROUND

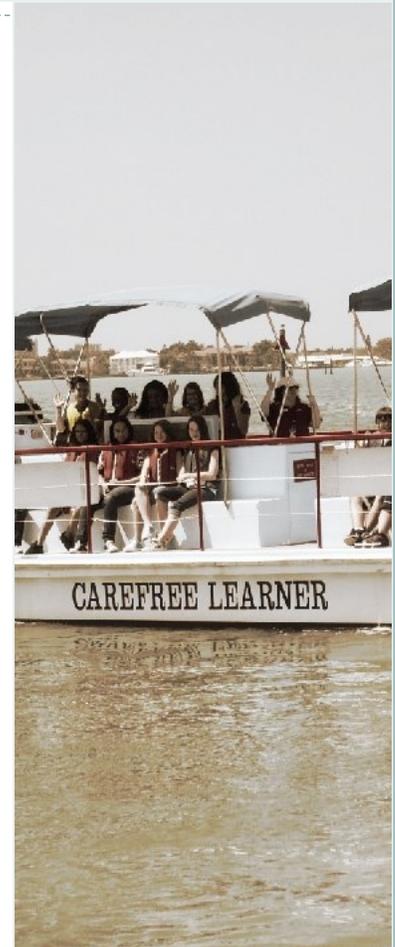
Built by students and launched in 1978, the Carefree Learner is Sarasota High School's "floating classroom". The boat conducts educational tours in Sarasota Bay for students and the community.

Marina Jack has graciously donated our slip at the Sarasota Bayfront. Sarasota County Schools 7th grade middle school classes have the opportunity to take a tour with the Carefree Learner for free thanks to the generosity of the Sarasota County School Board.

Other groups that participate in the tours and help support the program are the Sarasota Shell Club, Sarasota Bay Watch, American Littoral Society, Englewood Shell Club, and Audubon Society.

BOOKING

Please email Megan Ehlers at megan.ehlers@sarasotacountyschools.net or CarefreeLearner@gmail.com for booking. Trips take place from August to May during the school year. Middle school trip times are from 11:15am to 12:45 pm. High school and community trips run from 11:15 am to 1:15 pm and 1:00pm to 3:00pm.





A TYPICAL TRIP

After an overview of safety procedures at the dock, the Carefree Learner (CFL) heads out onto Sarasota Bay. Once over the seagrass beds, an otter trawl net is deployed to collect organisms. Students search through bins loaded with sponges, seaweed, and a variety of animals. Sponges are searched for invertebrates, and animals are placed in the centrally located aquariums for observation and discussion later on in the trip.

With the sponges released back into the bay to regenerate, we start making our way to the Robert's Bay Bird Rookery, one of Florida's most successful breeding colonies. Depending on the time of year students can observe mating behaviors, nest building, feeding, and juveniles of a variety of native bird species.

As we make our way back to the dock, the instructor fishes out the various animals we collected from the aquariums for discussion. Species' roles and relationships, defensive adaptations, reproductive methods, feeding, and habitat is discussed in detail. The CFL then makes her way into Hudson Bayou to review the ecological importance of mangrove and seagrasses to Florida (erosion, fisheries, etc.).

During the final activity students return the organisms back into the bay to the area they were originally collected.

Approximately 175,000 students and adults have studied Sarasota Bay Ecology for almost 40 years on board the Carefree Learner.

LOCATION

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**2 Marina Plaza, Sarasota,
FL 34236**

A Dock #31



Questions? Call or text Megan Ehlers (941) 223-4644 at any time.

She can also be reached from 7:30-11:00 am through email or by calling Sarasota High School at (941) 955-0181 ext. 64652.

PREPARATION

The CFL can fit up to 20 adults, and 24 students. There are four benches that fit approximately 6 students. A seating chart is available to help you plan if needed. Remind students to dress appropriately for the weather, and suggest sunscreen even in the winter.

Cell phones are permitted at the discretion of the teacher for pictures and/or video, but should otherwise put away. Headphones may not be used at any time.

The trip, including buses, are free to 7th grade public middle school students. To book your bus, call transportation at (941) 486-2141.

The CFL does not run during small craft advisories. Trips may be cancelled the evening or morning before at the captain's discretion. We try to reschedule the trip to the best of our ability within the next 30 days.

Please review the rules below with your students before the trip..

BOAT RULES

- **Instructions from Captain Randall and Dr. Ehlers will be listened to the first time they are given.**
- **Students will wear a life jacket which is kept zipped and/or clipped at all times.**
- **Animals collected must be treated with care and respect.**
- **Benches are for sitting not standing.**
- **When leaving and entering the marina students must stay seated and be quiet.**

Failure to abide by the rules will result in the boat returning to the dock early.

