



## PALM BEACH INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

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## INSPIRING TOMORROW

by Joanne Weiner, Founder & Executive Director, PBIA

When I first began working in the equestrian community over 25 years ago, only about 100 horses were competing at WEF. Young riders travelled back and forth from their schools on the weekends, or had to miss school all together. Students who wanted to leave school to pursue their riding on a full-time basis had few options: They could choose to quit school, get a GED, or enter a correspondence-type program. When I saw how awful the educational options were, I decided to create a program – Private Tutoring Services – that not only fit the training and competing schedules for student athletes, but also allowed them to get a great college-preparatory education.

The process was not without its challenges. It took some time to figure out how to work with different students from different schools, how to create a different type of schedule for each type of situation, and how to work with all the different personalities involved in the equestrian community.

Our goal was to attract great educators to Wellington and Ocala, Florida, as well as to Gulfport, Mississippi – educators who for 3 or 4 months could teach any subject imaginable and travel to the many horse shows where we set up temporary tutorial centers after winter season. As much as Barnes and Noble loved having our students and tutors in their coffee shops, we also really needed to establish our own centers.

Today, Palm Beach International Academy (PBIA) is a thriving academic institution embedded not only in the equestrian community, but also in tennis, hockey, golf, acting, artist, and other communities. PBIA offers one-on-one and small group classes to students from all over the world and is located literally around the corner from the show grounds in Wellington. We have an 8000-square-foot facility that creates, organizes, and oversees hundreds of students' educational programs in our centers in Wellington and Boca Raton, Florida, and remotely, around the globe. PBIA's highly-evolved system works with each student's school during season and schools know they can trust that their students will return home ahead of the curve after studying for 3 or 4 months with us. We also offer an exceptional college preparatory program for students who choose to attend school full-time with us. This 'blended-learning program' has proven to be an incredible option for the many students enrolled. Our partnerships with universities also allow students to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees. The educational possibilities are endless.

The generosity of the equestrian community throughout the years is helping to transform education throughout the United States and world as well. PBIA is in the forefront of using the latest findings in mind-brain science in teaching, using technology as a tool for learning, and helping to turn students into global citizens. Our students have grown-up to be among the top riders in the world, as well as leaders in their professions and communities. They are beginning to send their children to us as well, and many of the top riders and trainers who never had these options also see the benefits of having their children a part of our student body.

As an educator and artist who began this service with \$300 and a cell phone, I am thrilled and proud to be the Executive Director of Palm Beach International Academy. With over 200 educators currently working with us, beautiful centers for hundreds of students to learn, and an incredible group of families and students believing in us, we all look forward to what the future holds. We are busy preparing for WEF, Ocala and Gulfport, and look forward to being at Tryon and North Salem in the Spring. As more and more people understand that education can – indeed, should – happen anytime and anywhere, students will be able thrive in this modern world. Their minds will be active and attentive and their imaginations will be stimulated and inspired. *This is, after all, what helps make the difference between the blue and red ribbons!*