



Florida's Charter Schools



Congratulations!
**Somerset Academy
 Charter Middle School**

Commissioner Winn Announces FCAT Reading Scores Challenge Winner

On July 11, 2006, Education Commissioner John L. Winn announced Somerset Academy Charter Middle School in Miami-Dade County as the FCAT Reading Scores Challenge winner. The challenge is part of the Shoot for the Stars: A Record Breaking Year for Middle Schools initiative launched in January to encourage academic achievement for middle school students in reading.

"I am honored to recognize the students, parents and educators of Somerset Academy for their achievement," said Commissioner Winn. "They have nearly tripled the percentage of students reading at or above grade level. This is a remarkable accomplishment."

The competition included every middle school in Florida. Schools must have increased both their percentage of students reading at or above grade level and the percentage of students making learning gains compared to last year. A total of 567 middle schools qualified with Somerset Academy showing the biggest improvement. This past school year, Somerset Academy increased the percent of students reading at or above grade level to 79 percent, up from 28 percent during the 2005-06 school year. Also, 86 percent of students made a year's worth of progress in a year's time (percent of students making learning gains in reading), up from 63 percent in 2005-06. Somerset Academy also improved their school grade from a "D" in 2005 to an "A" this year.

Somerset Academy received \$10,000 for their school media center, courtesy of Bealls Department Stores, Inc. The other qualifying middle schools will receive certificates from Governor Jeb Bush and Commissioner Winn,

Just Read, Florida! posters and flags commemorating their achievement.

Commissioner Winn presented the award during the Just Read, Florida! Fifth Annual Leadership Conference held July 10-12, 2006. Just Read, Florida! makes reading a priority in Florida's public schools and among the community groups and volunteer organizations that support them. It is based on the latest reading research, which includes emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. For more information about Just Read, Florida! and the Shoot for the Stars: A Record Breaking Year for Middle Schools initiative visit www.justreadflorida.com.

2006-07 Special Teachers are Rewarded (Star) Appropriation

The 2006 Florida Legislature's 2006-07 budget includes an appropriation of \$147.5 million within the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) for the Special Teachers Are Rewarded (STAR) performance pay plan.

This plan is provided as a method for districts and charter schools to implement performance pay provisions of section 1012.22, Florida Statutes, and to access their portion of the funds in the appropriation. The Legislation also suspended the State Board of Education Performance Pay Rule (E-Comp). Those requirements no longer apply, and districts have more flexibility in complying with the Performance Pay Statute from 2001.

Each school district is required under s. 1012.22, F.S. to (1) adopt a salary schedule that bases a portion of each instructional employee's salary on performance, and to (2) adopt a performance-pay policy for school administrators and instructional personnel. Both the salary schedule and the performance pay policy are



based upon employee performance as demonstrated in the district's performance assessment system required in section 1012.34, F.S. Charter schools may participate through the local school district or by submitting a plan for separate review and approval.

Approval of the district's STAR plan by the State Board of Education is required to receive STAR funds, and districts will receive feedback from the Department within 45 days of receipt.

The following is a timeline of critical dates that must be met for funds to be awarded:

- December 31, 2006 – Comprehensive STAR plan must be submitted to the State Board for approval.
- March 1, 2007 – Revised STAR plan must be submitted in the event the State Board determines a plan needs revisions.
- April 1, 2007 – Deadline for a district to adopt its State Board approved STAR plan to receive funds from the appropriation

Districts and schools may contact Karen Hines-Henry at phone number: 850/245-0502 or email: Karen.Hines@fldoe.org for further questions or clarifications.

Building Excellent Schools Fellowship

The Building Excellent Schools Fellowship is a rigorous, year-long training program in general charter school management, which in some ways places it in parallel with programs offered at graduate schools of business and education. However, instead of its participants being students that come to the program with myriad interests that they pay the university to help develop and refine, Building Excellent Schools Fellows are carefully selected leaders-in-training that come already focused on one goal, founding and operating a great school, and instead of paying BES for its training, recipients **are paid by BES** a generous professional stipend of **\$80,000** for their year's work in the program.

A Fellowship year generally entails:

- Approximately 100 days of intense training at BES' central offices in Boston, which include visits to the top 30 performing urban charter schools in the northeast United States. Schools visited in the past

have included Academy of the Pacific Rim (MA), Amistad Academy (CT), Boston Collegiate (MA), Milwaukee College Prep (WI), North Star Academy (NJ), and Roxbury Prep (MA).

- Extended residency in a high-performing urban charter school. During the residency, Fellows receive substantial access to school leadership, work intensively on a challenging project for the school, and participate in routine work every school day. These residencies develop Fellows' technical skills and the critical people management and organizational skills that often separate great leaders from merely effective ones.
- Ongoing coaching and support around board and charter application development.

Building Excellent Schools Fellows share common beliefs far more than they share common experiences. Fellows represent a vast range of professional experience including education, business, law, and public administration. Classroom experience is not a pre-requisite for participation in the program. Ultimately, Building Excellent Schools is looking for high-capacity individuals that are deeply committed to fundamentally changing urban education. An exemplary Fellow is:

- A relentless achiever—they get the job done no matter what.
- Demanding of oneself and others—good is not good enough, only great will suffice.
- Willing to learn—accepts that only with careful study, guidance, and preparation can a great school be built.
- Highly flexible—can adapt to new knowledge, skills, and situations with ease.
- Mature and professional—can successfully operate in multiple professional environments, including business and government.

For more information on the Building Excellent Schools Fellowship Program please contact:

Building Excellent Schools
262 Washington Street, 7th Floor
Boston, MA 02108

617.227.4545 telephone
617.227.4551 facsimile

www.buildingexcellentschools.org

The Florida Schools of Excellence Commission

The Florida Schools of Excellence Commission was established under Florida Statute 1002.335 (5) (c) on August 15, 2006, the date Commission members were appointed by the State Board of Education.

FSEC is an independent, state-level charter school authorizing entity working in collaboration with the Department of Education and under the supervision of the State Board of Education. The commission members were appointed by the State Board of Education with three appointees recommended by the Governor, two appointees recommended by the President of the Senate, and two appointees recommended by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The members of the commission will vote annually to appoint a chair and a vice chair.

The commission convened its first meeting on September 22, 2006 and, thereafter, shall meet each month at the call of the chair or upon the request of four members of the commission. The next three meetings will take place in Tallahassee on October 26, 2006, November 9, 2006 and December 14, 2006.

Members of the Commission are as follows:

One year terms:

John Washington Lewis – Chair
President, Lewis & Lewis of Jacksonville
President, Republic Capital Real Estate Investments, Inc.

Alejandro “Alex” Sanchez
President and Chief Executive Officer,
Florida Bankers Association

Ricardo “Richard” Moren
Brandon Home Furnishings

Two year terms:

Liza Jane McFadden – Vice Chair
President, Volunteer Florida Foundation

Judith Budnick
Retired

Reginald Gaffney
Executive Director, Community Rehabilitation Center, Inc

Rudy Rodriguez
Independent Contractor – Real Estate Associate currently associated with Keyes Company/Realtor

For more information about the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission, please contact Jacqueline Hitchcock at 850/245-0502 or email:

Jacqueline.Hitchcock@fldoe.org

Tenth Annual Florida Charter School Conference

The Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice will host the 2006 Florida Public Charter School Conference, November 29-December 1, 2006, at the Wyndham Orlando Resort



FLORIDA'S
CHARTER SCHOOLS
A Decade of Progress

in Orlando, Florida. This year marks the tenth anniversary of charter schools in Florida. We trust this event will bring together Florida's education community to build better educational opportunities for all students while celebrating ten years of a successful charter school program in Florida.

The 2006 Florida Charter School Conference will focus on issues specific to the following areas: (1) prospective applicants and authorizers; (2) new schools and authorizers; and (3) veteran schools and authorizers. This conference will also highlight Florida's Charter Schools as they successfully celebrate a decade of progress.

Conference information can be found on the Independent Education and Parental Choice website at: http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Charter_Schools/charter_school_conference.asp

For further information please contact Noelle Bonard, Florida Charter School Conference Coordinator, at 850/245-0502 or email: 2006CharterSchoolConf@fldoe.org

Reminder to Sign-up for Paperless Communication

In an effort to communicate with Florida's educational community in a timely and cost efficient manner, The Florida Department of Education (DOE) has developed the means of notifying interested parties when official correspondence is posted on the



DOE website. By signing up and indicating your topics of interest, you will receive email notices containing links to messages, reports, legislative updates, technical assistance papers and official memorandums issued by the Florida Department of Education. All messages will link to PDF files which may be viewed, downloaded to your computer, or printed at your discretion. For more information on the Florida Department of Education's paperless communication system please visit the DOE website at: <http://www.firn.edu/doe/menu/communications.htm>.

No Child Left Behind



The federal *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001* is designed to ensure that children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. The program provides options to parents of students enrolled in schools that are in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

The Florida Department of Education is leading statewide efforts to close the achievement gaps affecting students whose educational opportunities are limited by low-performing schools, to increase awareness among parents and other community members about public school options in Florida and to ensure all students are well-served and **NO STUDENT IS LEFT BEHIND**.

For more information on NCLB, visit www.fldoe.org/NCLB. For information on NCLB choice requirements, visit www.firn.edu/doe/flbpo/index.htm.

Keeping Us Informed

We ask that if you have changes to your contact information, change in positions, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, and email addresses, please contact Karen Hines-Henry at 850/245-0502 or email Karen.Hines@fldoe.org. This updated information will certainly help keep us informed as we continue to keep you informed!

Charter School Director Visits The Villages High School

BY SEAN MAXFIELD, DAILY SUN

THE VILLAGES — Steve Adams, director of Charter, Virtual and Home Education with the Florida Department of Education, liked what he saw during his visit to The Villages High School.

"I'm just abuzz about this opportunity for your children," Adams said to parents and staff at the school. "The opportunity you are participating in is unique in the nation. We can all learn from what's happening here."

Adams spoke with parents and instructors during a tour of the charter school campus. He represented the Edu-

cation Department's Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, which is in the process of identifying charter schools to be featured on the School Choice Web site at the Charter School Conference held at the end of November in Orlando.

The hand-picked schools also could be showcased in a statewide publication celebrating a decade of progress for charter schools.



The visit began with Adams listening to parents explain what makes the charter schools special. Parent Sonny Resmondo, who has had children attending the charter schools for many years, said the staff and teachers make the educational experience worthwhile.

"It's amazing what hours they put in," Resmondo said of the teachers.

Other parents said their children are happy to be in a free-thinking environment. They like that teachers pay close attention to the students.

Adams also liked the way the culture and spirit of community of The Villages has influenced the atmosphere of the schools. He was glad that children from the schools had an opportunity to talk with local military veterans for essays and other projects.

"Everyone has a stake in the success of every child's education," Adams said.

Adams later took a guided tour of the high school and even got to check out the graphic arts lab and sample some cream of potato soup prepared by Chef John Wood's culinary arts class.

"There's nothing wrong with it," he said of the sample.

Randy McDaniel, director of education for The Villages Charter Schools, said he hopes this visit will further illuminate all the hard work that parents, teachers and students put into the schools.

"Someone's here looking at us," McDaniel said. "It's a chance to get better."

Sean Maxfield is a reporter with the Daily Sun. He can be reached at 753-1119, ext. 9303, or sean.maxfield@thevillagesmedia.com.