

Just for Teachers

News from the Florida Department of Education
February 2010

In This Issue

- **A Note from Sheila**
- **Haiti Update**
- **Commissioner's Teacher Advisory Task Force**
- **Curriculum Corner**
 - Kindergarten Survey
- **News from Across the state**
 - Law Enforcement Officers Celebrate Literacy Week
 - Hinson Middle School Students National FFA Winners
 - Gulf County Increases Graduation Rate
 - Lee County Librarian One of Top Ten in Nation
 - Polk Educators Recognized
 - James Hale Named Florida Assistant Principal of the Year
- **Opportunities for You and Your Students**
 - Missing Children's Essay Contest
 - Literacy League Book Club for Middle School Students
 - Children's Town Hall Nominations
 - Cards of Care for Haiti
 - Free Video from Florida Department of Agriculture
- **Summer Workshops**
- **Teacher Discounts**
- **Reflection**

A Note from Sheila

Peggy Sammons, a VPK teacher in Bradenton, shared this delightful story dealing with a student's perception of Peggy as a teacher:

I recently purchased a pair of Converse low top shoes for my 15 year old daughter, but she decided they were not her style. Rather than return them, I kept the shoes for myself. The first day I wore them to work, 5 year old Kaliyah looked at them and said, "Mrs. Peggy, those are not teacher shoes."

I asked Kaliyah what "teacher shoes" looked like and she responded, "Teacher shoes look important and those high tops just don't look important!"

Kaliyah's observation reminds us that teachers—you—are important. Every day teachers positively influence the lives of countless children. Regardless of the kinds of shoes you wear, remember that your role as an educator is vital. You are important!



● *Haiti Update*

As we watch coverage and continue to monitor the devastating situation in Haiti, many of us have questions about the potential impacts to our schools and communities and how we can personally assist in the relief efforts. Please be assured the Department of Education has been meeting with Florida's Emergency Operations team regularly, including representatives from both the Departments of Children and Families and Health, and we are prepared to work with this statewide team to respond to the issues that may arise regarding enrolling and educating these new students. Florida's Emergency Operations team is also actively coordinating with their federal counterparts as a part of Operation Haiti Relief.

Due to Florida's proximity to the earthquake region, our school districts will be relied upon to lend a hand by providing a smooth school enrollment process to displaced families that may relocate to Florida. The Department has instituted a process for districts to track new student enrollment resulting from this terrible tragedy and that system is up and running. Superintendents throughout the state are aware of the proper procedures for tracking these students and the Department stands ready to assist districts with any questions or concerns. In addition, specific information regarding statewide assessment has been shared with superintendents and district assessment coordinators throughout the state.

As of February 1st, the total number of students enrolled in Florida's school districts as a result of the earthquake is 958. The districts most heavily impacted by this increased enrollment are Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties.

The Department will continue to provide school districts with updates and share news of the efforts of our fellow state agencies in response to this disaster. Please feel free to contact my office or appropriate Department staff with any questions that may arise as we work to respond to the needs of these students and their families.

For more information visit <http://www.fldoe.org/haiti/>.



● *Commissioner's Teacher Advisory Task Force*

Education Commissioner Dr. Eric J. Smith welcomed 17 highly-effective Florida teachers to Orlando today for the inaugural meeting of the Commissioner's Teacher Task Force. Created by the Department of Education, in partnership with the Florida Education Foundation, Task Force members will identify the characteristics of effective teaching and work with Department staff to determine plans to capitalize on these discussions to elevate teaching as a profession across the state. Each Task Force member has been previously recognized for his or her dedication and individual achievements within the profession.

"The thoughts, experiences and expertise of our best and brightest teachers are essential in our ongoing efforts to improve our school system and the academic capabilities of our students," said Commissioner Smith.

"Teachers are the captains of their classrooms and have a keen understanding of what their students need. By tapping into their knowledge through open and candid dialogue we are not only elevating the teaching profession but creating ideas that are sure to be met with success."

Members of Florida's Commissioner's Teacher Task Force were selected based on their proven track-record of positively impacting student achievement, and they reflect representation from across Florida's many regions. These elementary, middle and high school teachers also represent all areas of curriculum, including core curriculum, the arts, early childhood, and the social sciences. In addition to sharing their own personal experiences and addressing various other issues impacting Florida's teachers, task force members will also weigh-in on the current Educator Accomplished Practices that address teacher effectiveness.

The meeting was facilitated by two Task Force members who were recently selected into the National Teaching Ambassador Fellowship program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. Dr. Adewale Alonge, a middle school science teacher from Homestead Elementary School in Dade County, and Jasmine Ulmer, a Title I Math Coach and Gifted Teacher at Lake Butler Elementary School in Union County, are among a team of 13 teachers nationally that have been tasked with assisting the U.S. Department of Education in gathering information and feedback pertaining to education reform across the country.

For more information about the Commissioner's Teacher Task Force, including a listing of the 17 teachers selected for the group, visit <http://www.fldoe.org/commissioner/ttf.asp>. Information about the U.S. Department of Education's National Teaching Ambassador Fellowship Program can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherfellowship/index.html>. If you would like to personally contact one of the task force members email them at justforteachers@fldoe.org and I will make sure they receive your message.

● *Curriculum Corner*

[Attention Kindergarten Teachers! New Survey Available:](#)

The "Kindergarten Teacher Survey" focuses on the transition from Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education programs to kindergarten and the coordination of preschool and kindergarten programs. The Office of Early Learning encourages all kindergarten teachers to take a moment to share your knowledge about the VPK to kindergarten transition with us by completing this survey. Visit <http://www.fldoe.org/earlyLearning/> to complete the survey.



• *News from Around the State*

Law Enforcement Officers Help Celebrate Literacy

In recognition of Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! representatives from over 40 local sheriff and police departments, the Florida Highway Patrol, Florida Police Chiefs Association, and the Department of Business and Professional Regulation's Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco visited more than 300 classrooms in nearly 30 schools to participate in a read-aloud activity.

Miriam Arthur, assistant principal at Hialeah Elementary said, "Our reading activity this morning was a true success! Officer Zogby of the Hialeah Police Department was GREAT and our Pre-K and Kindergarten students were entertained!"

"Please accept a special thank you for your efforts that enabled Deputy Chief Robinson to read to the students of Eustis Elementary. The students were engaged as he read and filled with wonder and delight that a person of his stature was in their classroom," wrote Eustis Elementary principal Rusty Dosh.

I was lucky enough to visit schools in Brevard, Leon, Orange, and Pasco during the week and the students I encountered were thrilled at having officers read to them. Not only did the officers share a fun and informative book, they also talked about their jobs and the importance of reading in daily life.



Left - Officer Hill, Zephyrhills Police Department, was a big hit!

Right – Officer Valenti with Ms. Redding's first graders. Amazing officer, amazing teacher!

Below – Deputy Chief Robinson of the Eustis Police Department



Hinson Middle School FFA Named National Chapter Award Winner

The David C. Hinson Middle School FFA (Future Farmers of America) Chapter of Daytona Beach was named “Outstanding Middle School” Model of Innovation winner at the 82nd National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The nation’s top 10 three-star gold chapters in the middle school development division competed for the award. The chapter received a plaque in an onstage ceremony during the convention’s second general session on Thursday, Oct. 22. Top chapters were also selected from student, chapter and community development divisions.

Members of the Hinson FFA have stepped up their agriscience skills. The entire chapter of seventh and eighth graders participated in an online curriculum on planting science, and 37 percent of the chapter members developed agriscience fair projects based on their online learning.

Hinson FFA members also partnered with the county’s environmental services department and marine science center to work restoring and replanting mangroves along the county’s shoreline for ecosystem replenishment.

The Models of Innovation awards are sponsored by the National FFA Foundation. It is one of the many ways FFA members accomplish the FFA mission and succeed in making a difference in their communities and the lives of others.



Gulf County Increases Graduation Rate

Educators, administrators, and students at two Gulf County high schools who once ranked near the bottom when it came to statewide graduation rates, now have reason to celebrate. They’ve vaulted themselves to a No. 1 ranking, thanks in part to a national program emphasizing academic achievement and college access that helped get them there.

For the first time, Gulf County’s Port St. Joe and Wewahitchka high schools lead the state in African-American graduation rates (95.7 percent), according to figures released in November 2009 by the Florida Department of Education for the 2008-09 academic year.

“Just five years ago our African-American students ranked 38th when it came to graduation rates,” said Gulf County School Superintendent Tim Wilder. “We attribute this dramatic gain in large measure to the presence and commitment of College for Every Student (CFES) mentors and counselors who’ve come into our schools and helped to transform the lives of students who once thought graduation and college were out of reach.”

Since 1991, College for Every Student (CFES), based in Cornwall, Vt., has been a driving force in helping underserved students nationwide prepare for, gain access to, and succeed in college.

Since its founding in 1991, CFES has helped thousands of underserved students in 540 K-12 public schools nationwide take steps toward college. Through its mentoring, school-college partnerships, and student leadership programs, CFES has helped raise academic performance and educational aspirations and ultimately ensure that these students graduate from high school and succeed in college. Over the last three years, 96 percent of CFES high school seniors - 2,500 young people, many of whom were previously destined to drop out of high school - have gone on to college.

Lee County Librarian One of Top Ten in Nation

Dana Thomas, librarian at Cypress Lake Middle School in Lee County, has been named one of the 2009 I Love My Librarian Award winners, recognizing her as one of America's Top 10 Librarians. The award is co-sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the New York Times and the American Library Association in recognition of the importance of libraries and librarians in improving the lives of people in their community. Congratulations Dana!

Two Polk Educators Recognized by Professional Organization

Polk County educators Chad Garcia of Lakeland High School and Diane Bondurant of Tenoroc High School were recently honored by the Florida Council of Teachers of English (FCTE). Garcia was named the Beginning Teacher of the Year and Bondurant received the Honor Award as a long-time FCTE member for advancing the teaching of language arts. For more information about FCTE, visit <http://fcte.org/>.

James Hale Named Florida Assistant Principal of the Year

James Hale, assistant principal at Choctawhatchee High School (Okaloosa County), has been named the Florida Assistant Principal of the Year by the Florida Association of School Administrators (FASA). Now designated a state winner by FASA, Hale is eligible in consideration to be the 2010 NASSP/Virco National Assistant Principal of the Year.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and Virco Inc. come together annually to honor a winner from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools. From this pool of outstanding administrators, three national finalists will be named in February. From those finalists one national winner will be chosen at NASSP's national convention on March 13, 2010, in Phoenix, Arizona. The National finalists each receive a grant of \$1,500 and the National winner receives a grant of \$5,000.

As an assistant principal, Hale has proven success in involving the local community in the life of the school, astute awareness of current and emerging issues, and passion in improving the school's learning environment. All state winners, including Hale, will be honored at a three-day event in Washington, DC, April 21–24, 2010. Event highlights feature a national speaker, visits to Capitol Hill to meet with legislators, and networking with some of the best assistant principals across the nation. The event culminates with a black-tie gala to recognize the achievements of each of the state honorees, the national finalists, and the national winner.

“As school districts across the country struggle with filling school administrator positions, both principals and assistant principals, it becomes imperative that we highlight and honor the high flyers in the profession,” said Gerald N. Tirozzi, NASSP Executive Director. “To shine a light on the work of a quality educator such as James Hale is an honor.”

Additional information about the NASSP/Virco National Assistant Principal of the Year program can be found at www.principals.org/apoy or by contacting NASSP at 800-253-7746 or recognition@principals.org.

• *Opportunities for You and Your Students*

Missing Children's Essay Contest

Fifth grade students in Florida are invited to enter the 2010 Missing Children's Day essay contest. Each school will submit a winning essay selected from among its students based on the theme "Safety is as simple as ABC...Always Be Careful." Essays should be no longer than one typewritten page (Times Roman font sizes 12 or 14), or two handwritten pages, and focus on the choices that children can make to keep themselves safe from abduction. When writing their essay, students should think about personal experiences in dealing with adversity, or discussions with parents or teachers about safe places to get out of harm's way. The statewide winner will read his or her essay during the Missing Children's Day ceremony in Tallahassee on September 14, 2010, and will receive a trophy, a \$100 check and a Universal Studios VIP package. The deadline for schools to submit an entry is April 16, 2010. For more information, contact Patricia Rutherford with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Essay Contest Coordinator, at (850) 356-4774. You can also contact Just for teachers at justforteachers@fldoe.org. All entries must be received by April 16, 2010.

Literacy League Book Club for Middle School Students

The *Literacy League* book club is a new reading initiative designed to connect Florida's middle school students with their favorite authors in modern and innovative ways. The club, open to all students in grades 6-8, creates a new kind of collaboration between students, reading and technology. Students will now have the opportunity to have their questions answered directly by the author of the selected book, redefining how students learn through the use of technology.

Four books will be selected throughout the year by the Florida Department of Education, and students participating in the club will be asked to submit questions about the book either by e-mail or video submission. The questions will be answered by the author of the chosen book for a *Literacy League* podcast show, housed on Florida's iTunes U Web site. The show will also air regularly on the Florida Knowledge Network.

Book Selection:

Award-winning author Julianna Baggott's book, "The Anybodies," is the first book chosen for the club. The next book selection will be announced in April.

How to submit a question:

Upon completion of the book, please submit your questions in the following formats:

- E-mail questions to LiteracyLeague@fldoe.org
- Submit a recorded video question (WMV, Quick Time or MPEG files will be accepted), and either e-mail to the above address or mail a CD version to the Department of Education's Communications Office at 325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 1524, Tallahassee FL, 32399-0400
- Mail your written questions to the above address

The deadline to submit your questions for this quarter's book club broadcast is March 1, 2010.

Please e-mail LiteracyLeague@fldoe.org if you have any questions.

Nominations for Children’s Week “Kids Only” Town Hall Meeting Due Soon

You still have time to nominate a student to be a part of the Children’s Week “Kids Only” Town Hall Meeting. This unique forum for students provides an opportunity to pose poignant questions to the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet regarding important children’s issues. The 20-member Cabinet, led by Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp, will hear from a student panel selected from a statewide pool of applicants. The event will take place Tuesday, April 13, 2010, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and is free and open to the public.

To nominate a middle or high school student to participate on the 12-member student panel, download the Student Panel Application at www.childrensweek.org/townhallmeeting. Completed Student Panel applications should be postmarked no later than February 12, 2010. For more information about the "Kids Only" Town Hall Meeting, download the “Kids Only” fact sheet at www.childrensweek.org/events/factsataglance.pdf (PDF) or contact Statewide Coordinator Jason Zaborske at (850) 251-7274 or e-mail info@childrensweek.org.

Cards of Care for Haiti

The Volunteer USA Foundation announces that the National Disaster Recovery Fund is accepting pictures and cards of love and inspiration to send to children and families affected by the earthquake in Haiti. In addition to the millions of dollars that are pouring into Haiti from US donors, the *Cards of Care* project aims to share these hopeful messages with families who live in Haiti and their loved ones in the U.S.

Volunteer USA is also providing a free lesson plan to help teachers use the Haitian earthquake and other real-life disasters as examples of how Americans assist with humanitarian and recovery efforts, as well as provide a platform to discuss the need for all families to develop and practice personal disaster plans. Visit www.volunteerusafoundation.org for access to the educational material.

“We know the road to recovery and reclaiming of lives will be long – physically and emotionally exhausting,” said Jeb Bush, honorary chair of Volunteer USA. “It is our hope that by sending simple but heartfelt messages to the victims of this overwhelming earthquake, they will draw some comfort and hope in the months and years ahead.”

Volunteer USA will work with hospitals, shelters, schools, non-profit and faith-based organizations to deliver the *Cards of Care* to the people of Haiti in the months ahead.

Please send cards to:

Volunteer USA Foundation – Cards of Care for Haiti
5970 SW 1st Lane, Ocala, FL 34474

**Please be sure to include your name and contact information with your message/card.*



Free Florida Fishing Traditions Video

The “*Florida’s Fishing Traditions: Sebastian*” documentary video is part of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ campaign to educate the public about Florida’s historical working waterfronts and the commercial fishermen who carry on the fishing legacy today. The DVD is available for free to teachers for use in their classrooms. Order online at http://www.workingwaterfronts.com/heritage/sebastian/sebastian_order.htm. You will also find information about Florida’s historical waterfront communities, description of the main types of Florida seafood, recipes, games, and much more at www.FL-Seafood.com. For additional information or assistance, call (850) 488-0163.

• *Summer Workshops*

NEH Summer Institute for School Teachers July 11-31, 2010

“Social Movements in Modern America: Labor, Civil Rights, and Feminism”

You are invited to apply for our three-week summer institute at Indiana University Bloomington. Together we will examine the pivotal role of three major social movements in America: their history, their interrelationships, and their transformative political and cultural impact over the last century. For more information, eligibility requirements, and application instructions, please visit <http://www.indiana.edu/~inst2010> or contact Dr. Barbara Truesdell, barbara@indiana.edu. Your application must be postmarked or received electronically no later than March 2, 2010. This institute is co-sponsored by the Center on Congress and the Center for the Study of History and Memory at Indiana University. The National Endowment for the Humanities has designated the institute as part of its "We the People" project, a special initiative designed to improve the teaching of American history and culture.

Teachers Only Plant Camp 2010

The University of Florida/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants is looking for 24 science teachers (i.e., upper elementary, middle or high school) who are interested in attending **PLANT CAMP 2010**, a **FREE*** summer workshop. This 4.5-day event, slated for June 13-17, 2010, is designed for teachers who are interested in learning more about the numerous non-native, invasive plant and animal species that are silently invading Florida. Along the way, they'll learn about the native flora and fauna that make our state such a unique place to live and/or visit. Lots of hands-on field and lab experiences are provided to strengthen background knowledge and confidence for teaching this subject.

Applications are chosen through a competitive process. Selections will be based on the applicant's commitment (and history) of sharing new knowledge with students and colleagues. Participants will earn as many as 35 hours of professional development credit and return to their classrooms with a pile of free materials to work with.

The workshop is an annual keystone event of the Florida Invasive Plant Education Initiative – an ongoing outreach program designed for Florida educators: <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/education>. Both are made possible by the Invasive Plant Management Section of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, in partnership with the UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants.

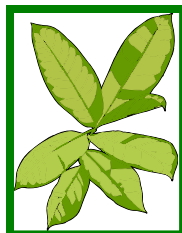
Participation is limited to 24 teachers, so apply now! Application packets are due by February 19, 2009.

For more information and to see a video about PLANT CAMP, visit:
<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/education/plantcamp/index.html>

Contact:

Amy Richard / Education Initiative Coordinator
UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants
352.392.6843

CAIP-education@ufl.edu



Trees are Terrific...and Energy Wise!

Don't miss out on this engaging and impactful opportunity to teach fifth grade students about the important role trees play in the production and conservation of energy! Download your free 2010 Arbor Day National Poster Contest materials and help foster the next generation of tree stewards. For complete details visit <http://www.arborday.org/kids/postercontest/map.cfm>.

● *Teacher Discounts*

T-Mobile

T-Mobile now offers a 15% monthly discount on qualified monthly charges to all Florida Public Employees including teachers. Visit <http://floridaemployeedeals.com/> to find all the latest promotions and instructions on how to order new service. Employees with existing T-Mobile service can get attached to the discount program by calling (877) 453-8824 and asking for the 15% State of Florida employee discount using Node 4025529. The Florida Public Employee program rolls up to the State of Florida 15% discount.

Tropic Isle Inn will offer Florida Teachers a nightly rate starting from \$99 with a two-night minimum. Cleaning fee is included. Tropic Isle Inn is a pet-friendly secluded hideaway in Bradenton Beach on Anna Maria Island offering a private beach, heated swimming pool, and complimentary beach chairs, towels, and beach toys. Offer is valid for the month of February and you must show proof of teacher status. Call (800) 883-4092 to book this special. www.TropicIsleInn.com

Island Real Estate offers upscale vacation rentals with a variety of amenities including swimming pools, spas, tiki huts, direct Gulf access, and private boat access on Anna Maria Island. They will offer a 10% discount to teachers on all four-to six-bedroom homes and a 5% discount on all other accommodations, including one-to three-bedroom homes, condos and multi-family homes. Valid February 1-28 and April 10th – May 28th, 2010. Call Toll Free 877-778-6066 to book this special and tell them “We love Teachers!” www.islandreal.com

Steinhatchee Landing Resort

Steinhatchee Landing Resort is offering a 50% discount for teachers who want to get away during their Spring Break this year. Stay four or more nights in any of the resort's 50, one- to four-bedroom cottage accommodations and receive 50 percent off your entire stay. The discount can save guests anywhere from \$280 to \$764 for a four-night stay (depending on booking dates and cottage type). For complete details visit www.SteinhatcheeLanding.com. To book this special, call toll-free (800) 584-1709 or (352) 498-3513. You must mention “We Love Teachers” when booking. *Subject to availability. Some restrictions may apply. Savings will reflect on final bill at checkout.

Intercontinental Tampa Teacher Offers January through April 3, 2010

Tampa's affordable luxury hotel - the InterContinental Tampa - is centrally located in the heart of the city, within walking distance to several popular shopping and dining destinations, and convenient to family-friendly attractions, including the Florida Aquarium, Lowry Park Zoo and Busch Gardens. InterContinental Tampa is the ultimate weekend escape for couples and families, with a rooftop pool offering spectacular views of the bay and city; a state-of-the-art fitness center; and outstanding on-site dining at the world-famous Shula's Steak House. The InterContinental Tampa's award-winning “In the Know” concierge directs guests to popular Tampa Bay destinations, as well as local hideaways. InterContinental Tampa is offering teachers special rates through April 3, 2010. Florida educators will receive rates of 40% off on weekdays (starting at \$138) and 50% off on weekends (starting at \$95), based on the prevailing rate. For reservations, please visit the link below or call (866) 402-0758 and mention rate code ILQT4. Teacher's identification required upon check-in. Subject to availability. Check the site anytime of the year for current rates for education professionals! www.InterConTampa.com

• Reflection

We're all incredibly busy, aren't we? As I visited schools across the state this past week, I was once again reminded of how hard teachers work and how your days are literally non-stop. During my visits two encounters especially made me pause and reflect on our chosen profession.

I was privileged to take part in the Florida Future Educators of America (FFEA) annual conference the weekend of January 22-24th. Over 400 high school students and their sponsor brought their enthusiasm to Orlando where they displayed award winning posters, gave heart-felt speeches, and submitted thoughtful essays. They also heard wonderful speakers, including Georgia's First Class Teacher of the Year Bradley Cohen and our own Teacher of the Year Megan Allen, who fueled their interest in the educational field. What fun it was for me to work with these young adults and share my own vision of what it means to be a teacher. (My workshop included glue, construction paper and wild animals—we had a great time.) I shared with them that while teaching will never make one rich or famous, it does provide the opportunity to positively influence the life of a child. This year's conference theme, *To Teach a Child is to Change the World*, reinforced that message.

A few days after conference, I spent some time in Trish Redding's second grade classroom at Palm Bay Elementary. (You can see Trish's photo in the Literacy Week article included in this month's newsletter.) Ms. Redding, a 25 year teaching veteran, does not know the meaning of burn-out. Her enthusiasm, commitment, and expertise were all apparent the very moment I walked into her room. She was the teacher every child (and administrator) dreams of having! As I left her room I told her, "I want to be in your classroom!"

These two encounters were in some ways poles apart. My FFEA experience reminded me of the bubbly enthusiasm housed within students who aspire to be teachers. We must encourage those aspirations through stellar teacher preparation programs and strong support during their first few years of teaching. Ms. Redding on the other hand, reminded me that it is possible to remain excited and dedicated in spite of long hours, heavy workloads, and little recognition. Her attitude inspired me to continue to serve the teachers of Florida however I am able.

Many of you will be giving state-wide assessments in the next few weeks and months. On behalf of the department I want to personally say thank you for all you have done to prepare your students for not only this moment, but for the teachable moments you encounter every single day. You are appreciated.

