



# Just for Teachers

**News from the Florida Department of Education**

**November 2011**

## **Communication from Commissioner Robinson...**

### **ESEA Flexibility Waiver**

Many of you may have read in the news recently about No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waivers and how Florida is planning on seeking one. I want to take a quick moment to explain why this is important, and the potential benefit to our state.

- Currently, we have “A” and “B” state-graded schools that are labeled as struggling according to federal requirements. This is confusing for parents and spreads too many mixed messages in our communities.
- Florida set a high standard for those federal requirements early on, while other states set lower standards that give the appearance of better performance.
- Existing federal requirements are very narrow and do not account for many different facets of the work of our schools.
- These same requirements do not account for the learning growth of every student.

Florida has been ahead of the curve on this issue, working with our federal partners to establish a school improvement program several years ago that bridged both state and federal accountability requirements. A federal waiver would allow us to further enhance this program to account for the issues above, and allow us to bring clarity to the performance of our schools. I hope you follow this issue closely in the coming months as the benefits to our students will be immeasurable.

And I close with this: Florida is neither waiving standards nor accountability. Florida simply seeks relief from regulations to better educate our students and to create a learning environment to support our teachers and principals.



## Teacher Talk November Episode

### Common Core Standards

A live teacher audience show that was packed with professional development, surprises, and a Disney© fieldtrip! Visit <http://www.fldoe.org/JustForTeachers/tta.asp> to view past



The Florida Department of Education has a new video series called Education 360 which provides quick snapshots about important education reform efforts currently underway in the Sunshine State. View them all at

<http://www.fldoe.org/ARRA/RacetotheTop.asp> or on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/educationfl>.



## Curriculum Corner

### Lego Land Educational Field Trips

<u>Date</u>	<u>Admission (per student)</u>
November 2011 - April 2012	\$5
May 2012 - June 2012	\$8
July 2012 - August 2012	\$12



Admission entitles guests to pick from any one of the featured education programs or a self guided experience and **it includes park admission for the entire day!!** A deposit is required at the time of booking and there is a 15 student minimum. The chaperone comp = 1:5 + applicable tax. Learn more at [http://florida.legoland.com/en/buy\\_tickets/Groups/education\\_programs/](http://florida.legoland.com/en/buy_tickets/Groups/education_programs/)

## Teacher Treasures

We are proud to announce the winner of the Florida Department of Education's Teacher Treasure September Giveaway. **Wendy Richardson** won one, two-night stay for four at **TradeWinds Island Resorts**.

"As a child, school was a favorite game where she always wanted to be the teacher. During high school her fascination with chemistry and physics took hold. Today, Wendy Richardson is fortunate that every day she is able to combine those two passions, teaching and science, and share them with her students. Ms. Richardson received her B.A. in Secondary Science Education at the University of South Florida and holds certifications in Chemistry and Physics. Upon graduation, she taught for Hillsborough County Schools. A life-long learner, Ms. Richardson has taken classes at the University of Dallas and St. Petersburg College. She has home schooled her two children and has run a home school co-op for the past 10 years.



The knowledge and skills learned in her classes, along with her attention to detail, organization abilities and leadership qualities make Ms. Richardson the effective teacher she is today. The ability to touch so many students' lives and to share her passion for science with them is what makes Wendy Richardson so excited about teaching chemistry at Florida Virtual School".

- Wendy Richardson

Congratulations to IvetteTorres our October winner. Our November giveaway will be a gift certificate for a **Glogster account**.

With such a variety of offerings, we will clear all entry forms on the day of the drawings. Our submission form will reopen on the first of each month. Enter today at <http://www.fldoe.org/JustForTeachers/>.



### **Celebrate Literacy Week Public Service Announcement Contest**

The 2012 Just Read, Florida! Celebrate Literacy Week Public Service Announcement (PSA) contest is underway! The theme for this year's contest is "Take the Lead and Read," and all students from elementary, middle and high schools are eligible to participate. The PSAs should be no longer than 26 seconds and must be postmarked by Nov. 18, 2011. The winning schools will be announced during Celebrate Literacy Week in January 2012. For more information and contest details, visit <http://www.justreadflorida.com/literacyweek.asp>.

## **Education News**

### **Florida Virtual School Enhances Offerings with New Fall Courses**

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) announced seven new course offerings this fall, adding to its catalog of more than 110 free online courses for Florida students. Geared toward high-school aged students, the new courses include Guitar 1, AP® Art History, AP Human Geography, French 1, Sociology, Journalism, and Advanced Algebra with Financial Applications. In addition to offering new courses this fall, FLVS has also developed Algebra 1, Geometry and Biology to help students prepare for the End of Course Assessments. For more information, please visit [www.flvs.net/coursecatalog](http://www.flvs.net/coursecatalog).

### **Florida First Lady Announces Top Summer Literacy Adventure School**

On Oct. 5, 2011, Florida First Lady Ann Scott announced that Reedy Creek Elementary School in Osceola County had the highest number of participating students in the Summer Literacy Adventure with 478 children pledging to read 7,124 books. Throughout the summer, Mrs. Scott visited and read to students in 17 locations, including state parks, local public libraries, and the Governor's Mansion to encourage students to read and visit their public libraries. Overall, more than 8,000 students statewide pledged to read a total of 101,261 books as part of the Adventure. For more information about the Summer Literacy Adventure or to learn about literacy resources available through the Department of Education, visit the Just Read, Florida! website at [www.justreadflorida.com](http://www.justreadflorida.com). Public libraries throughout the state can also serve as a valuable tool during the school year, and locations for libraries may be found at [www.fllibraries.org](http://www.fllibraries.org). In addition, the Florida State Parks can enhance the learning experience through exploration and discovery all year long. Learn more at [www.dep.state.fl.us](http://www.dep.state.fl.us).

### **School Choice Expo**

*Nov. 16, 2011*

*2:00 - 7:00 p.m.*

*DoubleTree Hotel at the Entrance to Universal Orlando  
Orlando, Fla.*

The Florida School Choice Expo offers families an interactive "Carousel of Choice" by creating an informal atmosphere where parents can ask questions and communicate directly with state and district education leaders. For more information, including how to participate or register as an exhibitor, visit [www.floridaschoolchoiceexpo.com](http://www.floridaschoolchoiceexpo.com) or contact Laurie Levine at [lauriewlevine@gmail.com](mailto:lauriewlevine@gmail.com).

## 2011 Educational Strategies & Student Engagement Institute

Nov. 7-10, 2011

Hilton St. Petersburg Bayfront

St. Petersburg, FL

The Institute is a combined effort of four formerly separate conferences: The Effective Strategies Institute on Dropout Prevention, the School Attendance Symposium, the Juvenile Justice Education Institute, and Fall Leadership for School Volunteer Coordinators. The theme for this year is *Complete the Journey: Paving a Path to Success*. The Institute will feature more than 80 workshops and three nationally renowned keynote speakers, including Judge Jeanine Pirro, John Hodge and Allen Mallory.

To register for the conference, submit a proposal and/or make room reservations online select the following link: <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/conferences/2011-educational-strategies-student-engagement-institute>. Please note the deadline for the submission of proposals has been extended. If you have further questions, please contact Tameka Thomas by phone at (850) 245-0845 or via email at [Tameka.Thomas@fldoe.org](mailto:Tameka.Thomas@fldoe.org). You may also contact Dr. Kimberly Davis by phone at (850) 245-0551 or via email at [Kimberly.Davis@fldoe.org](mailto:Kimberly.Davis@fldoe.org).

### Free Teacher Resources

Sunshine Connections: <http://www.sunshineconnections.org>

Busch Gardens and SeaWorld

Teacher Guides: <http://www.swbg-animals.org/just-for-teachers/guides/index.htm>

Classroom Activities: <http://www.swbg-animals.org/just-for-teachers/classroom-activities/index.htm>

### Fantastic New Literacy Events

#### Kingdom Keepers Quest

- Where: Magic Kingdom
- What: A self guided adventure for elementary and middle school students through the Magic Kingdom written by author Ridley Pearson
- When: 365 days a year starting Oct. 1, 2011
- Information: <http://www.disneyyouth.com/kingdom-keepers/>

#### Come Celebrate Florida Literacy Week at Walt Disney World

- Where: Disney's Hollywood Studios
- What: A conversation with New York Times best-selling author Ridley Pearson appropriate for all grade levels
- When: Thursday, Jan. 26, 2012, 9:30 a.m. at the Premiere Theater at Disney's Hollywood Studios
- Information: <http://www.disneyyouth.com/youth-education-series/wdw/literacy-week/detail>

## The Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice

The Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice (IEPC), also known as the School Choice Office, is responsible for the oversight and implementation of several educational programs that provide parents with school choice options beyond their local assigned elementary, middle or high school. School choice is a key component in helping to ensure high academic achievement for all of Florida's students. School choice is about letting parents make the best decision about how and where their students will be most successful. Florida continues to lead the nation in the number and quality of options available to families. IEPC oversees the following school choice programs:

**CHARTER SCHOOLS** are public schools that are independently operated and often provide smaller classes, alternative or specialty curriculum and more chances for parent involvement.

**HOME EDUCATION** is a parent-directed educational choice allowing parents the flexibility to tailor the curriculum to the needs of their child at home or in a cooperative group with other parents.

**PRIVATE SCHOOLS** (K-12) are nonpublic schools. Many offer a unique purpose and philosophy to meet the needs of specific learning populations. The Department of Education is responsible for maintaining a directory of these schools but does not license, accredit, or regulate these schools in any way.

**THE MCKAY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM** provides parents of students with disabilities with the option to choose another public school or funding to attend a qualified participating private school.

**THE FLORIDA TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM** provides parents of children from low income families with a scholarship to attend a participating private school.

**THE OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM** provides parents of children attending low-performing public schools with the option of choosing a better performing public school for their child.

**PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS** include magnet schools, Controlled Open Enrollment and ABC (A Business Community School) Schools.

**THE VOLUNTARY PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM** is an initiative funded through a federal grant to expand access to and quality of school choice programs in the highest need areas.

IEPC has varying responsibilities and requirements in each of these areas. For more information about these and other programs, please visit our website [www.floridaschoolchoice.org](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org). IEPC is committed to educating parents and students about ALL school options available in Florida in order to assist them in making the best choices for their education. Here are two events for November:

**Florida Charter school conference** – Head to **Orlando** for the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida Charter School Conference **November 14-16**. Explore offerings from more than 100 exhibitors and attend any of the 48 breakout sessions



**FLORIDA SCHOOL CHOICE EXPO** - The School Choice Office will be hosting our second School Choice Expo on **November 16<sup>th</sup>** in **Orlando**. Admission and parking are free, so join us and learn more about Florida School Choice.

