



## Florida Honors Outstanding Principals and Assistant Principals

Mickey Mouse wasn't the only one having a magical time last week, just ask the 37 Florida principals and assistant principals who were honored as the best school leaders in the state.

It wasn't that long ago that I was serving as a Marion County school principal, so you can imagine how exciting it was to recognize the hard work and dedication of these wonderful leaders. Each of the



attendees was nominated by their district to attend the 2014 Commissioner's Leadership Academy, acknowledging the critical role their leadership plays in student and school success.

I felt very fortunate to know and have worked with several of the district winners. In fact, one of the honorees, Principal John McCollum, was my

mentor while I was an elementary school principal in Marion County.

Like John, most of the principals attending the summit came from schools where almost all of their students are on free- or reduced-price lunch plans. What inspires me about these principals is that they do not let a student's circumstances get in the way of the school's ability to provide a first-rate education.

When it was my turn to address the attendees, I thanked them for being on the front lines with students, teachers and parents every day. Although the work can be overwhelming, Florida teachers and principals are truly making a difference in the lives of children, ensuring they are prepared for the future...and hopefully having a little fun along the way.

Sincerely,

**Pam Stewart**  
Commissioner of Education

### Teacher Opportunities

#### Tuition Waiver for Classroom Teachers

In 2010, the Florida Legislature authorized colleges and universities to waive tuition and associated matriculation fees for classroom teachers.

Florida College System institutions and state universities may waive up to six credit hours per term for teachers employed full-time by a school district, including public charter school teachers. Qualified students may only enroll in undergraduate courses in mathematics, science or special education.

All undergraduate courses with levels one through four in a discipline with an approved prefix shall be eligible for the waiver on a space-available basis. The Course Prefix Listing Approved for the Teacher Waiver may be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/articulation>.

Please contact your institution of choice for specific enrollment information. A list of Florida College System institutions may be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/fcs/> and a list of state universities system institutions may be found at <http://www.flbog.edu/aboutsus/universities/>.

#### University of South Florida Offers Free Engineering Event

USF's Engineering EXPO, a free opportunity to meet and talk with Tampa Bay's local engineers and engineering student organizations, helps students understand the importance of math, science, engineering and technology within their lives.

All ages are welcome to attend the event and enjoy interactive, educational shows and hands-on exhibits.

To register for the event, visit <http://expo.eng.usf.edu/registration.html>.

#### Florida Invasive Plant Education Initiative's PLANT CAMP 2014 Application Now Open!

The University of Florida/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants is looking for 24 science teachers (upper elementary, middle or high school) who are interested in

### Resources

#### Black History Month Resources



Are you looking to include more information about Florida's Black History Month in your classroom?

Check out the following links to find important information, photos and videos illustrating Florida's Black History, including images like the one above of educator and civil rights leader Mary McLeod Bethune.

- Just Read, Florida! [2014 Black History Month Recommended Reading List](#).
- Florida Department of State's Florida Memory, [Black History Month: Resources for Students and Educators](#)
- Florida Department of State's Florida Memory, [Images of Black History](#)
- [2014 Florida Black History Month Website](#)

### Accomplishments

#### Florida Students Surpass Million Minute Marathon 2014 Reading Goal

Students and teachers committed to reading more than 33 million combined minutes combined on January 13 as part of the 6th annual Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! Million Minute Marathon.

With a final total of reading more than 35 million minutes, students shattered

attending PLANT CAMP 2014.

This five-day workshop, from June 16-20, 2014, is designed for teachers interested in learning more about the 130-plus invasive plant species invading Florida's natural areas and neighborhoods as well as the native flora and fauna that make our state so unique.

Hands-on field and lab experiences will strengthen background knowledge and confidence for teaching this subject, while also providing 32 hours of professional development credit. PLANT CAMP graduates return to their classrooms with an abundance of activities and resource materials (estimated \$500 value). Learn more about this opportunity at [Florida Invasive Plant Education Initiative](#).

#### PBS KIDS Writers Contest Now Open

The [PBS KIDS Writers Contest](#) is open to children in kindergarten, first, second and third grades and encourages them to celebrate their creativity while building literacy skills by writing and illustrating their own stories.

PBS stations throughout the country will collaborate with schools, public libraries and other community-based organizations to present the PBS KIDS Writers Contest in local communities. Each station will select local winners and award prizes.

The local winners will then be entered into the national contest and a judging committee will rank the top 12 entries. National winners will be announced during the summer of 2014, and the winning stories will be featured on [pbskids.org/writerscontest](http://pbskids.org/writerscontest).

For more information on the contest, visit [PBS KIDS Writers Contest](#).

#### 2014 Florida EconChallenge Online Competition

This year, Florida high school teachers and students will have the opportunity to participate in an online statewide economics competition for the chance to win a free trip to New York City!

This online competition is the first round of three to determine the overall champions of the 2014 National Economics Challenge. The first place winners of the Florida competition, in two divisions, advance to the national semi-finals to compete with winning teams across the United States.

The top four teams in each division of the National Semi-Finals win an all-expenses paid trip to New York City to compete in the Finals of the National Economics Challenge on May 17-19, 2014.

- Online Registration for Teachers and Coaches - [www.econchallenge.org](http://www.econchallenge.org)
- Florida Online Economics Challenge Competition - March 1

To register your teams, please visit <http://www.econchallenge.org/index.html?s=10&l=1>.

the 2013 record of nearly 30.1 million minutes

An estimated 1.2 million students from 59 school districts and three early learning coalitions participated in the effort.

2014 Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! events were made possible by the support of many [educational partners](#), including the Florida Lottery.

Continue reading [here](#).



#### Florida's Top Teacher a National Finalist for Fifth Straight Year

Dorina Sackman, Florida's 2014 Teacher of the Year, was named one of four finalists for the prestigious National Teacher of the Year award today by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Ms. Sackman is an 8th grade English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher at Westridge Middle School in Orlando, and has been an ESOL teacher for more than 15 years.

She was named Florida's Teacher of the Year and Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education in July 2013. She serves as an education advocate and goodwill ambassador representing educators throughout the Sunshine State.

Continue reading [here](#).

#### Nine Schools Honored as PSA Contest Winners

To compete in the 2014 Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! Public Service Announcement contest, students created short videos focused on this year's theme "Reading Accelerates Success."

Winners were chosen at elementary, middle and high school levels, with the winning schools awarded prizes sponsored by the Florida Education Foundation.

[Full list of winners.](#)

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