



Just for Teachers

News from the Florida Department of Education
October 2009

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A Note from Sheila

A few weeks ago I had the privilege of spending two days with approximately 100 classroom teachers and instructional coaches in Duval County. There are various reasons I visit districts; this specific meeting dealt with writing instruction and assessment, but whatever the reason, I am always enriched by my interaction with effective educators.

Effective teachers ask questions, analyze data, and apply proven techniques. The questions asked during my time in Duval seemed to focus on one overall theme—how can this task, this skill, be taught more successfully? I was encouraged as I listened to dedicated professionals enthusiastically discuss ways to bring about student achievement.

Harry Wong, author of How to be an Effective Teacher, says, “**It’s not programs, fads, or ideologies. It’s the teacher!**” Florida educators, it’s you! You make a difference each and everyday and it is an honor to assist you however I am able. Please feel free to contact me with your questions, concerns, and ideas. I look forward to hearing from you at justforteachers@fldoe.org.

• Race to the Top Fund

The \$4.35 billion *Race to the Top* Fund is the largest ever federal competitive investment in school reform. It will reward states for past accomplishments and create incentives for future improvements. The funding criteria that the Department proposes to use will challenge states to create comprehensive strategies for addressing the four central areas of reform that will drive school improvement:

- Adopting internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
- Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals;
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and
- Turning around our lowest-performing schools.

To provide the information that teachers and leaders need to continuously improve the effectiveness of their instruction, that students and families need to guide and support student learning, and that the community and taxpayers need to judge and support their schools' success, we must have **state-of-the-art data systems**—one of the critical areas of reform. Rapidly reported, accurate, relevant, and actionable data are the key to knowing what's working for our students and what's not. They tell us which students are on track and who needs additional support. They tell us which teachers excel and in what areas, so they can be tapped to share knowledge and provide support. They tell us what curriculum materials and instructional strategies are working, and for what types of students. And they tell us which schools and districts excel and which require support and intervention. Transparency is not just a goal—it is a necessary prerequisite and enabler to good decision making. It allows teachers and leaders to make decisions that improve the quality of the instruction and support they provide to each student every hour of every school day.

To read the complete description of the use of data and its importance to the success of our schools visit <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/07/23/37weiss.h28.html?r=1133873506> and <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>.



• FCAT Updates

Throughout the year, committees comprised of Florida educators meet to discuss and make recommendations regarding content, bias and sensitivity, scoring, and other topics that affect the development and implementation of the FCAT. The 2010 FCAT will include changes at some grade levels that are the result of new and revised benchmarks, as well as the recommendations of Content Advisory Committees. Below you will find a list of these changes so that you can understand why they were made and better prepare your students for the upcoming administrations.

FCAT Writing includes the following changes:

- Beginning with the 2010 FCAT Writing administration, there will be only one writing prompt at each grade level (4, 8, and 10). The writing mode of the prompt will be either narrative or expository at grade 4 and persuasive or expository at grades 8 and 10. In order to ensure the continuance of instruction using all writing modes, the mode assessed at each grade level will not be announced prior to the test. By using one prompt for all students at each grade level, cost savings will be accrued while maintaining the integrity of the assessments. All members of the FCAT writing content advisory committee reviewed this proposal and unanimously supported it.
- In March 2009, the Commissioner announced that each writing response at grades 4 and 8 would have **one reader** during performance scoring this year. **Grade 10 will also be included in this change.** For quality control purposes, 20% of all student responses will be read by a second reader.
- This change in FCAT Writing scoring procedures will affect school grade calculations. The proposed calculation method will now be the average of the percentage of students scoring a 3 and above and the percentage of students scoring a 4 and above. So, for example, if a school has 80% of its students scoring a 3 and above on Writing and 60% scoring a 4 and above on Writing, the school would earn 70 points $[(80+60)/2]$ for the Writing component of school grades.

Other changes include:

- A perforated paper ruler will be distributed for use in Session 4 only for grades 3 and 4 FCAT Mathematics. New and revised benchmarks require students to measure objects.
- Grade 4 FCAT Mathematics will include some gridded-response items. These items were added based on benchmarks and as an effort to give 4th graders the opportunity to become familiar with response grids before Grade 5.
- A reference sheet will be provided for Grade 5 FCAT Mathematics based on new benchmarks that require 5th graders to make conversions. Providing the reference sheet adds the task of requiring students to discern which formula is needed, rather than just giving them the formula.

If you have any questions about these changes, please feel free to contact the Bureau of K-12 Assessment at 850-245-0513.



New High School Grading Formula

The State Board of Education (SBE) recently approved enhancements to Florida's high school grading formula during a meeting in Miami. The changes, required by the passage of Senate Bill 1908 during the 2008 Legislative session, split the focus of the high school grading formula to now account for both Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) performance and new measures such as participation and performance on advanced coursework, graduation rates and the college and career readiness of students.

"In addition to providing a better representation of the accomplishments of our high schools, this new grading formula will help increase the educational opportunities available to students throughout Florida," said Education Commissioner Dr. Eric J. Smith. "The Board's approval of these changes represents a significant step forward for our state as we work to prepare our young people to compete in today's highly competitive global marketplace."

Beginning this school year (2009-10), 50 percent of a high school's grade will be based on the performance of their students on the FCAT, and the remaining 50 percent will be based on factors that include the following:

- The school's graduation rate;
- The performance and participation of students in Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual Enrollment, Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), and industry certification;
- The postsecondary readiness of the students as measured by the SAT, ACT, or College Placement Test (CPT);
- The high school graduation rate of at-risk students; and
- Growth or decline in these data components from year to year.

In previous years, grades for high schools have been released annually during the summer, alongside elementary and middle school grades. With the insertion of new data components for the revised grading formula, it is anticipated that high school grades will be released toward the end of the year when all components are available for the calculation to occur.

For more information about the changes to high school grades, visit http://www.fldoe.org/board/meetings/2009_09_15/109981presentation.pdf.



• Resources for You & Your Classroom

Read for the Record—It's Not Too Late

On October 8, I will join Senator Steve Oelrich at Lake Butler Elementary School (Union County) as he reads to students during the nationwide *Read for the Record* Event. The Florida Department of Education encourages you to take part in this year's Read for the Record campaign as well. This international campaign encourages children to read the same book, on the same day, in communities all over the world. Sponsored by Jumpstart, the campaign began in 2006. Last year, nearly 700,000 readers shared the classic children's tale, *Corduroy*. This year, the selected book is *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle.

Borders stores across the state of Florida will also participate in *Read for the Record* by hosting a story time featuring *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*! Times may vary so please contact your local Borders store to get the schedule.

Here's how you can participate:

1. Before October 8, 2009, go to the Read for the Record Web site at <http://www.readfortherecord.org/> to register your participation.
2. On October 8, 2009, read the book with your child or offer to read the book at a local school.
3. Visit a local museum that may have insects such as caterpillars or butterflies to learn more about them.
4. Have a child read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to you – at any setting.
5. Create a crafts project involving caterpillars at home or school.

It's that simple. Encourage the love of reading by participating in Read for the Record. For more information, contact justforteachers@fldoe.org.

National School Lunch Week October 12-16

"All-Star School Lunch" is a slam-dunk to help students learn about the importance of eating healthy and being active. The NBA-inspired campaign features five "basketball teams" each comprised of healthy school lunch menu items and coached by a current or former NBA/ WNBA player. The campaign runs from August 2009 to October 2009, culminating during National School Lunch Week, Oct. 12-16, 2009. For complete details visit <http://docs.schoolnutrition.org/meetingsandevents/nslw2009/>. For more information on encouraging healthy eating, visit <http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/>.



October is Seafood Month

October is National Seafood Month and an excellent opportunity to teach your students about one of Florida's largest industries. Florida's commercial fishermen provide the state and the nation with over 83 million pounds of seafood annually. For lesson ideas for all age groups, visit the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Bureau of Seafood and Aquaculture Marketing Web site at www.FL-Seafood.com.

You will find information about Florida's historical waterfront communities, description of the main types of Florida seafood, recipes, games, and much more. A good place to begin your search is by clicking on the "Info for Teachers" menu item on the left side of the home page. For additional information or assistance, call (850) 488-0163.

International Education Week November 16 – 20, 2009

International Education Week (<http://iew.state.gov/index.cfm>) is an opportunity to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide. This joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education is part of our efforts to promote programs that prepare Americans for a global environment and attract future leaders from abroad to study, learn, and exchange experiences in the United States.

We encourage the participation of all individuals and institutions interested in international education and exchange activities, including schools, colleges and universities, embassies, international organizations, businesses, associations, and community organizations.

- [National Geographic Society](#) is a great place to begin your journey.
- Encourage cultural understanding for students using the online resource *One World: Connecting Communities, Cultures, and Classrooms*. Sponsored by the National Football League and Scholastic Inc., this unique education resource is designed for teachers. The free, web-based program may be downloaded from http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/one_world/index.asp.
- Hold a geography, foreign language, or world history bee for your students. For ideas, visit <http://iew.state.gov/quiz.cfm>.
- Many U.S. and foreign embassies have resources on their Web sites. For a list of U.S. embassies worldwide, visit <http://usembassy.state.gov>.

Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) to Deliver Digital Public Media to the 21st Century Classroom

The PBS Foundation has received a \$1 million grant from the Ford Foundation to help build the PBS Digital Learning Library, an online repository of trusted, public broadcasting-created educational content that teachers and students can easily access.

The PBS Digital Learning Library will be a comprehensive source of "learning objects," including video, audio, images, games, and interactive learning activities designed specifically for classroom use, delivered to teachers exclusively through local PBS stations.

The Ford Foundation grant provides initial seed funding for the development, rollout and management of the PBS Digital Learning Library system, and other critical support components to make this system available to PBS stations. Building upon PBS's solid track record of developing award-winning, high-quality educational digital media through services such as PBS TeacherLine and PBS Teachers, the Ford grant will help PBS reach the goal of providing educators and students across the U.S. with a comprehensive curricular supplement for every subject taught from pre-K through grade 12.

In addition to support from the Ford Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) will be providing content development grants to PBS member stations to develop content for the Digital Learning Library and PBS is working with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to ensure that content meets each state's educational requirements and helping identify the critical communities where the Digital Learning Library is needed most. Video resources from the PBS Digital Learning Library will be short segments that are more classroom-friendly, and adapted to meet the needs of teachers and students in a 21st-century teaching and learning environment.

For more information or updates on the PBS Digital Learning Library, go to www.pbsteachers.org/dll.



DINOSAURS! at the Brogan

Opening October 3, 2009 at The Mary Brogan Museum of Art and Science, this exhibit features nine amazing and lifelike robotic creatures, including the multi-plated Stegosaurus. Hear the dinosaurs roar and watch them feed and care for their young. See Pteranodon, the prehistoric sky king, whose wingspread was as wide as a soccer goal. Find out which dinosaur had eyes as big as soccer balls and possibly binocular vision. Understand how the horn-faced Triceratops protected itself from attackers and how much time the peaceful Apatosaurus may have spent in the water and why. All it takes is a trip to The Brogan Museum, where these prehistoric pedestrians are enjoying the right of way.

Visit The Brogan Museum for public programs as well.

- October 3 - Art for All - "Make Your Own Fossil" Discover how paleontologists unravel the past and create your own fossil to take home with you!
- October 17 - Art for All - "What's for Dinner?" Learn about the diet of our friends from the Paleo-Past. What did the dinosaurs eat and what clues are left behind?
- October 31 - Trick or Treat at The Brogan Museum – prizes and candy for kids visiting on this spooky day.

For more information on DINOSAURS!, please call 850-513-0700 or visit www.thebrogan.org. For information on how to schedule a group visit, please contact Jennifer Tobias at 850-513-0700 x 224 or via e-mail at jtobias@thebrogan.org.

The Kinsey Collection Comes to Tallahassee

All educators are invited to visit The Brogan Museum, Tallahassee, for an opportunity to experience the museum's premier exhibition, *THE KINSEY COLLECTION: Shared Treasures of Bernard and Shirley Kinsey, Where Art and History Intersect*, at no cost. Bernard and Shirley Kinsey will conduct an education session and tour for teachers at the event. This extensive exhibition is drawn from the artistic and historical treasures collected by California residents and FAMU alumni, Bernard and Shirley Kinsey. The Kinsey Collection presents the journey of the Kinseys as they embrace and acquire art and artifacts. From rarely seen slave owners' documents and brilliant expressions in paint to glimpses into private eighteenth and nineteenth-century lives, The Kinsey Collection reflects a rich cultural and historical heritage which they hope to preserve for future generations. This free event for educators will be held **October 26th, 5 p.m.-7 p.m.** at The Mary Brogan Museum of Art and Science, 350 South Duval Street, Tallahassee.

Evening activities will also include DINOSAURS! as well as science experiments presented by BLAST and information displays from The Community Classroom Consortium. The evening provides the opportunity for educators to mingle with Brogan staff, discuss Field Trip Opportunities and outreach endeavors. Light refreshments will be served with abundant opportunities to mingle with colleagues. Proof of status as an educator is required.

• Opportunities and Contests for You & Your Students

Lt. Governor Challenges Students to Re-design a Portion of the Department of Education's Web Site

Lt. Governor Kottkamp is challenging students to put their skills to the test by re-designing the student portion of the Florida Department of Education's (DOE) Web site. The re-design competition is aimed at encouraging students to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in their CTE course(s) to a real-world project. The winning student submission will be incorporated into the Department's existing Web site design to be deployed in 2010.

"We are living in the age of technology where the mastery of these skills can lead our children into fulfilling and prosperous careers," said Lt. Governor Kottkamp. "This competition is a wonderful opportunity for our students to display their talent, and I am eager to see the great ideas and designs they are able to come up with."

The contest is open to any student who is enrolled in one or more of the CTE courses that prepare students for a career in Information Technology (IT), Multimedia, Web Page Design, and/or Digital Design (Media). Through Florida's Division of Career and Adult Education, there are nearly 300 Career and Technical training programs including 25 secondary CTE programs specific to information technology and Web design. The contest is open to approximately 84,000 CTE students across Florida.

Student submissions will be judged by a panel of technology and design experts, as well as communications and public relations professionals. Members of the judging panel include individuals from Brandt Information Services, CoreMessage Inc., Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Salter-Mitchell, Taproot Creative and Florida Department of Education.

Entries must be submitted via CD and include the name of the student, the student's high school name and address, the teacher or advisor who assisted in the project and the name of the school district. Submissions must be postmarked by November 20, 2009, and sent to:

The Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1524
Tallahassee, Florida 32399



College Savings Month

Governor Charlie Crist and the Florida Prepaid College Board are reminding families during College Savings Month that Florida offers easy and smart ways to save for their children's college education. A May 2009 survey on college savings found that though 90 percent of parents view sending their kids to college as an essential part of the American dream nearly half have saved less than \$5,000 for the cost. Meanwhile, The College Board reports that two-thirds of college graduates are burdened with an average of \$22,700 in student loan debt. "The earlier you start saving for college, the better," Governor Crist said in his proclamation of September as College Savings Month in Florida. "A Florida Prepaid College Plan offers the simplicity and security of buying something today for a child's college education that will be worth more tomorrow." Florida Prepaid College Plans includes two tax-free 529 plans - the Florida Prepaid College Plan and the Florida College Investment Plan. **Open enrollment to lock in this Year's prices starts October 19, 2009.** "Families who are busy raising their children may think they can't afford college savings," Chairman Ted Hoepner of the Florida Prepaid College Board said. "Yet for a few dollars a day, families can purchase a Florida Prepaid College Plan. Families also can open a Florida College Investment Plan account with just a \$25 a month deposit. "

The Florida Prepaid College Plan is financially guaranteed by the State of Florida, so you don't have to worry about monitoring plans, and the State guarantees plans will cover all promised tuition, housing or fees at the time a student attends college.

More information and online enrollment in Florida Prepaid College Plans is available at www.myfloridaprepaid.com, or by calling 1-800-552-GRAD (4723).

Save the Date! Florida KidCare Announces 2009 “Act-Out for Health”

Calling all middle and high school teachers... save the date! Florida KidCare announces the 2009 “Act-Out for Health” contest beginning August 31, 2009. Last year, more than 100 public service announcement (PSA) videos and print ad entries were received from students across the state promoting affordable children's health insurance available through Florida KidCare.

This year, Florida KidCare is seeking 30-second video PSA entries and billboard advertisements created by students ages 12 through 18. This contest makes a great class project to add to your curriculum. Need ideas? Check out the example curriculums on the KidCare Web site at www.actout4health.org. Your students can apply their creativity and skills learned in the classroom to a real world experience.

The winning statewide video PSA will be distributed via YouTube, the Florida Knowledge Network within the Department of Education and Comcast Cable's PSA program. The winning billboard design will be placed in the statewide winner's hometown or the closest billboard location possible. Regional winners have the opportunity to win great prizes including gifts cards, cash awards and money for their school.

Contest rules and entry forms are also available at www.actout4health.org.



Florida Announces School Bus Safety Poster Winners

Florida is sending three state winners to compete in the National School Bus Safety Poster Contest. Advancing to the next level of the competition are Kristine Wong, a 7th grader at David Hinson Middle School in Daytona Beach, Manasvini Manfripragada, a 5th grader at Cypress Creek Elementary in Port Orange, and Jennifer Russell, a 1st grade student also from Cypress Creek. Congratulations students!

• Fall Conferences—For full details visit each organization's link

- **Florida Council of Teachers of English Professional Development Institute Oct. 15-17, 2009**
<http://www.fcte.org/>.
- **Leadership of Mathematics & Science Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Statewide Conference Oct. 20-22, 2009**
<http://www.lsi.fsu.edu/>.
- **Florida School Counselor Association 2009 Annual Convention October 29 - 31, 2009**
<http://www.fla-schoolcounselor.org/>.
- **Get Ready for the Kappa Delta Pi 47th Biennial Convocation – Your Source for Professional Development Oct. 31, 2009**
<http://www.kdp.org/communities/convo09/mainpage.php>.
- **National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) 2009 Area Conference - Fort Lauderdale Nov. 12–14, 2009**
<http://www.nsta.org/conferences/2009ftl/?lid=con>

Professional Development

Troy University's Tampa Bay Site will be offering several exciting new professional development workshops for teachers and administrators in the Tampa Bay area this school year. The first two monthly workshops will be:

- **Teaching as Story** – Saturday, October 17th, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon at our Tampa Bay Site (5201 West Kennedy Blvd, Suite 110, Tampa, FL), using stories combined with an activity to facilitate student understanding. This workshop will be of special interest to teachers and administrators who want to improve their multicultural understanding. Participants will read a Native American story and do a beading activity, as a way of modeling a Native way of teaching, and learning more about issues facing Native young people in school and life. Cost is \$2 for materials.
- **Writing Books for Young People** – an all day workshop being scheduled for Saturday November 14th, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at our Tampa Bay Site, the workshop will be of special interest to any teachers or administrators who have always wanted to write books for young children through young adults. The workshop facilitator will be Thomas Peacock, author of six books and many articles and short stories. The workshop is free but you may purchase a light lunch for \$5 or bring your own lunch.

If you are interested in attending the workshops, please contact Thomas D. Peacock, Ed.D, Associate Professor, Educational Administration Department: tampa@troy.edu or 813-835-6220.

• **Teacher Discounts**



Half-Price Haircuts for Teachers

Don't pull your hair out just yet! Instead, let Aveda Institutes in Florida pamper you with a **Half-Price Haircut** during the month of October. Offer is good at any one of our four locations: Aveda Institute Orlando, Aveda Institute South Florida, Aveda Institute St. Petersburg and Aveda Institute Tallahassee. Call 877.283.3235 and use the discount code AICUT50 to schedule an appointment. Remember, you must show your school ID Badge at time of checkout. To learn more about The Aveda Institutes visit <http://www.avedaflorida.com/ai/index.php>.

For a complete list of current discounts visit <http://www.fldoe.org/justforteachers/discounts.asp>.

• Explore Adoption Update

On July 22, 2009 an “Explore Adoption” message was sent from the Governor’s office through the *Just for Teachers* list serve. The announcement generated a huge response as teachers requested more information concerning details of this worthwhile program. Since my personal knowledge of the program was very limited, I requested clarification from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) which they graciously provided. The information below should answer most of your questions.

The Explore Adoption one-time, lump-sum benefit has been in existence for state employees since 2001. The amount appropriated by the Legislature available for this program benefit is different each year based on legislative appropriations. In July 2007 the law was amended to include public school and community college personnel. This change opened the door for an enormous flood of qualified applications, so much so that the money appropriated for that application period did not cover all qualified. The program, except for one year, has never been sufficiently funded to pay all qualified applicants.

After the August 1 – September 30th open enrollment period is completed, applications are reviewed and verified. Qualified applicants are prioritized and given priority based on the date of adoption, with the oldest adoption finalization given first priority. This is based on legislative decisions and is to ensure adoptive parents have an opportunity to receive the benefit before the adopted child turns 18. In the late fall of each year, DCF develops and presents a legislative budget request based on the number of qualified applicants. The Legislature meets in the spring and decides how much money will be appropriated to this program, an amount that can be modified by the legislature. The final amount allocated to the program fund any given year is determined at the end of the legislative session. Not everyone who qualifies during a given enrollment period will receive the benefit because, as stated earlier, the amount of money appropriated varies each year. The legislative budget is completed in June, the Governor reviews and approves each line item and by late June, DCF is able to determine how many of the qualified applicants will receive the benefit. After the budget is actually transferred to DCF from the Governor’s budget office, DCF transfers the exact amount needed to the personnel office of an agency or school district with one or more qualified employees to pay the benefit thru their payroll system. It is important to note that the application is completed during August or September of one year and is paid in the following August or September.

Applicants must show proof that they were a public school employee at the time of application for the benefit. If an applicant qualifies, but does not receive the benefit funds, the applicant must reapply during open enrollment, August 1—September 30th, of the following year. Applications are not retained.

For complete details about Explore Adoption please visit <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/adoption/adoptbenefitprogram.shtml>.

