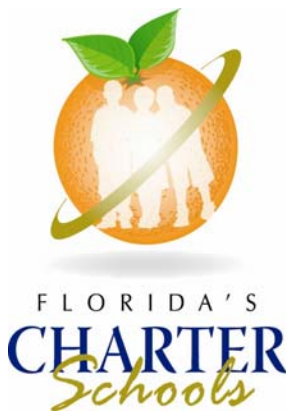


Florida Department of Education

Florida's Charter Schools News

Florida's First School Choice Expo



The School Choice Expo was held January 22, 2011 at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa, to celebrate Florida's first School Choice Month. There were over 450 in attendance. The Expo featured speakers including Commissioner of Education Eric Smith, state representatives and others, and a panel of experts addressing choice issues. Attendees were also treated to fantastic school performances from **Academy Prep Center of Tampa** Gospel Choir, **Howard W. Blake High School of the Arts** Musical Theater, **Manatee School for the Arts** Show Choir and **DeArmon Creative Arts School and Theater (CAST)**. Throughout the day there were Choice Info Sessions on the different choice options available for families in the state of Florida. The exhibit hall was filled with an assortment of schools, school districts and service providers that connected with parents to disseminate information on the opportunities available.

To view speeches from Commissioner Smith, and others, and to see news coverage of the event, click on the following links:

Event Speakers - <http://www.fec.tv/floridaschoolchoiceexpo/>

Expo School Choice Parent Testimonials - <http://www.youtube.com/user/FECTV9418?feature=mhum>

News Clip Coverage - <http://www.floridaschoolchoiceexpo.com/>.

A photo album of the day's events may be viewed on DOE's new Face Book page: <http://www.facebook.com/EducationFL#!/EducationFL?v=photos>

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SouthTech donates cookies for S.T.A.R.S. Conference

Students at SouthTech Culinary Academy donated 400 cookies to the S.T.A.R.S. Conference. The S.T.A.R.S. Conference (Start Transition and Realize Success) is an informational one-day free conference for families, students with disabilities, educators, and other professionals to learn about support and services available in the community. The Seventh S.T.A.R.S. Conference will be held on Saturday, February 26, 2011. Workshop sessions will include, Career Planning, College Planning, Social Security Benefits, Independent Living Skills, Agency Services and many more. The Workforce Alliance Mobile Unit will be on site to assist students and families seeking employment.

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Today Show Makes Visit to G-Star School of the Arts

Palm Springs, FL – G-STAR School of the Arts for Motion Pictures and Broadcasting, the largest film, TV/digital media production and acting high school in the nation, and only high school in the world with an on-campus motion picture studio, received a visit from NBC's TODAY SHOW on January 26 & 27 for a profile segment on the school's unique program.

G-Star's academic and artistic accomplishments would warrant the attention of any major news organization with statistics including a 99% graduation rate with 97% of its graduates going on to college; an "A" school rating; and having been named "The Number One High School for Film in the World" by the Raindance Film Festival (Europe's largest independent film festival in London, UK) in 2010. What caught the eye of 18-year National Correspondent veteran for the Today Show, Jamie Gangel, was that the G-Star School of the Arts is the only high school in the world that owns a commercial motion picture studio where G-Star's students intern on the sets of multi-million dollar feature films while receiving real-world, hands-on experience with film industry professionals. Ms. Gangel, winner of the Edward R. Murrow and Associated Press Awards who has interviewed every living President from Gerald Ford to Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton and many luminaries from Robert Downy, Jr. to Yo Yo Ma, approached the Producer of the NBC News Network, Sylvie Haller, with the story.

"I received a call from Ms. Haller," says Greg Hauptner, G-Star Founder and CEO. "She personally set up the Today Show segment sharing that she found G-Star's story 'amazing'. To say I was flattered is an understatement. All our students and staff were extremely excited to have the Today Show visit our campus to do a story on us."

Over 50 feature films, plus commercials (i.e.; Nike, Abercrombie & Fitch), music videos (Radiohead, Kriyss Grant) and student films have been produced at the G-Star Studios. With over 110,000 square feet under roof, it is the largest motion picture studio in Florida. G-Star Studios recently opened the largest sound stage in Florida which is the most technologically advanced sound stage in the world. G-Star financed and produced its own feature film starring Barry Bostwick (the Mayor in Spin City), Ron Palillo (Horshak on Welcome Back Kotter) and G-Star alums Michelle Pariseau and Shay Roman, which enjoyed its world premiere at the Raindance Film Festival.

Celine Dion at G-Star Studios and School of the Arts

Palm Springs, FL (January 31, 2011) Mega-recording star, Celine Dion, completed two weeks of rehearsal and behind-the-scenes filming here, Friday, in preparation for her new Caesars Palace Las Vegas show. Miss Dion needed a world-class rehearsal and film production studio and found it at G-Star. "The facility is wonderful," declared Miss Dion. "I am very impressed with the sound stage, and the production house (i.e., green room, makeup/dressing room, etc.) is beautiful. It was great!" G-Star's newly opened state-of-the-art sound stage includes many features beyond those offered by any other sound stage across the globe.

"Miss Dion's prerequisites to protect her incredible voice were met by utilizing our smoke evacuation system (used for filming large-scale fire scenes) to cool the stage with fresh air instead of using the A/C system," explains Greg Hauptner, Founder and CEO of the G-Star Studios and School of the Arts. The system has four giant, 7-foot high blowers on the roof and specially built remote control operated louvers in the walls.

"Miss Dion's safety, security and confidentiality were paramount during her time with us," continues Hauptner. "G-Star Studios is the largest motion picture studio in Florida and, while accommodating our clients' needs, we carefully safeguard their privacy. Understandably, Miss Dion's situation was unique and required absolute secrecy. It is only now, and with her permission, that we are informing the public that she was here and that she considered this a great experience."

Submitted by Greg Hauptner, Founder/CEO/CFO
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Foundation website: www.gstarfoundation.org, X-Scream website: www.xscreamhalloween.com



*NBC Today Show &
Celine Dion at G-Star
School of the Arts*



An “A” School in Just One Short Year

Edison Collegiate High School (ECHS) – Charlotte, the only charter school in Charlotte County, opened its doors to 100 eager freshmen, the Class of 2013, in August 2009. In October 2010 the students and faculty learned that, as a result of their phenomenal FCAT scores, the Class of 2013 had earned an A grade for the fledgling school.

The only admissions requirement for this early college school, on the grounds of the Punta Gorda campus of Edison State College, is to be ready to rise to the ninth grade. There is no GPA requirement; there is no test score requirement; there is no special talent requirement. All the school asks is that students come ready to learn, that they demonstrate that they have the maturity to tackle a rigorous academic curriculum in a supportive learning environment. The mission of Edison Collegiate High School is to provide an innovative, academically inspiring, and student-centered early college experience in which 9th-12th graders have the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and an Associate in Arts degree simultaneously.

All core courses (in the first year, English, East/West Heritage, Biology, and either Algebra I or Geometry) are taught at the honors level. Even though many of the students have never taken an honors course before, teachers accept the responsibility of helping students to develop the attitudes, behaviors, and skills necessary to succeed in honors courses.

Additionally, teachers are familiar with the Florida benchmarks in their field. Teachers teach to the benchmarks. They do not teach to a standardized test. The FCAT examinations are not mentioned to the students until the day before the tests begin. There is no FCAT drama, no FCAT fear.

In March 2010, 658 schools throughout Florida administered the FCAT to ninth graders. ECHS – Charlotte students ranked 12th in mathematics (top 2%) and 15th in reading (top 3%). Our teachers and our students rose to the challenge. They showed that a rigorous curriculum and high expectations can yield awesome results.

In the second semester of their freshman year, 26 students were given the opportunity to take one dual enrollment course at the college, Music History and Appreciation. The 26 students received 13 A grades, 7 B grades and 6 C grades for an average grade of 3.27 (as compared to a class of regular college-age students whose average grade was 2.57).

If they continue to stay the course, 40 members of the Class of 2013 will end their sophomore year with at least 3 college credits on their transcripts; 17 of those 40 will have 11 college credits. These students are well on their way to both a diploma and an Associate in Arts degree in four short years.



*“Only charter school
in Charlotte County”*



Leah Nix, Christy McCay, and Amber Franklin with Professor Blake Schmidt in chemistry class

Carlos Maas (reading) and Wyatt Hoffman (mathematics) celebrate their perfect scores on FCAT.

Holly Osborne works with mixtures of acetylene gas and air in chemistry class



*Submitted by Diane Juneau, Edison Collegiate High School, 26300 Airport Road, Punta Gorda, FL 33950
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SWBA Science Olympiad Team Gets 3rd Place

Congratulations to Sweetwater Branch Academy (SWBA) Science Olympiad Team for their great achievement in the Invitational Science Olympiad tournament held in Orlando on January 15, 2011. SWBA team won 3rd place as a team and received 14 event placements among the top 5 in each category as listed below. Many thanks to the parents, coaches and students because this accomplishment would not be possible without their effort and dedication for the SWBA Science Team and good luck in the upcoming regional competition on February 26, 2011.

Team Placements: SWBA Jaguars got 3rd Place as a Team

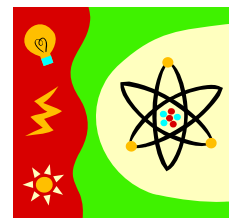
Event	Placement	Team Members
Battery Buggy	1	Natalie Liu, Nathaniel Hermansen
Disease Detectives	2	Isaac O'Hern, Sahil Patel
Optics	2	Zachary Vance, Natanya Cruz
Shock Value	2	Sahil Patel, Cullan Hennessy
Road Scholar	3	Quennon Ewing, Cullan Hennessy
Dynamic Planet	4	Jose Berry, Quennon Ewing
Ecology	4	Zachary Vance, Quennon Ewing
Junkyard Challenge	4	Jessica Lipori, Phoneix Houston
Write It, Do It	4	Lauren Newman, Patrick Amora
Bottle Rocket	5	Jenise Hall, Nathaniel Hermansen, Kiara Williams
Meteorology	5	Natanya Cruz, Jenise Hall
Microbe Mission	5	Patrick Amora, Lauren Newman
Storm the Castle	5	Phoneix Houston, Paulius Zhukauskas
Solar System	5	Natalie Liu, Lauren Newman



Congratulations to
SWBA!!



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Sweetwater Branch Academy hosts its 2nd Annual Math Stars Contest

The second annual Math Stars Contest took place Saturday, January 29th, 2011. There were over 250 people in attendance, including parents and 84 contestants. Fourth and fifth grade students from public, charter, and private schools in the Alachua County sweated for 45 minutes to solve challenging math problems in order to win an iPad. All participants were recognized and presented with certificates for participation. First place prize for the math contest was an iPad, second place prize was an iPod Nano, and the third place prize was an Mp3 Player. The teachers of the winners were awarded with gift certificates, valued at \$100, \$75, and \$50 for the first, second, and third places respectively.

Trey Saunders was the first place winner in the contest. Trent Lowery came in second, and Ryan Le Prell became the third place winner. Alachua School District Board Vice Chair, Mrs. April Griffin presented the winners' gifts.

Congratulations to all winning students and all the others who answered quite a few questions right. We would also like to thank everyone for making this a very successful event.



*Congratulations
to all participants!!!*



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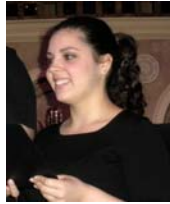
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Arts & Minds Charter High School



Congratulations to Arts & Minds senior **Amanda Isabel Cancio** ~ Academy Silver Knight nominee in the music category ~ for placing as a semifinalist in the individual vocal performance in The Young Talent Big Dreams Competition held at the Miracle Theatre. Amanda will be performing in the finals in February. Amanda's A&M instructor is Christina Alexander.

In addition, art students 11th grader **Fernando Ramos** and Class of 2011 **Emilio Blanco**, under the tutelage of Master Teacher Artist Mary Abreu, competed in the prestigious Beaux Arts Festival Student Art category. Fernando was awarded the "Best of the Show" and Emilio took the first place for his painting. Fernando's winning piece was "Self Portrait" done in oil paint on canvas. Emilio is the Silver Knight nominee in art.



Submitted by *Robin L. Sarantos, Ph.D.*,
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Holocaust Survivor Depicts Story of Survival to South Tech Academy Students, Educates on Consequences of Discrimination and Hate

Boynton Beach, FL – Norman Frajman, Holocaust Survivor and President/Chairman of the Speakers Bureau of the Child Survivors/Hidden Children of the Holocaust, shared his remarkable story of survival with World History students at South Tech Academy.

As a child, Frajman experienced the brutality and violence that defined the Holocaust by courageously surviving five camps, including Majdanek and Buchenwald, in addition to losing over one-hundred members of his family. By the age of fifteen, Frajman was liberated by the Russians and eventually immigrated to the United States. With this move also brought a reunion with his father, who had survived years plagued with war in the Soviet Union.

Frajman shares his story to educate others of not only his personal experience, but also of the aftermath that such senseless acts of violence, prejudice, and hate can bring. Specifically, he advocates bringing awareness to the implications of anti-Semitism and discrimina-

tion, concurrent in providing a vivid and moving account of the Holocaust. The students at South Tech Academy were deeply moved, and some forever changed, by his account and reflections of what he learned as a survivor. Student Natalya Mendoza says, "...that you were able to remove the word hate from your vocabulary is amazingly beautiful."

Mr. Steven Kozak, World History Instructor, has taught at South Tech Academy for four years and coordinated this profound opportunity for the students. Kozak has a personal understanding of the tragedies that the Holocaust has left behind, as many of his family members perished during this time. Kozak says, "It is very troubling that many of us will live our lives not considering the consequences of hate and its cruel effects upon those that experience it." Kozak is visiting the National Holocaust Museum in March and will continue to provide a deeper level of education to the students at South Tech Academy.

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