

May 2010



Florida's Charter Schools News

Recognition of National Charter Schools Week



Dear Charter School Administrators and Staff:

As we celebrate **National Charter Schools Week**, May 2-8, I want to thank you for your continued commitment to Charter Schools, and to offering quality public education options for students and families across the state.

National Charter Schools Week provides an opportunity for the charter school community to help parents, communities and policy makers appreciate and support the integral part charter schools play in expanding quality educational opportunities for Florida's

children. By providing choice, innovation, flexibility, accountability, and community partnerships, charter schools are raising the bar on what is possible in public education. Currently, Florida's 410 operating charter schools serve more than 137,000 students, and new charter schools are applying to open in record numbers to meet the growing public demand.

This year's theme, *Promoting Innovation & Excellence*, is a tribute to what you do every day. As educators, your dedication to providing an exceptional learning experience for Florida's students is the reason our charter schools continue to flourish and stand as a model for the nation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eric J. Smith
Commissioner

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Charter School Rule Development

The Department recently proposed a new rule defining **nonprofit organization** for purposes of charter school operation.

12 noon. [Additional details and draft rule language](#) were noticed in the Florida Administrative Weekly.

[Charter School Statutes and Rules](#) page.

A rule workshop will be held on May 12, 2010, in Tallahassee from 10 a.m. -

More information about charter school rule development is available on the



FLORIDA'S
CHARTER
Schools

Academy of Arts & Minds Charter High School

Located in lush tropical Coconut Grove, Florida, the Academy of Arts and Minds (A&M) Charter High School is dedicated to the highest academic standards coupled with a burning desire to excel in one or more specialized areas ~ Visual Arts, Dance, Instrumental Music, Chorus, Theatre, Creative Writing and Philosophy. While the fine arts curriculum in many public schools is being cut or eliminated, under astute director, William Machado, the program at A&M is thriving and continues to bring in Master Teachers. Students have a strenuous audition process in one of the specialized areas and come from all parts of the county. Classes remain smaller than in most of the public schools throughout Miami-Dade, and parent support is strong. The PTSA and other stakeholders are involved in the educational process and meet regularly with Director Machado who is in his second year at A&M. Community service is an intricate part of the overall curriculum with students reaching out and giving back in a myriad of ways from fund-raising for cancer research, tutoring, and volunteering in area hospitals to book sales which help abused children. It was opened in 2004 by founders Lili Renteria and Manuel Alonso-Poch who love the arts and were concerned with the drop in school programs. Their goal was to create a public high school charter in which students could achieve their potential in the artistic areas. Great strides have been made with Mr. Machado's dedication and staff involvement. To accommodate all of the fine arts, the school day runs one hour longer than traditional high schools.



Academy of Arts & Minds Charter High School Director **William Machado**, presenting senior **Rubi Rosalie Ruiz-Burzos** the President's Volunteer Award.

Congratulations to the *Academy of Arts & Minds Charter High School's* **Rubi Rosalie Ruiz-Burzos** who has qualified for the prestigious *President's Volunteer Service Award*. Completing 1000-plus hours, Rubi's extensive community service includes her Ladies in Waiting Ministry at her religious center where she serves as director and leader of the program which works with young girls. In addition, Rubi is a member of the Hialeah Youth Choir, and she has completed 345 hours as a volunteer at Kendall Regional Medical Center. Rubi is Sabbath School Director at church and continues to be actively involved as a flute player in the South Florida Christian Ensemble, performing not only around the state but as far as New York.

Reaching out and giving back to the community, Rubi is president of A&M's Key Club and member of the music department. In addition, she is a member of A&M's Senior Committee.

Rubi represents one of the Academy's finest young people. She is A&M's *Silver Knight* nominee in music and is well qualified to be a recipient of the *President's Volunteer Award*. It is with great pleasure that Director **William Machado** presented Rubi Rosalie Ruiz-Burzos with this distinguished certificate from The White House, Washington, D.C.

Robin Sarantos, Ph.D.
A&M volunteer

Congratulations Archimedean Middle Conservatory Science Olympiad Champion for the state of Florida!!



First row: Amy Lee, Constance Thurmond, Gabriela Muiño, Yeorgia Kafkoulis, Shiva Kangeyan, Sophia Christodoulou, Aditya Shetty, and Elizabeth Hernandez. Standing: Dr. Kalai, Keyan Zolfaghari, Christopher Rivera, Isaac Barreto, Ioanna Georgoulakis, Antonio Menarde, Leonardo Sanchez-Noya, and Kendra Guerrero.

On Saturday, April 10, Archimedean Middle Conservatory, a charter school in Miami-Dade County, competed at the Florida Science Olympiad Tournament held at the University of Central Florida (Orlando). There were 54 registered teams from all across the state of Florida in the Middle School Division. The Archimedean team (ARCHI SCI) won FIRST PLACE in the competition, and thus the privilege and responsibility to represent the STATE OF FLORIDA at the Science Olympiad NATIONAL Tournament (<http://soinc.org>), on May 20-22, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Chicago.

Archimedean Middle Conservatory is the STATE CHAMPION and has brought home the trophy and numerous medals. Science Olympiad is an interscholastic competition for middle and secondary school students all across the United States. It was designed to create a passion for scientific education and to allow the students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and teamwork in all areas of science.

Our team is comprised of 15 middle school students. They have been competing for the past three years, improving year after year with lots of enthusiasm, commitment and the goal to become the State Champions. And finally they achieved their goal this year. Students, teachers, and parents have worked very hard to reach this level. The sponsor of the team is Dr. Kalai and the teacher who has assisted with the preparation is Mr. Palacios.

Results of the competition are as follows:

Anatomy	Constance Thurmond, Christopher Rivera	2nd Place (Silver)
Bio Process Lab	Shiva Kangeyan	2nd Place (Silver)
Dynamic Planet	Shiva Kangeyan, Aditya Shetty	1st Place (Gold)
Physical Science Lab	Keyan Zolfaghari, Gabriela Muino	2nd Place (Silver)
Disease Detectives	Antonio Menarde, Amy Lee	2nd Place (Silver)
Elevated Bridge	Isaac Barreto	2nd Place (Silver)
Fossils	Shiva Kangeyan, Amy Lee	1st Place (Gold)
Pentathlon	Aditya Shetty, Georgia Kafkoulis Gabriel Muino, Antonio Menarde	3rd Place (Bronze)
Road Scholar	Shiva Kangeyan, Amy Lee	1st Place (Gold)
Shock Value	Keyan Zolfaghari, Leonardo Sanchez-Noya	1st Place (Gold)

Vasiliki Moysidis, Ed.S.
Archimedean Middle Conservatory, Principal

The Charter School at Waterstone



The Charter School at Waterstone has a plethora of all of the traditional classroom technology. Listening centers, overhead projectors, computers, and CD players can be found in every classroom, but in the technology-crazed society that we live in, these can hardly be referenced as technology. Never before has learning been as interactive and fun as at The Charter School at Waterstone. Students at Waterstone are experiencing learning with state-of-the-art technology. Mimio boards (interactive whiteboards) and digital projectors bring learning to life. While a Math class finds the perimeter of a digital dream home, the Science teacher is conducting a digital online experiment in minutes that would normally take weeks to complete. Reading teachers and their students love manipulating reading text on an interactive whiteboard while the Social Studies teacher

uses the interactive whiteboard to access the internet to conduct research, watch a video clip and complete a bar graph on the rate Civil War soldiers perished in battle. But not all technology is teacher led. Students at The Charter School at Waterstone benefit from two computer labs, and students in grades 6-8 take required introductory computer courses. Students can also elect to take more advanced computer classes which include yearbook and graphic arts and design. All 7th graders satisfy a state required career class with the assistance of an online career portfolio program.

Another exciting addition to the technology classroom is a cut above the rest. Waterstone is one of the first schools in the area to purchase a mobile Apple Mac lab. This lab's mobility provides access to teachers by bringing 25 wireless laptops into their classroom to complete projects, compile research on the Worldwide Web and even complete assessments hosted online. Apple technology in the classroom has been such a success that teachers at Waterstone are anxiously awaiting the arrival of a new Apple i-Pod touch lab synched with educational software that will serve as learning centers in the classroom. There is no doubt that technology plays a huge role in our lives, and by incorporating technology into the curriculum, teachers enjoy planning their lessons, and students are more interested in the lessons and benefit from the exposure to technology.



Article submitted by Melissa Aguilar

Congratulations to SWBA Science Olympiad Team for the great result at the Florida State Science Olympiad.

Fifteen (15) students from Sweetwater Branch Academy traveled to the University of Central Florida on April 10 to participate in the statewide Science Olympiad. Going up against 54 other teams from all around Florida, the sixth through eighth-grade students competed in 23 different events, including Anatomy, Meteorology, Solar System, Elevated Bridge, Ornithology, Physical Science Lab, and others.

SWBA students placed in the top four in two events (Disease Detectives and Road Scholar); top five in two events (Shock Value and Meteorology); top six in one event (Elevated Bridge); and top 9 in one event (Junkyard Challenge).

Our school team placed **ninth overall among 54 schools in Florida** that were able to make it to the state level competition. This is the school's second year attending the Science Olympiad and is the highest place it has finished so far.

The competition gives students the opportunity to enhance their scientific and mathematical skills while competing with other students from across the state. Events are designed to test students' critical thinking and reasoning skills.

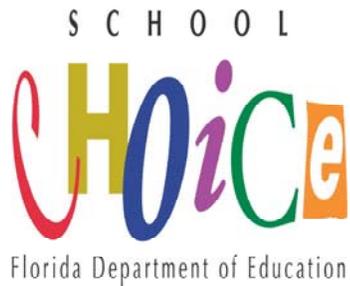
The following students received top placements:

- Disease Detectives - 4th Place : **Angelica Forson** and **Isaac O'Hern**
- Road Scholar – 4th Place: **Quennon Ewing** and **Christopher Theriot**
- Meteorology – 5th Place: **Anya Fairchild** and **Cullan Hennessy**
- Shock Value – 5th Place: **Anya Fairchild** and **Maia Pelham**
- Elevated Bridge – 6th Place: **Natanya Cruz** and **Maia Pelham**
- Junkyard Challenge – 9th Place: **Sahil Patel** and **Anya Fairchild**

We are proud of our students. Go Jaguars!



Fethi Goktepe, M.S., Principal
Sweetwater Branch Academy



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Education and Parental
Choice**

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School Choice Hotline:
1-800-447-1636

www.floridaschoolchoice.org

New Applicant Trainings Scheduled!

Charter school applicants must participate in training prior to submitting an application to the sponsor. The following trainings have been scheduled for the 2010 application cycle:

June 8, 2010, 8 a.m.— 4 p.m.
Valencia Community College
West Campus, Building 8
1800 South Kirkman Road
Orlando, FL 32811

June 10, 2010, 8 a.m.— 4 p.m.
Nova Southeastern University
N. Miami Beach Campus, Tech Auditorium
1750 NE 167th Street
North Miami Beach, FL 33162

June 24, 2010, 8 a.m.— 4 p.m.
Betty Easley Conference Center
Conference Room 166
4075 Esplanade Way
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Register online at
http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Charter_Schools/ApplicantTraining/

Message from the Directors

Dear Charter School Educators,

Today, as we observe **National Charter Schools Week 2010**, we are excited by the amazing growth of Florida's charter schools. With well over 400 charter schools in operation, and new schools applying in record numbers, Florida is raising the bar nationally for excellence in public education.

As we celebrate our successes this week, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank each and every one of you for making a difference in your community. We applaud your efforts, your successes, and the education opportunities you provide to Florida's parents and students.

This year's theme is *Promoting Innovation & Excellence*, and indeed, your dedication to innovation and excellence has helped to make quality education options a reality for families throughout our state.

Sincerely,

Adam Miller
Charter Schools Director

Michael Kooi, Executive Director
Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice



From left to right: Adam Miller, and Michael Kooi