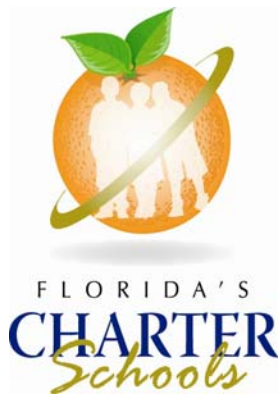


Florida Department of Education

Florida's Charter Schools News

Teacher Evaluation Systems



As most of you are aware, the State of Florida has committed to a comprehensive reform of its systems of teacher and leader evaluation. Recently signed by Governor Scott, [Senate Bill 736 \(SB736\)](#) formally sets into law many of the evaluation strategies that were earlier proposed in Florida's Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative. The goal of the new evaluation system is based on an expectation that all teachers can increase their expertise from year to year and produce annual gains in student achievement with a powerful cumulative effect. Accordingly, the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has contracted with Learning Sciences International (LSI) to provide technical assistance and support to school districts for understanding the new statutory imperatives and implementing new guidelines for teacher evaluation that meet the requirements of SB736, RTTT, and the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs). LSI asserts that its overarching strategy for meeting the requirements of SB736 is based on rigorous, transparent and fair evaluation systems that differentiate effectiveness with data on student growth and include timely and constructive feedback.

Nearly all of Florida's public school districts have agreed to participate in RTTT and are currently making decisions regarding the most effective research designs they will use to guide their new evaluation systems. FDOE has established June 1, 2011 as the date for each district to submit the "Review and Approval Checklist for RTTT Teacher Evaluation Systems" and supporting documentation. This checklist, which attends to all of the requirements set forth by SB736, RTTT and the FEAP, can be accessed at:

<http://www.fldoe.org/ARRA/pdf/ReviewApprovalChecklist.pdf>

As school districts and charter schools participating in Race to the Top prepare their teacher evaluation systems for submission, the Department is preparing additional guidance and technical assistance related to Senate Bill 736. We are accepting questions via a form on our website until May 20, 2011:

http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Charter_Schools/SB736_Questions.asp.

Answers to the submitted questions will be addressed in a Q&A document that will be distributed to all charter schools in June.

Please do not hesitate to contact staff members in the CSP Office if we can assist you further.

2011 Legislative Session



[SB1546](#) related to charter schools was passed by the Legislature and is awaiting signature by the Governor. Once it is signed, we will provide additional details.

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Syrian Diplomats visit Charter School in Pensacola



CAPSTONE PENSACOLA

The Office of International Visitors, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and U.S. Department of State coordinated a team of Syrian diplomats to visit Capstone Academy in Pensacola through the International Visitor Leadership Program on March 30th.

Capstone Academy is a public charter school for pre-kindergarten children with special needs. The school is a program of United Cerebral Palsy of Northwest Florida and operates in partnership with the Escambia County School District.

The visiting group, comprised of educators, speech and behavioral therapists from the Aamal Syrian Organization for the Disabled, toured the school and met with staff to learn about and discuss similarities and differences in serving children with special needs.

The project, titled Disabilities – Helping Syria’s Most Marginalized Citizens, is arranged by The Graduate School, International Institute and coordinated locally by the Gulf Coast Citizen Diplomacy Council.

The U.S. Department of State has outlined the following objectives for this project:

- To gain an overview of specialized services and schools provided to children with disabilities and how these programs function within the framework of the overall U.S. educational system;
- To explore the variety of partnerships among educational institutions, government, and private organizations;
- To examine ways in which schools diagnose learning disabilities and work with parents before and during the diagnosis process;
- To further explore specialized integration and after school programs;
- To analyze the work of advocacy and awareness building organizations dedicated to assisting and supporting children with learning and other disabilities;
- To investigate best practices in developing and funding of effective programs for the disabled; and
- To visit an array of educational institutions and speak with students, teachers, and administrative staff in the classroom.

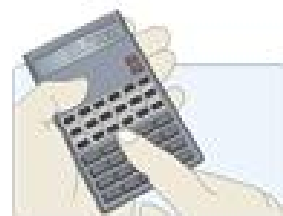
For more information, please contact Nancy Wolfe, Principal, Capstone Academy at 850-458-7735.

*Disabilities – Helping
Syria’s Most
Marginalized Citizens*

*Submitted by Nancy Wolfe, Principal
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2011 Charter School Needs Assessment Results

The 2011 Charter School Needs Assessment was open from March 31-May 6, 2011. A total of 244 respondents completed the survey: 21 from sponsors and 223 from charter schools (administrators, governing board members, teachers, management companies, consultants). In addition, 113 respondents started the survey, but did not complete it.



The fourteen most requested training topics by charter schools are listed below:

<u>Training Subject Area: Specific Topic</u>	<u>% Yes</u>	<u>% Maybe</u>	<u>Total%</u>
School Leadership: Professional Development for Admin	72.6	9.8	82.4
Special Populations: Response to Intervention	71.9	16.3	88.2
School Leadership: Grant Writing	65.2	15.2	80.4
State Initiatives: Teacher Evaluation Systems	64.3	15.2	79.5
State Initiatives: 2011 Legislation	63.8	15.2	79.0
Authorization and Sponsor Duties: Charter School Law	63.0	17.6	80.6
Curriculum and Instruction: Data-Driven Decision Making	60.8	16.7	77.5
Curriculum and Instruction: Next Generation SSS	59.5	17.2	76.7
Governance: School and Principal Evaluations	56.7	21.4	78.1
Accountability: Learning Gains	56.3	17.4	73.7
State Initiatives: Differentiated Accountability	55.8	20.5	76.3
Special Populations: Teaching Strategies/Inclusion	53.3	17.2	70.5
School Leadership: School Climate (Discipline/Bullying)	52.2	23.2	75.4
Authorization and Sponsor Duties: Performance Management	48.0	23.3	71.3

In addition, sponsors indicated that charter schools would benefit most from training in the following areas:

<u>Training Subject Area</u>	<u>% Selected</u>
1. Response to Intervention	71.4
2. Finance/Operations	66.7
3. Governance	66.7
4. Accountability Requirements	66.7

The top three most requested training topics by sponsors (school districts) are as follows:

<u>Training Topic</u>	<u>% Yes</u>	<u>% Maybe</u>	<u>Total%</u>
Update on legislative changes – impact on charters and districts	90.9	9.1	100
Sponsor role in Differentiated Accountability	81.8	13.6	95.4
Monitoring for financial quality	77.3	22.7	100

Based on the results of the needs assessment, the Department will prepare a training plan for the 2011-12 school year to address the needs of our stakeholders. Training will be provided in a variety of formats including regional workshops, breakout sessions at the annual charter school conference, webinars, and technical assistance papers.

If you did not take the opportunity to participate in the needs assessment this year, please look for the 2012 assessment to be released next spring. In the meantime, if there are specific areas with which you would like assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our office. We appreciate your feedback and look forward to providing continuous opportunities to improve the quality of Florida's charter schools.

“244 respondents completed the survey”

G-Star Featured on NBC Today Show

The G-Star School of the Arts and the G-Star Studios were featured on NBC's Today Show on March 30, 2011! The story can be seen by going to G-Star's website at www.gstarschool.org or by clicking on the following link: <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/26184891/vp/42337498#42337498>.

*Submitted by Greg Hauptner, Founder/CEO/CFO, G-Star School of the Arts for Motion Pictures and Broadcasting
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***Congratulations
G-Star!***

Character Counts at ECHS – Charlotte



Standing: Elizabeth Toth (Class of 2013): Trustworthiness
Tristan Deehan (Class of 2014): Responsibility
Anna James (Class of 2013): Caring
James Lanza (Class of 2013): Citizenship

Sitting: Spencer Price (Class of 2014): Respect
Helena Tracy (Class of 2014): Fairness

At Edison Collegiate High School (ECHS), we believe that Character Counts – so much so that we have embraced a comprehensive character education program called just that – *CHARACTER COUNTS*. The *Character Counts* program is the most widely implemented character education program in the country and we at ECHS have greatly enjoyed instituting its concepts. The program is based on six core values (or pillars) that embody good character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Each month, we focus on a particular pillar and give “pillar awards” to the student who best represents the characteristics associated with that month’s value.

During *National Character Counts Week*, in October, students participated in many engaging activities, in celebration of the six pillars in the program. Students participated in an essay contest in which they were asked to write about what they truly believed in.

“During the closing ceremonies, I opened up my heart to the students I call ‘my kids’ and I let them know why we were investing so much time into this program,” said Principal Diane Juneau. “I decided to take a moment to share with my students what *I* believed in, hoping it would make an impact or a difference. I told them that I believe that people are inherently good – that we are born with good hearts and kind souls. I also believe that the world (in all of its glory and with all of its wonder) can slowly begin to chip away at our goodness and we can eventually find ourselves quite far from the place in which we began –living lives that don’t represent our good nature – living lives that are not admirable.

“You needn’t look very far to see examples of this; all you need do is simply turn on your television and watch the news, or any popular television show. The less-than-honorable manner in which so many people conduct themselves is portrayed as acceptable or normal, when in reality, it’s not at all how we were intended to be or how we are supposed to be living. These beliefs are what prompted me to bring this program to ECHS.”

Ms. Juneau believes that in order to live our best lives, we have to intentionally think about being people of good character. “We ALL could use a little reminding, from time to time, of what that means and what it looks like,” she said. “Being a person of good character requires intentionality. It requires courage to stand up for your values, even if it makes you the minority. It requires self-reflection and evaluation – asking yourself questions like these: Was I trustworthy today? Was I respectful? Do I owe someone an apology? Did I do my best work? Was I fair to others, despite my feelings toward them? Did I lift anyone up who was down? Did I bring anybody down? Did I give back in some way?”

If we desire to be the best we can be, we must intentionally try to represent these core values, everyday. We must focus on trying to be the light in what can sometimes be a dark world. Ultimately, we should focus on being the world’s exception, not the rule. “I hope my kids heard my message this year and will carry it forward, not only for their own benefit, but for the benefit of those around them,” said Ms. Juneau.

Submitted by Diane Juneau, Principal
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Character Counts



LWHS students go Shoeless to Raise Awareness

Lake Wales High students joined thousands of people across the country – and around the world – on Tuesday, April 5, when they took off their shoes as part of the annual TOMS Shoes' One Day Without Shoes event.

One Day Without Shoes was created to “raise awareness of the impact a pair of shoes can have on a child’s life by taking off our own.” The official day is April 5, although events take place throughout the year. Bok Academy, for instance, will hold an event later this spring after FCAT testing.

In 2006, American traveler Blake Mycoskie befriended children in Argentina and discovered they had no shoes to protect their feet. Wanting to help, he created TOMS Shoes, a company that would match every pair of shoes purchased with a pair of new shoes given to a child in need. Mycoskie returned to Argentina with a group of family, friends and staff later that year with 10,000 pairs of shoes made possible by TOMS customers.

To participate in One Day Without Shoes, LWHS students must turn in signed parent permission slips. They also must wear appropriate shoes to and from school.

Tuesday’s One Day Without Shoes will be the second day of IMPACT Week, five consecutive days planned by the school’s National Honor Society, Art Club and Humanitarian Club to focus on issues that impact the world. Monday is Education Appreciation Day. Wednesday is Malaria Awareness Day. Thursday is Clean Water Day. Friday is Poverty Awareness Day.



Shoeless awareness at LWHS

Polk Avenue PRIDE Team Visits Circle of Friends



The Polk Avenue Elementary PRIDE Team took a walking field trip recently (March 21) to visit downtown neighbors at Circle of Friends, a ministry for disabled individuals.

As part of a community service project, PRIDE Team students worked with Circle of Friends to make greeting cards, which will be sold as a fundraiser.

The Polk Avenue PRIDE Team has 18 fourth and fifth grade students.



Hillcrest Hawks Learn Basic Water Safety

Physical education teacher Nancy Leatherland (back to camera) cover the basics of water safety with second grade students at Hillcrest Elementary recently.

Students in grades K-2 learned what to do if someone needed help in the water, and whether to throw something or reach out with an object. They also learned basic rules like never swim alone; stay with an adult; never dive when you can’t see the bottom; and protect yourself from the sun. Older students also learned about basic swimming strokes.



*Submitted by Frances McMichael
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Lake Wales Charter Schools
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 Choice**
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 Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
 Phone: 850-245-0502
 Fax: 850-245-0875

School Choice Hotline:
 1-800-447-1636

www.floridaschoolchoice.org



Sweetwater Branch Academy Participates in SECME

Sweetwater Branch Academy participated for the first time at Southeastern Consortium for Minorities in Engineering (SECME) 2011. The regional SECME was sponsored by the UF Engineering society, Tau Beta Pi and held at the University of Florida. It was a day full of competitions in Engineering, Science and Math interspersed by long walks to various event sites from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. There were about 200 students from area elementary, middle and high schools. SWBA's team of three students, Deja Bivins, Ruslan Chernitsyn and Sarah Gantham was ready to go. The mousetrap event was the first one and it included an interview with all team members, a technical drawing (as accurate as can be), a technical report and two test runs of the car. While our car did not go the furthest, it was solid in construction and well designed. Some cars went as far as 40 feet, some as little as two feet, SWBA's car went 15.5 feet.

Next was a mystery design contest – designing a boat out of a piece of aluminum foil that would hold the largest number of pennies. One of the teams from Lincoln Middle School got the top score with 74 pennies. SWBA made it to 15 pennies, before the boat fell over.

Afterwards was a Science quiz – cerebral challenge. It was a multiple choice format where teams had a clicker to select their choice of answers. The questions ranged from easy (What is responsible for bubbles in a soda?) to really tough (frequency of electromagnetic waves).

This was followed by bottle rocket launches. We did fairly well in the demonstration though a bit short on hang time. However, our technical drawing and report were excellent.

There was a lunch hour, wherein we grabbed a bite. Math competition was to follow. The organizers announced (half jokingly) that any student who got 100% would receive \$1000. There were 30 questions with 40 minutes to complete them. Right answers got 4 points, while wrong answers got negative 4 points. Unlike at FCAT, guessing was not a good idea.

Finally, the awards ceremony took place at 3:30 p.m. They only gave the 1st place trophies as other prizes were not ready yet. Sweetwater Branch Academy did fabulously. We won three 1st place trophies – one for mouse trap car, one for bottle rocket and one for the individual poster by Deja Bivins. Go, Jaguars!

*Submitted by Fethi Goktepe, M.S., Principal
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