

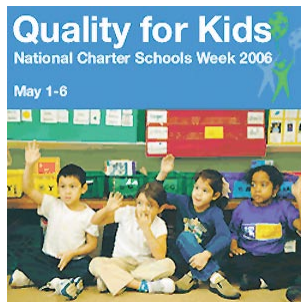


Florida's Charter Schools

National Charter Schools Week

MAY 1-6, 2006

The Florida Department of Education (DOE) joined charter schools throughout the state to celebrate National Charter Schools Week from May 1 through 6. As a part of this celebration, the Florida Department of Education displayed materials in the State Capitol with the message **"Charter Schools are Public Schools."**



Department officials also met with legislators and other decision-makers about the important role charter schools play in public education.

This year marks the 10th year anniversary of charter schools in Florida. Since the state's first 5 charter schools opened in 1996, public charter schools have focused on providing parents with educational programs and increased opportunities for involvement in their children's education. With 334 public charter schools currently operating, and more than 92,000 students participating, Florida has the second highest number of public charter schools in the nation.

Florida Charter School Conference:

SAVE THE DATE



The Florida Charter School Conference will be held November 29-December 1, 2006 in Orlando, Florida. As Florida charter schools mark their 10 year anniversary, the theme for this year's conference is: **Florida Charter Schools: A Decade of Progress.**

The event will be designed for the charter school community and stakeholders to come together to celebrate successes and best practices, clarify legislative intent (federal and state), and learn from national, state,

and local leaders in the charter school movement. Please join us as we salute Florida's charter schools. Information as to times, location and conference items will be provided and posted in the near future.

CER Launches National Charter School of the Year Award

The Center for Education Reform (CER) is proud to announce the creation of the National Charter School of the Year Award. The year-long review process will culminate in a gala event during the 2007 National Charter Schools Week. The winning school will receive \$10,000, a trophy, and will be featured in CER's National Charter School of the Year program.

Using several criteria, including test results, graduation rates, and other successes, every participating charter school will be reviewed and ranked by a blue-ribbon panel of education providers, experts, and researchers. All of the nation's charter schools will receive a National Charter School of the Year Award survey before the end of the summer. Schools will have until December 1, 2006 to complete their survey and present the appropriate data online or through the mail to be considered for the award.

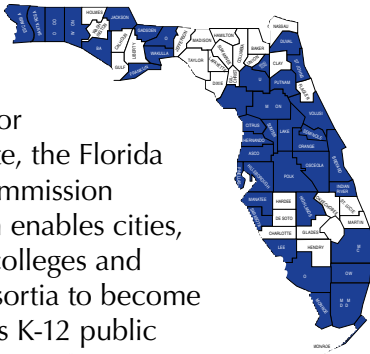
Following the presentation of the award during next year's National Charter Schools Week, CER will release the National Charter School of the Year program with an in-depth cover story on the winning school, followed by data on the top 100 charter schools in the nation. To ensure that this award is recognized by the President, CER will seek the assistance of the Department of Education and the White House.

The Center for Education Reform (CER) creates opportunities for and challenges obstacles to better education for America's communities. Founded in 1993, CER combines education policy with grassroots advocacy to foster positive and bold education reforms. For more information, contact CER at (202) 822-9000 or visit www.edreform.com.

Charter School Legislation Update

CHARTER SCHOOL STATEWIDE AUTHORIZER

The 2006 Florida Legislature passed House Bill 135 creating a new public authorizer for charter schools in the state, the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission (FSE). The new legislation enables cities, universities, community colleges and regional educational consortia to become active partners in Florida's K-12 public education system by allowing them to sponsor charter schools together with the Commission.



It will also establish a procedure for school districts to retain "exclusive authority" over the charter schools in their district and provide public accountability for FSE sponsored charter schools by requiring transparency and rigorous process to become and remain a charter school sponsored by the Commission.

Charter Services for Exceptional Student Education

The Florida Charter School Resource Center has changed their name and is now called: "**Charter Services for Exceptional Student Education.**" Charter Services for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) seeks to build sustainable relationships with charter schools staff, districts, Florida DOE staff and other charter school stakeholders.

The Florida Charter Services for ESE will conduct exceptional student education workshops. Details for these workshops will be posted on the following website: www.charterschools.usf.edu.

If you have any questions, please contact The Florida Charter School Resource Center at 1-800-214-4247 or email James Agarpa at jamesa@iirp.coedu.usf.edu.

For further questions please contact Karen Hines-Henry at 850-245-0502 or Karen.Hines@fldoe.org.



Charter Accountability

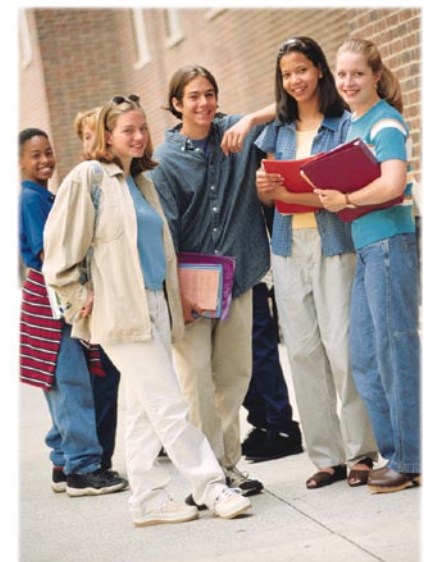
The 2006 Florida Legislature passed House Bill 7103. This bill revises numerous provisions related to charter school governance, academic, and financial accountability. It also revises the purposes of charter schools; the charter school application, renewal and appeals process and deadlines; sponsor duties, responsibilities, and administrative services. The bill revises contents and term of the charter contracts; governing board duties; timing of district payments and disbursement of funds to charter schools; and facilities requirements for conversion charter schools. Through the bill, the Department of Education is to: provide training and technical assistance to applicants and to struggling schools, develop an automated uniform accountability report, develop a standard charter and charter renewal format, and regularly convene the Charter School Review Panel.



2006 K-12 Conference

OCTOBER 3-6, 2006 • ORLANDO, FLORIDA

The 2006 K-12 Conference will focus on (1) innovative approaches to improving achievement at the middle grades (6-8), including K-8 schools; and (2) secondary public school career, collegiate, and magnet academies. Chancellor Cheri Pierson Yecke has expressed the goal of enhancing rigor at the middle level, and Commissioner John L. Winn has stated his goal for every secondary public school in Florida to have an academy by the 2009-2010 school year. This conference will be one of the first steps in highlighting the state's best model academies



and programs to other schools looking to implement such programs of their own. Last year, there were over 700 educators in attendance and district staff, school administrators and teachers are encouraged to attend. General session speakers include Mike Feinberg of KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program), a nationally recognized middle school model for improving student achievement that has been featured on Oprah and in Time Magazine, and Kati Haycock of The Education Trust (www.edtrust.org). Governor Bush and Commissioner Winn have also been invited to join this exciting conference opportunity. For more information, please contact Conference Chairman Holly Radcliffe at Holly.Radcliffe@fldoe.org or (850) 245-5030.

Charter Schools Are a Popular Choice Option for Parents

Since 1996 in Florida, charter schools have played a key role in increasing parental options in public education and providing innovative learning opportunities for students. With 334 charter schools in operation, Florida has the second highest number of charter schools in the nation. From schools specializing in the performing arts to focusing on technical training, Florida's charter schools cover the spectrum of educational needs.



Florida's charter schools are expected to educate more than 98,000 students in the 2006-07 year and provide parents one of the state's fastest growing choice options. Charter schools often provide parents with smaller classes, alternative curriculum and more chances for parental involvement. While authorized and financially supported by local school districts, charter schools are largely free to provide innovative education, and often provide more effective programs and choice to underserved groups of students.

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Florida Virtual School

The Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is a public on-line school offering virtual education options for students in grades 6 through 12. Courses are free to all Florida students and are available to public (including charter school), private, and home school students. Priority is given to students who need expanded access to courses in order to meet their educational goals, such as home education students and students in inner-city and rural high schools that do not have access to higher-level courses and students seeking accelerated access in order to obtain a high school diploma at least one semester early.

A charter school interested in having FLVS provide courses to their students is required to sign a Memorandum of Agreement. This agreement gives the specific guidelines necessary for participation with FLVS. The agreement assures that all parties are aware of their roles in assisting students to succeed when taking on-line courses from FLVS.

For more information on the Memorandum of Agreement process, please contact the FLVS Office at 407-317-3326.

School districts may not limit student access to courses offered through the FLVS; they are required to provide students with access to enroll in courses available through the FLVS and award credit for successful completion of such courses. Access must be made available to students during or after normal school day and through summer school enrollment.



All FLVS courses are delivered over the Internet. To help assure student success with virtual learning, a variety of web-based, technology-based and traditional resources are provided. These include phone, fax, stand-alone software, print-based material, websites, and real-world experts.

FLVS has a full middle and high school curriculum and offers 85 courses or more. The courses are based on the Sunshine State Standards. The curriculum includes honors and Advanced Placement courses. FLVS course grades are accepted for credit and are transferable. FLVS is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

To learn more about the FLVS program visit their website at: www.flvs.net.

GOVERNOR BUSH SIGNS BILL CREATING NEW COMMISSION FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

**MORE SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS WILL BE
AVAILABLE FOR FLORIDA FAMILIES**

TALLAHASSEE - Governor Jeb Bush today signed House Bill 135, which creates a state-level charter school authorizer - the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission. This independent statewide commission will directly sponsor charter schools and authorize municipalities, state universities, community colleges and additional entities to co-sponsor charter schools in Florida, expanding educational opportunities for students.

"Florida's charter schools offer a valuable public school option for students," said Governor Bush. "This legislation opens the door for the expansion of more high quality charter schools in Florida, and the newly created Commission will ensure that these schools are held accountable for serving student needs."

Currently, local school boards and select universities are the only entities allowed to authorize charter schools in Florida. The Commission, under the supervision of the State Board of Education, will provide a higher level of quality, efficiency, transparency and accountability. The seven-member Commission will be appointed by the State Board of Education based on recommendations from the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. The Commission will authorize and act as a sponsor of charter schools, approve or deny Florida Schools of Excellence (FSE) charter school applications, renew or terminate charters and conduct facility and curriculum reviews.

"With its primary focus being to develop and support charter schools in order to better meet growing and diverse needs, this Commission will ensure that charter schools of the highest academic quality are approved and supported throughout the state," said Senator Stephen Wise.

"Florida does not embrace a one-size-fits-all approach to education," said Representative Ralph Arza. "What this bill and the A++ Plan for Education do for the state is to ensure a high-performing education system that

helps every student achieve success. They give parents and students an equal educational opportunity."

Since the state's first five charter schools opened in 1996, public charter schools have focused on providing parents with smaller classes, alternative curriculum and increased opportunities for involvement in their children's education. With 334 public charter schools currently operating, and more than 92,000 students participating, Florida has the third highest number of public charter schools in the nation.

"Now more students than ever before will have the opportunity to take advantage of this distinctive and innovative approach to education," said Representative John Stargel. "This program serves all of our students and provides real choices to parents for their children's success."

Charter schools are public schools that are independently designed and operated and are among the fastest growing school choice options in Florida. They are open to all students, regardless of income, gender, race or religion. Charter schools tend to attract students who struggle academically and cover a spectrum of educational needs from specializing in the performing arts to technical training.



"Today, Governor Bush has increased the number of quality education choices for Florida's families," said Commissioner Winn. "This commission will improve the process for creating and managing charter schools statewide."

"This new law ensures that more and better quality charter schools will evolve to serve students in Florida," said Center for Education Reform President Jeanne Allen. "The new authorizer is a groundbreaking development that draws on our best experiences nationwide and is likely to be a model for other states. It is no surprise that such innovation comes from a state that has led the way in all education reform."

To learn more about charter schools in Florida, visit the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice Office website at www.floridaschoolchoice.org.