

Florida's Charter Schools News

USDOE Awards Florida \$33.6 Million to Help Create More High-Quality Charter High Schools

U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education Raymond Simon presented the award of a \$33.6 million grant to Florida Education Commissioner Eric J. Smith at a ceremony at Nap Ford Community Charter School in Orlando on Thursday, June 12, 2008. The grant is to help Florida create more quality charter schools and increase school choices that parents have to provide to their children.

Florida was awarded the federal grant through a competitive application process and is one of five states receiving the competitive grants through the Department's Charter Schools Program (CSP), which supports states' efforts to plan, design, implement and disseminate information about charter schools. Florida will use its grant to help create high-quality charter high schools which will assist students in meeting the state's academic standards. New charter school applicants will be able to apply to receive the funds later this year.

Additional information can be found at the following link: <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/06/06122008.html>.

Inside this issue:

Crossroad Academy Receives \$2.25 Million	2
Student Awarded Congress-Bundestag Scholarship	3
Charter Schools Week Celebration	4
SBE Rule 6A-6.0784	5
Congratulations!	5
Conferences/Workshops	5

2008 Legislative Changes affecting Section 1002.33, Florida Statutes, Charter Schools

House Bill 1313

Students with Disabilities

- The Bill replaces reference to "students with handicapping conditions" in s. 1002.33(10)(f), F.S. with the phrase "students with disabilities."

Senate Bill 1712

Ethics in Education Act

Require districts, charter schools, Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, and private schools that accept state scholarship students to:

- Adopt policies establishing standards of ethical conduct for instructional personnel and school administrators, including the requirement of training on the standards, responsibilities and procedures for reporting misconduct affecting the health, safety, and welfare of students by instructional personnel and school administrators, and liability protections.



FLORIDA'S
CHARTER
Schools

2008 Legislative Changes - continued

- Ban confidentiality agreements with terminated or dismissed instructional personnel and school administrators (or those that resign in lieu of termination) based on misconduct and require that employment recommendations for future educational settings disclose the misconduct.
- Void the purpose and effect of agreements or contracts that conceal misconduct by instructional personnel or school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.
- Disqualify instructional personnel and school administrators from employment in any position that requires direct contact with students if they have been convicted of offenses listed in s. 1012.315, F. S.
- Conduct employment history checks for instructional personnel and school administrator candidates for positions requiring direct student contact, screen with DOE tools and document findings.
- Post in a prominent place, at the school and online, the policies for reporting abuse and misconduct, contact information, and penalties for failure to report.
- Provide that the sponsor of a charter school that knowingly fails to comply with the requirements for employees of charter schools shall terminate the charter.

HB 5083

Education Conforming Bill

- Section 4 amends s. 1002.33(20)(a), F.S., so that eligible charter schools will receive 100 percent of the Merit Award Program (MAP) allocation without a 5-percent administration fee being withheld by the charter school sponsor.

Crossroad Academy Charter School of Business Received 2.25 Million Dollar Check during National Charter Schools Week



From left to right: Superintendent Reginald James; Major (retired) Willie Jackson, Vice Chairman, Crossroad Academy Board; Ronald Whitfield, State Director, USDA Rural Development; Millie Forehand, Principal; Jean Miller, Acting Executive Director, Independent Education and Parental Choice; and Edward Dixon, Chairman, Gadsden Board of County Commissioners.

QUINCY, FL — During the 2008 National Charter School Week Celebration, Crossroad Academy Charter School of Business received a check in the amount of \$2.25 million for the construction of a new school facility.

“We are pleased to celebrate how our school is helping to open doors to opportunity,” said Inez Holt, Board Chairperson of the school. The public was also invited to join in celebrating all of Crossroad Academy’s accomplishments.

Executive Director Millie Forehand explained that the loan for the new facility had been in the making for approximately 2 years. The \$2.25 million to construct the building is a Community Facilities Direct Loan awarded through the USDA Rural Development. The loan term is 25 years, with a 4.25% interest rate payable from capital outlay funds generated by the school. “We are

fortunate that the current facility has been available to us for the past 10 years, but it was not designed for a school.”

The new facility, which will be located across the street and diagonal from the current site, is designed with school operations in mind. It will accommodate 244 students from kindergarten to eighth grade, but most importantly, will have the added convenience of a combination gym/auditorium. This will allow Crossroad to have assemblies and physical educational activities indoors. Additionally, the classrooms are designed to give the needed square footage and adequate circulation space per class.

“Aside from the tremendous job the staff is doing, their camaraderie and their dedicated support, this is one of the things I am most proud of for Crossroad Academy Charter School of Business,” said Forehand.

Student Awarded Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Scholarship



Mariana Valbuena, a **Somerset Academy Charter High School** senior, has been awarded the prestigious Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Scholarship. The school is located at 20805 Johnson Street in Pembroke Pines, and is a public charter school serving students in grades K-12.

As a scholarship recipient, Mariana will experience German life firsthand next year. She will live with a selected volunteer host family who will provide room, board and a caring environment. Mariana will attend school, participate in community life, culture and recreation, all while learning about Germany and its culture.

"Being a student at Somerset Academy Charter has definitely allowed me to grow as an individual. The fact that every student is part of a diverse yet close-knit community allows for personal attention from teachers and staff. This charter school has encouraged me to work hard and inspired me to make my dreams come true," explains Mariana about her years at Somerset Academy in Pembroke Pines.

Mariana, a young socially-conscious community activist, is quite busy serving not only her community, but others as well. Among her recent activities was a mission trip in 2006 to a poor town in Lima, Peru where she served as the group translator. During this trip, she helped build homes, assisted in a local school, and distributed food and water. She ventured on a similar trip to the Dominican Republic as well. Mariana is currently working on an independent service project designed to help a group of poverty-stricken children of Colombia. She is planning, organizing, and carrying out the project that will provide a sponsor family for each child. Mariana has volunteered at nursing homes, soup kitchens and hospitals. She tutors students struggling with school work and teachers who desire to learn Spanish. Mariana is a mentor of the CHANCE Big Brother Big Sister Program and she recently won the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizens Award.

The Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Scholarship program provides full scholarships for American high school students to live with a host family and attend school in Germany for a year. This unique program is jointly funded by the German Bundestag and the U.S. Congress, through the U.S. Department of State and is awarded to only 50 students from the Southeast U.S.

Finalists for the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Scholarship are selected based on many criteria. The objective of the program is to offer this unique opportunity to the students whom best represent the diversity of the United States. To be eligible, the student must be a U.S. citizen, national or permanent resident and have a GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale. The student must show evidence of the personal qualities essential for adjustment to another culture such as flexibility, curiosity, open-mindedness, sense of humor and a desire to be challenged. Written and oral communication skills are also evaluated as are the motivation for a cross-cultural experience.

After her year in Germany, Mariana plans to attend Duke University where she has been awarded a scholarship. She aspires to major in a science-related subject that will entail research and being surrounded by nature.



Charter Schools Performed at the Department of Education during National Charter Schools Week

Employees of the Department of Education were given an opportunity to see how their hard work contributes to the lives of children they serve on a daily basis by watching students from several local charter schools display their talents. The Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice (IEPC) invited C.O.A.S.T. Charter School from Wakulla County, Crossroad Academy Charter School of Business from Gadsden County, and School of Arts and Sciences from Leon County to participate in the celebration of National Charter Schools Week.

The celebration included IEPC Acting Executive Director Jean Miller serving as Mistress of Ceremony and the reading of the Governor's Proclamation recognizing charter school students increased proficiency in performance. Rebecca Katz spoke on behalf of the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools. The performances were enjoyed by all. Great job!!



C.O.A.S.T. Charter School
Irish Step Dancers



Crossroad Academy Skit/Modeling Troupe performed "Edgar Allan Poe's Cask of Amontillado" (with a Sherlock Holmes Ending).



The **School of Arts and Sciences** Chorus sang "Sunrise, Sunset" from "Fiddler on the Roof" by Jerry Bock and "You Raise Me Up" arranged by Roger Emerson. The Advanced Band played "Canadian Folk Fantasy" arranged by Edmondson & McGinty and "Baby Elephant Walk" by Henry Mancini, arranged by Johnnie Vinson.

Governance Training Rule approved by State Board of Education

The State Board of Education approved Rule 6A-6.0784, FAC, Approval of Charter School Governance Training at its meeting on June 17, 2008. The rule implements section 1002.33, F.S., by requiring every member of the governing body of a charter school operating in Florida to participate in governance training on or before August 1 of each calendar year. The training must be delivered consistent with a training plan that has been submitted and approved by the Department of Education, as described in the rule.

To ensure fair and equitable implementation of the rule, the following guidelines will be in effect for the remainder of the current calendar year:

- All charter school governing board members are to participate in four hours of approved governance training by December 31, 2008.
- Training plans must be submitted to the DOE by July 18, 2008, to be included in the first round of reviews.
- Names and contact information of approved trainers will be posted to the Charter Schools Web site on August 1, 2008.

The rule contains a grandfathering clause for governance training that was provided prior to approval of the rule. Governing boards that participated in governance training between January 1, 2008, and the effective date of the rule will be considered to have met the training requirement if it was delivered according to a training plan that is subsequently approved by the Department.

Additional information on governance training can be found at the following Web site: http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Charter_Schools/.

Congratulations!

Renatta Adan-Espinoza, Principal, Academy for Positive Learning, received the Educator Award from the American Red Cross Searches for 'Real Heroes' to Honor at the 2008 Luncheon. The event was held on June 25, 2008, at the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach.

The annual event, created in 2002, grew from a desire to develop a community program that is closely related to the overall mission of the Red Cross – teaching people to save lives. At this year's luncheon, the awards were presented in 10 categories: Fire Rescue, Law Enforcement, Medical, Good Samaritan Adult, Good Samaritan Youth- Girl, Good Samaritan Youth-Boy, Military, Animal Rescue, Educator and Marine Rescue.



**Office of Independent Education
and Parental Choice**

Phone: 850-245-0502

Fax: 850-245-0875

School Choice Hotline:
1-800-447-1636

www.floridaschoolchoice.org

Conferences/Workshops

Date(s)	Conference/ Workshop	Location	Contact Information
November 20-21, 2008	2008 Florida Charter School Conference	Doubletree Hotel at entrance to Universal Orlando	Noelle Bonard at Noelle.Bonard@fldoe.org