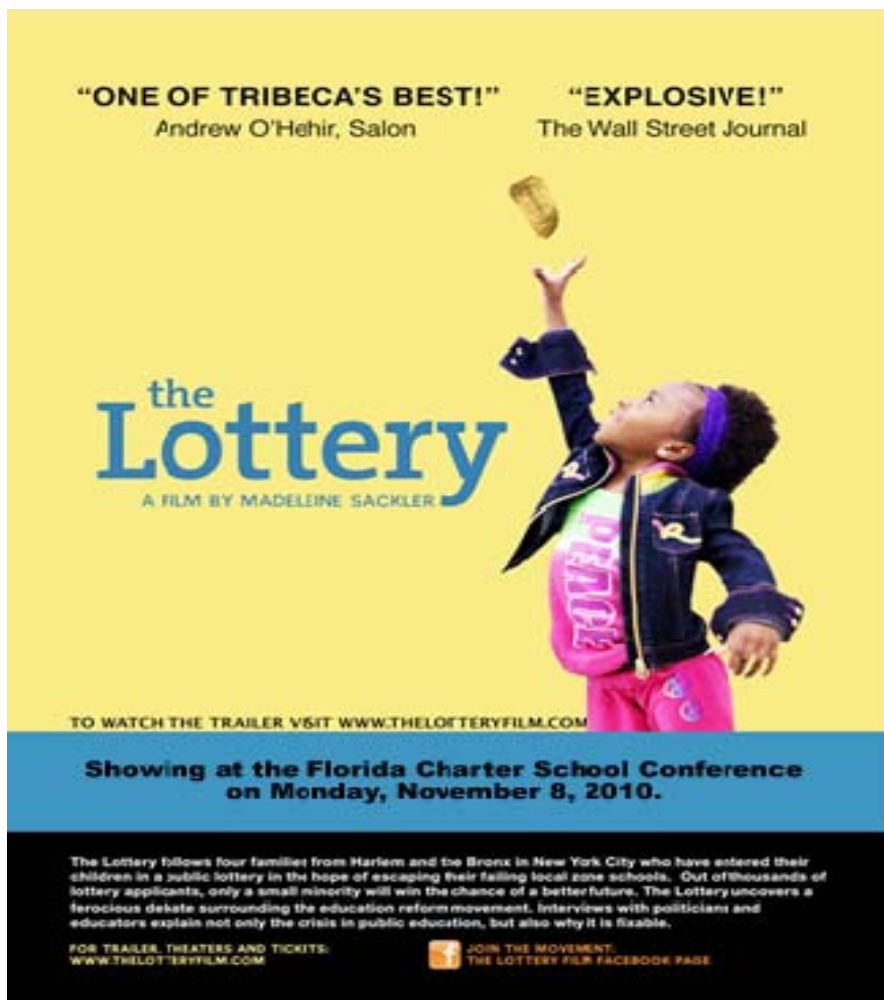


September 2010

# Florida's Charter Schools News

## 2010 Florida Charter School Conference presents:



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The annual Florida Charter School Conference will take place **November 8-10, 2010** at the **DoubleTree Hotel at the Entrance to Universal Orlando**. The theme for this year is "*Florida's Charter Schools: Rising to the Challenge*." We invite you to attend this year's conference to hear how Florida's charter schools have "risen to the challenge" of providing effective programs and school choice to Florida's diverse student population.

Visit <http://www.charterschoolconference.com> for more information on the conference. See you in November!



FLORIDA'S  
**CHARTER**  
*Schools*

## Gardening Helps Students' Skills Blossom



Emanating outside of the Florida Autism Center of Excellence (FACE) are the fragrant aromas of basil, rosemary, dill, mint and other fresh herbs. An assortment of vegetables like carrots, tomatoes and peppers radiate bright hues.

The pleasant sights and smells come from the new community garden at FACE, located right on the school's beautiful campus and designed just for the students.

### The Community Garden is Born

The garden came to life thanks to an enthusiastic community volunteer, Brenda Connolly. A self-described "outdoors lover," Brenda, a CPA and mother of two, was looking to reinvigorate her passion for gardening in a way that would benefit her community.

"I wanted to develop my vision of growing locally sourced produce in an educational environment," she said.

Brenda's pursuit led her to FACE, a public charter school managed by Quest that serves children ages 3 to 22 with moderate to severe autism. Since the garden's launch, the approximately 70 students at FACE spend time each week during the school year planting seeds, caring for vegetables and harvesting crops.

### Garden Therapy for Autism

A program like the community garden helps FACE students develop essential skills in a fun environment while catering to their unique needs and abilities. For children with autism, who can often struggle with learning, taking a complex skill and breaking it down to a series of smaller, more manageable steps can often be an effective way to teach. This practice can be adapted in the garden setting – a reality that Brenda, who had never worked with children with autism before, learned quickly.

"Something like planting green bean seeds can be a challenging task for some of the kids, because there are four to five steps," she said. "So I had to rethink, 'Okay, we're going to do it one step at a time.'"

A multi-step process such as planting seeds is taught in independent stages, from finding the appropriate container all the way to watering. Then, when the students struggled determining how much water to use – a skill that may seem basic – Brenda taught them proper watering by using a cup as a measurement tool. And still, the garden has helped them learn about more than horticulture.

"It's not just about gardening," Brenda said. "We're reaching them in sensory ways, and they're learning other important skills."

### More than Gardening

The students gain exposure to sensory activities such as digging, exposure to new textures and smells, and exposure to new foods by tasting the vegetables they have harvested, which can be therapeutic for some.

At the same time, they learn social skills by working alongside students from a neighboring charter school, who serve as mentors to the children at FACE. The vegetables produced are later sold at a farmer's market, teaching the students about money management. Funds raised from the market are reinvested back into the garden.

### Growing the Garden Further

For Brenda, the upcoming school year will be a chance to do even more with the students and give the garden an opportunity to expand its reach. She hopes to teach the children about composting, introduce a butterfly garden, focus more on crop maintenance, and build partnerships with additional schools. Above all else, she wants each child to be exposed to all the steps in the gardening process, and is constantly thinking of new ways to help them grow.

"I really like working with the kids; they have so much to contribute. And I saw so much progress in them [this past year]. It was unbelievable."

Submitted by Tom Porter, Director, Quest Schools, FACE

## Best Practices Web sites

Technology has become an essential part of teaching. One of the most diversely interesting and academically useful Web sites for K-12 teachers, who are seeking to infuse more technology into their school curricular programs, is *EDTECH Teacher: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning* located at:

<http://edtechteacher.org/index.html>

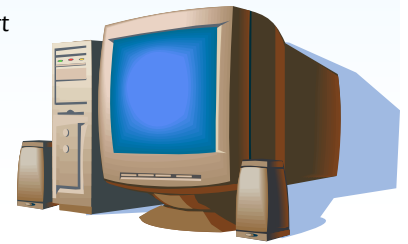
This Web site is being developed as a user-friendly library of peer-reviewed teaching resources and features numerous links to sister Web sites such as:

*The Center for Teaching History with Technology* located at:

<http://www.thwt.org/>

These wiki-centers have thousands of interactive lesson plans, webquests, podcasts, powerpoints, chatrooms and blogs that might be of great interest to teachers. **EdTechTeacher** is also an educational technology professional development provider dedicated to helping teachers use technology to create active, student-centered learning communities. The EdTechTeacher "[Teaching for the 21st Century](#)" [Professional Development Program \(T21\)](#) provides cohorts of teachers the opportunity to develop their technology integration skills over a one-year period with the coaching and support of educators who have extensive experience teaching with technology.

Submitted by Chris Muire, Ph.D., Educational Policy Director, Charter Schools Program



## River City Science Academy (RCSA) Charter School Received an "A" Grade Second Year in a Row

RCSA received an "A" grade in its second year last year. RCSA is Duval County's first ever "A" grade charter school. The school was accredited by the **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI)** in the second year.

This year, RCSA received an "A" grade again for the second year in a row and made **AYP** in all subgroups. This is a great accomplishment. The teachers and staff are so dedicated and by giving more than 100% to our students, it paid off.

According to the Florida Department of Education Website, 11 middle schools made an A grade in Duval County; and RCSA is one of them. Among them only 3 made AYP, and River City Science Academy is one them. RCSA is the only charter school to make an A and AYP this year.

During the 2010-11 school year, RCSA will be serving 6th through 10th graders in middle and high with around 580 students. In addition, RCSA is starting the elementary school and expecting 250 students in grades K-5.

Submitted by Dogan Tozoglu, Ph.D., Principal, River City Science Academy

*Congratulations!*

## Schedule of Trainings:

The Department has scheduled several Webinars this month to address pertinent topics for charter school administrators and sponsors.

### Merit Award Program

Tuesday, September 14, 2010, at 2:00pm  
Thursday, September 16, 2010, at 9:00am

The first Webinar topic is the Merit Award Program. The deadline to submit a charter school plan for the Merit Award Program is October 1, 2010. This is also the deadline for participating charter schools to certify compliance in implementing last school year's plan; therefore, charter school administrators interested in learning more about the program should register to attend.

### Financial Condition Rule

Thursday, September 16, 2010, at 2:00pm

The second Webinar topic is on [Rule 6A-1.0081, F.A.C.](#), related to charter school monthly financial reports and financial conditions. This is a repeat of the April 2010 Webinar that we hosted when the rule was adopted. We will discuss the requirements established by the rule and emphasize the district's role in monitoring charter school financial conditions.

To participate in one of the above Webinars, visit the [School Choice Meeting Room](#) Web site and click **Show All Meetings**. Then click **Register** for the session of your choice. Please note that registration confirmation and reminder e-mails will be sent from [messenger@webex.com](mailto:messenger@webex.com). If you have any questions, please contact our Training Coordinator, Tera Teders, at [tera.teders@fldoe.org](mailto:tera.teders@fldoe.org).

### Environmental Education Workshops for Teachers

The School Choice Office recently collaborated with the Department of Environmental Protection to host a series of professional development workshops across the state focused on environmental education. If you were unable to make one of the August workshops, we are pleased to announce that the Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) has scheduled many new workshops for the upcoming school year. Charter school educators are encouraged to check out the FWC Learning Calendar at [http://myfwc.com/CALENDAR/Calendar\\_Learning.htm](http://myfwc.com/CALENDAR/Calendar_Learning.htm). Participants can contact the person listed for the workshop to sign-up.

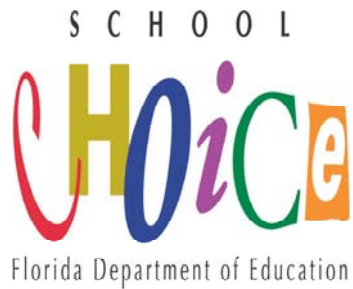
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## Governance Trainer Plans are due October 1, 2010

The Department will conduct two review periods for applications, with deadlines for submitting applications on or before October 1 and on or before May 1. Forms for submitting training plans are posted at: [http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Charter\\_Schools/](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Charter_Schools/). A training provider seeking approval must submit the original and three (3) copies of the form, or an original and an electronic copy on a CD saved as a PDF file, to the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice as described on the form.

Each approval shall be granted for up to two years from date of approval. No earlier than six (6) months prior to the expiration of approval, a training provider may submit a request for renewal of an approved training plan by completing and submitting Form IEPC-10, Charter School Governance Training, Application to Renew an Approved Training Plan. Form IEPC-10 is posted at: [http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Charter\\_Schools/](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Charter_Schools/).

If additional assistance is needed, please contact LaCrest McCary at (850) 245-0502 or via e-mail at [CharterSchools@fldoe.org](mailto:CharterSchools@fldoe.org).



**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](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org)

**Technical Assistance is Available**

Charter school staff is available to provide technical assistance or assist with any questions you may have. If you need assistance, please contact staff via telephone at 850-245-0502 or via e-mail at [Charterschools@fldoe.org](mailto:Charterschools@fldoe.org).

**Conferences/Workshops**

Date(s)	Conference/ Workshop	Location	Contact Information
Sept. 24-25, 2010	Florida Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Annual Conference	Orlando, FL	<a href="http://www.fascd.org">http://www.fascd.org</a>
Sept. 27-28, 2010	Best Cooperative Practices Between Charter and Traditional Public Schools Conference	Columbus, Ohio	Amy Black, <a href="mailto:ablack@oapcs.org">ablack@oapcs.org</a> , 614-744-2266, ext. 226
Oct. 4-7, 2010	2010 Dropout Prevention Institute/School Attendance Symposium	Hilton Walt Disney World® Resort, Lake Buena Vista, FL	Tameka Thomas @ 850-0845 or <a href="mailto:tameka.thomas@fldoe.org">tameka.thomas@fldoe.org</a> or Dr. Kimberly Davis at 850-245-0551 or <a href="mailto:kimberly.davis@fldoe.org">kimberly.davis@fldoe.org</a> or Dr. Gria Davison at 850-245-7837 or <a href="mailto:gdavison@usf.edu">gdavison@usf.edu</a>
Oct. 18-21, 2010	2010 NACSA Leadership Conference	Scottsdale Resort & Conference Center, 7700 E. McCormick Parkway Scottsdale, AZ 85258	<a href="http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/event/2010-nacsa-leadership-conference">http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/event/2010-nacsa-leadership-conference</a>
November 8-10, 2010 Important Dates: October 8 - <a href="#">Hotel Reservations</a> October 22 - <a href="#">Attendee Registration</a>	The 2010 Florida Charter School Conference *  The theme for this year is "Florida's Charter Schools: Rising to the Challenge."  * Required for CSP Grant Recipients	DoubleTree Hotel at the Entrance to Universal Orlando  Orlando, FL	<a href="http://www.charterschoolconference.com/">http://www.charterschoolconference.com/</a>