

CHARTER SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER

February 2012

Florida gets flexibility waiver from US Dept. of Ed.

The U.S. Department of Education has approved Florida's request for a flexibility waiver from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Florida was one of 11 states asking for flexibility with regard to accountability standards mandated by the No Child Left Behind legislation implemented in 2001. The state requested the waiver to be able to move to a single statewide accountability system that would eliminate duplicative regulation and make Florida's system easier to understand.

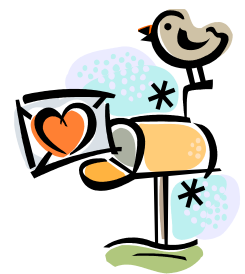
"Florida was one of the first states to implement strong accountability measures for its schools," said Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson. "Overlaying a federal accountability system atop what was already in place and working in our state has proven to be confusing for parents and stakeholders."

Commissioner Robinson added that flexibility would strengthen the state's ability to tailor its program to meet Florida's unique educational needs and better align state and federal accountability systems into one cohesive, easy-to-understand structure.

"Aligning our resources with our needs will lead to continued performance improvement for all students throughout Florida as we work to increase standards and boost national and international competitiveness," said Commissioner Robinson. "Approval of our request, however, is but one step in a process required to move forward with the flexibility waiver."

Florida applied for an ESEA waiver in mid-November 2011 and the U.S. Department of Education requested additional information in December. The State Board of Education will take action related to components of the waiver at its February meeting.

More information request is available at <http://www.fldoe.org/esea/>.



The School Choice Office has moved!

Our new mailing address:

*Florida Department of Education
Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice
325 W. Gaines Street, **Suite 1044**
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400*

Office staff continue to be available at their current phone numbers and e-mail addresses.



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FSUS wins 2012-2014 CSP Online Learning Community Project

The Florida State University School (FSUS) was recently awarded a 2012-2014 dissemination sub-grant for their successful proposal in the Charter School Program (CSP) Online Learning Community competition. The FSUS project is described briefly below.

FSUS, in partnership with Collaborate, Plan, Align, Learn, Motivate, Share (CPALMS), will develop and implement an Online Learning Community (OLC), CPALMS CHARTER, that will offer K-12, multidisciplinary support to all of Florida's charter school teachers and leaders in the areas of curriculum, instruction and assessment for the purpose of increasing student achievement in the core content areas evaluated through the state's A+ Accountability Plan. All materials and resources provided will undergo a rigorous peer review process through strong collaborations with the FSU Learning Systems Institute, Instructional Systems Program, Beacon Educator staff and OLC Advisory Board.

The Florida Charter School Program Office at the Florida Department of Education expects to announce the next round of dissemination sub-grant Requests For Proposals (RFPs) in late March 2012 through its statewide LISTSERV.

Program Reminders

- **Charter Schools Week** is May 6—12, 2012. This year's theme: *Public Charter Schools: Because Every Child Can Succeed*. For more information visit <http://www.publiccharters.org/additional-pages/national-charter-schools-week.aspx>. What is your school doing for Charter Schools Week?

Department Notes

2011-12 and 2012-13 Statewide Assessment Schedules

The 2011-12 and 2012-13 Statewide Assessment Schedules have been updated and posted to the Department's website at <http://www.fldoe.org/asp/schedule.asp>. ([Read more](#))

Florida Turnaround Leaders Program

The Florida Department of Education has partnered with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to offer a two and half-year program to prepare a cohort of aspiring school leaders. ([Read more](#))

RFP amended Due date moved

The Department has amended the 2012-15 Public Charter Schools Grant Proposal (CSP Grant). The amended version of the RFP, which is now posted on our website at https://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/charter_schools/Planning_Implementation_Grant.asp includes two changes, as explained below:

- The Due Date has been changed from February 23, 2012 to March 14, 2012 (Page 2 of the RFP)
- The definition of eligible applicants has been changed to allow district-managed charter schools and virtual charter schools to apply for funding (Page 2 of the RFP)

Both changes are highlighted with track-changes in the RFP which is now posted. Please contact our office if you have any questions.

Is your contact information up to date?

Update you contact information through your charter school login or e-mail Charterschools@fldoe.org.



Charters in the News

A round-up of local and national charter stories

Charter Schools

"Hopes, Fears and Reality: A Balanced Look at American Charter Schools in 2011"

By [Christina A. Samuels](#) [EdWeek.org](#)

Collaborations between public charter schools and their districts are on the rise, according to a [report](#) released last month from the Center for Reinventing Public Education, associated with the University of Washington Bothell.

The study says these connections come from districts' realization that charter schools can play a role in providing quality options for students at risk of academic failure.

The report also notes that for the 2010-11 school year, 5,275 charter schools enrolled 1.8 million students nationwide, or about 4 percent of all public school students. [Read more....](#)

The difference between good schools and effective schools

By [Joanne Yatvin](#) From *The Answer Sheet* by [Valerie Strauss](#)

I just found a book review I wrote for *The Elementary School Journal* in 1986. The book I reviewed was [McDonogh 15: Becoming a School](#) by Lucianne Bond Carmichael. (If you've never read it, you should get a copy, read it, and hold it close to your heart forever. Better yet, buy several copies and send them to your federal and state legislators.)

Reading it reinforced and expanded my own idea of what a truly good school is and the specific things it does to empower its students and strengthen its teachers. [Read More....](#)

Neil Drake: What you should know about charter schools

By [Neil Drake](#) [Special to The Sun](#)

After 15 years of working with charter schools in Alachua County and around Florida, I am impressed with the continuing need to inform the public as to the true nature, purpose and impact of charters on the public school system.

How should the public, especially parents, evaluate charter schools and why should they bother?

Charter schools should matter to parents and should be scrutinized carefully because, for many families, they are the only real choice available. [Read more....](#)

How one charter school bucks trend, serves the disabled

An Orlando campus is proving that charter schools can serve students with disabilities.

By [John O'Connor](#) [Stateimpact.org](#)

When her 3-year-old granddaughter moved to Orlando, the dean of education at the University of Central Florida knew exactly where she should go — a school founded for children with disabilities.

Young Ellie doesn't have a disability. But Sandra Robinson says she's still best served in the toddler program at the UCP Bailes campus in East Orlando.

"She would have the opportunities to work with these very skilled teachers," Robinson said, "but also in such a diverse classroom so that from her very early years Ellie would understand differences in people."

It's one of seven charter schools run by the non-profit UCP, affiliated with the Central Florida chapter of United Cerebral Palsy. And it's unique in several ways. [Read more....](#)

PRESENTATION PROPOSALS ARE STILL BEING ACCEPTED for the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LABORATORY SCHOOLS and CHARTER SCHOOL CONFERENCE.

The call for proposals and registration can be found at <http://www.fsus.fsu.edu/ials2012/proposals.html>

OUR CONFIRMED KEYNOTE SPEAKERS ARE

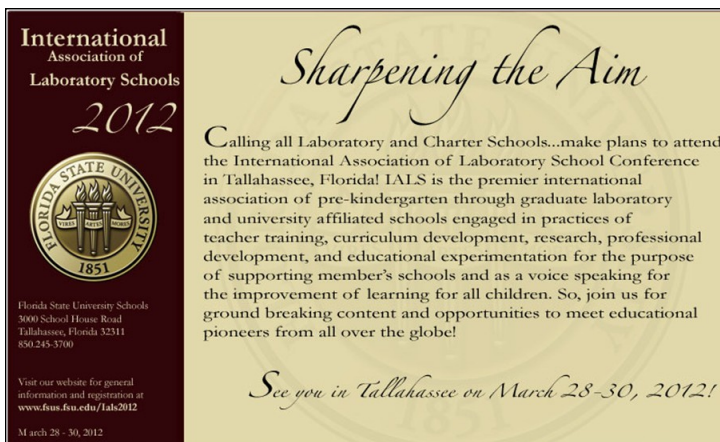
DR. BARBARA FOORMAN

Director, Florida Center for Reading Research

and

GERARD ROBINSON

Florida Commissioner of Education



The poster for the International Association of Laboratory Schools 2012 conference. It features the Florida State University logo on the left and the title 'Sharpening the Aim' in cursive. The main text reads: 'Calling all Laboratory and Charter Schools...make plans to attend the International Association of Laboratory School Conference in Tallahassee, Florida! IALS is the premier international association of pre-kindergarten through graduate laboratory and university affiliated schools engaged in practices of teacher training, curriculum development, research, professional development, and educational experimentation for the purpose of supporting member's schools and as a voice speaking for the improvement of learning for all children. So, join us for ground breaking content and opportunities to meet educational pioneers from all over the globe!' At the bottom, it says 'See you in Tallahassee on March 28-30, 2012!'. Contact information for Florida State University Schools is provided on the left side of the poster.

2012 LEEF 32nd Annual Conference



Good things come to those who wait. The 32nd Annual **League of Environmental Educators in Florida Conference** will be held March 29-April 1, 2012 at Wekiva Springs State Park. An amazing conference is planned, starting with keynote speaker, internationally known storyteller, author and naturalist, Brian "Fox" Ellis.

The website is now open for registration. The call for exhibitors, vendors and presenters is also open. For more information and to register, go to <http://leef-florida.org/net/content/go.aspx?s=47776.0.0.37432>.

Professional Development Resources

EE Professional Development for Charter Schools

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is partnering with the Florida Department of Education Charter School Office to organize environmental training for charter school teachers. In 2011, a needs assessment was completed by charter school teachers showing they wanted to receive this type of professional development.

To get a list of workshops, go to <http://depcharterschoolsworkshops.eventbrite.com/>. This website will contain all available workshops and will be updated weekly to include additional trainings. For more information, contact DEP Education Specialist Eileen Tramontana at Eileen.tramontana@dep.state.fl.us or 386-916-6834.

Florida Turnaround Leaders Program

The Florida Department of Education has partnered with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) to offer a two and half-year program to prepare a cohort of aspiring school leaders.

The purpose of preparing these leaders is to improve student achievement in chronically low-performing Florida schools. This innovative and intensive program will be made available to 20 current or aspiring charter school principals. Please visit http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/Charter_Schools/News_Feed.asp

and click on the link for more information. If you have questions, please contact: sandra.eggert@fldoe.org.



Shining Stars

Somerset Academy student earns full scholarship to U. of Pennsylvania



Somerset Academy Charter School student Tony Morales has been selected for early admission to the University of Pennsylvania's College of Arts and Sciences with a QuestBridge College Match scholarship. As a Quest Bridge scholar, Tony's expenses – everything from tuition to board – will be covered for four years. Tony is a senior at Somerset Academy Charter School -- 20801 Johnson Street -- in Pembroke Pines and is also class president.

This year, 321 finalists were matched with QuestBridge College Match awards at 31 of its partner colleges. Tony is among the twenty students (from 7,000 applicants) who received very early admission notifications from the University of Pennsylvania. Early admission notifications won't be released until March 2012. The QuestBridge National College Match helps outstanding low-income high school seniors gain admission and full four-year scholarships to some of the nation's most selective colleges. As part of the QuestBridge National College Match program, Tony attended Harvard this past summer. Tony plans to major in philosophy, politics and economics at UPenn.

Share the accomplishments of your **Shining Stars**! Please send submissions via e-mail to our newsletter editor at charterschools@fldoe.org.

- Indicate "Charter School Shining Stars" in the subject line.
- Limit the story to 3-4 paragraphs or no more than 500 words.
- Proofread and ensure story is ready for publication.
- Include a contact person or web link for more information.
- Include up to 2 photos, with captions (optional).

Stories may appear in the newsletter, the website, or both.

"This is a dream come true," said Tony, 17, a resident of Pembroke Pines. "I'm ecstatic! So is my family." Having been accepted to a top Ivy League university hasn't slowed Tony down at all. "I still have a lot of work to do at Somerset," explains the energetic senior. "I'm student government president...there's lots to do before graduation."



*Improving K-12 Educational
Choice Options*

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