



**The School District of Osceola County, FL**  
Terry Andrews, Superintendent

## **Press Release (English and Spanish)**

**October 21, 2011** - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact:** Dana Schafer, Director of Community Relations - Osceola School District -  
- 407-870-4007 or 407-908-8811 (cell)

## **Osceola Home To Two 2010/2011 Just Read, Florida! Literacy Award Finalists For The State**

The Florida Department of Education has announced that two Osceola School District professionals were among the 2010/2011 Just Read, Florida! Literacy Finalists. Following a comprehensive selection process, statewide finalists, and ultimately winners, were chosen from district nominations based on their commitment to literacy and their proven ability to promote and teach others about the fundamental skill of reading. Florida school districts were invited to nominate outstanding literacy leaders in four categories: District/School Literacy Leaders, Reading Coach of the Year, Reading Teacher of the Year, and Reading Leadership Team of the Year.

Osceola's finalists included:

### **Belynda Pinkston, Principal of Poinciana High -- High School Literacy Leader of the Year Finalist**

*The Reading Leader of the Year is selected from among district and school-level administrators who demonstrate superior leadership qualities and advance policies to foster excellence in literacy education at all levels.*

Ms. Pinkston believes that promoting a culture of literacy entails creating an environment centered on the three R's: Relationships, Rigor, and Relevance. As a result of focusing on these areas, Poinciana High improved its school grade from an "F" to a "B" for the 2009/2010 school year, a feat only duplicated by one other high school in the entire state of Florida. Teacher professional development has been offered in line with school-wide goals such as higher-order thinking questioning, collaborative pairs, Cornell notes, academic vocabulary, differentiated instruction, word walls, and many other topics. Each of the school's departments, including elective and career and technical education classes, have adopted a Reading Benchmark that is woven into their subject matter. Each department is also implementing a school-wide reading plan, which entails students working daily with on-grade level text, answering complex level questions, and concluding the week's work with a written summary. Ms. Pinkston said that their daily mission is to continue to "Promote **A** Standard of Excellence for **All** Students."

## **Amy Flowers, Reading Coach at St. Cloud Elementary -- Reading Coach of the Year Finalist**

*The Reading Coach of the Year award recognizes expertise in literacy and the ability to effectively deliver professional development activities related to literacy.*

Mrs. Flowers was selected for her passion for literacy and her ability to share her expertise with others. Her focus remains on ensuring that all students read at their appropriate level which is supported with her knowledge and understanding of literacy standards. Not only does she understand her role as a coach, more importantly, teachers can be confident that she is the person at their school who will guide and support them. In addition to facilitating book studies and needs-based workshops for staff, parent efforts are also supported through activities such as *Families Building Better Readers*, *Read Under the Stars*, and *Parents and Partners* to name a few. As the school's new teacher Mentor Lead on campus, she is able to influence and guide all incoming staff into understanding the appropriate instructional rigor that is necessary to meet the high expectations of the school, ensuring the success of every student. As a life-long learner herself, she leads by example, first earning National Board Certification, a Masters of Education in Reading, and also pursuing her doctorate in Educational Leadership.

As state finalists, Ms. Pinkston and Mrs. Flowers will receive a commemorative certificate in appreciation of their enduring commitment to literacy.

###