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**Sent time:** Wednesday, November 23, 2011 10:03:46 AM  
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**Subject:** FW: 11/23/11 Education Round-Up

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FYI – Have a wonderful Thanksgiving... ☺

Sincerely,

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**From:** Higgins, Deborah  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 23, 2011 9:14 AM  
**Subject:** 11/23/11 Education Round-Up

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

*Happy  
Thanksgiving*

[Officials: Raising FCAT standards necessary but may reduce graduation rates](#)  
(Daytona Beach News-Journal © 11/23/2011)

Smith Valentine More Florida schools may receive F's and more students may fail to graduate as state officials seek to ratchet up the passing scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. A group of education officials, including Volusia County Superintendent Margaret Smith and Flagler County Superintendent Jane...

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[Report: For-profit colleges allow cheating](#)

(DeSoto Sun Herald © 11/23/2011)

(Bloomberg) — Seven of 12 for-profit colleges attended online by undercover U.S. investigators violated school policies on cheating, grading standards and loan counseling, a report by the Government Accountability Office found. One or more instructors at two colleges repeatedly noted that the students were submitting plagiarized work, yet took no action, according to the agency, Congress' investi...

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[Mediator: Okaloosa school teachers should get a raise by Jan. 1](#)

(Destin Log © 11/23/2011)

A special magistrate brought in to mediate the dispute between the Okaloosa County School District and the teachers union has recommended that teachers receive a step increase beginning Jan. 1. The recommendation comes more than two months after the school district and the Okaloosa County Education Association declared an impasse over several issues, including teachers' pay. Read the magis...

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[Alabama county to drop single-sex classes](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/23/2011)

TALLAPOOSA, Ala. - The Tallapoosa County School Board has agreed to end single-sex classes in its public schools after the American Civil Liberties Union alleged that the programs were illegal and discriminatory. As a result of a settlement agreement, single-sex classes will cease at the end of this school year. Under the agreement, Council Middle...

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[Guest opinion: Florida needs less grade inflation, more legitimate education](#)

(Lehigh News Star © 11/23/2011)

As a newcomer to Lee County with a grandson enrolled in the Lee County school system, I am appalled at the low level of student achievement here compared to where he attended school last year, Jefferson County, Ky., which contains Louisville. As a retired college professor, I admit my educational expectations may be a bit lofty, but when you have 45 percent of graduating high school seniors who c...

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[Shorter breakfast time at Lee County schools could save \\$1.5 million](#)

(Lehigh News Star © 11/23/2011)

By shortening the time students have to eat the free breakfast meals the district provides at schools, the Lee County district hopes to save \$1.5 million in transportation costs next year. High school students will have 20 minutes to eat their breakfast next year, 10 minutes shorter than today. Elementary students will have 25 minutes, five minutes shorter than today. Middle school students will ...

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[Broward Teachers Union's interim leader vows more transparency](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/23/2011)

While Broward Teachers Union members are pressing for access to an internal audit detailing two years of possible financial mismanagement, the organization's new administrator is vowing to usher in more transparency. For starters, the Dec. 7 hearing to determine whether to expel union President Pat Santeramo will be open to all dues-paying members. John Tarka, retired president of the Pittsbu...

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[Palmetto High students gain top scholastic honors](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/23/2011)

Eight Palmetto Senior High School students were selected as National Merit Scholarship semifinalists for the class of 2012. The eight seniors are Joshua Ascherman, James Choi, Nathan Harris, Albert Liu, Yang Liu, Alyssa Rosenfeld, Ellora Sarkar and Olga Shestopalova. The award honors students who excel on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test and show exceptional academic...

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[Half of Lee teachers leave their jobs within 5 years, creating huge retraining cost](#)

(Naples Daily News © 11/23/2011)

FORT MYERS — Nearly half of the teachers hired by the Lee County School District leave their jobs within five years of starting them, costing the district millions of dollars. More costly, though, may be what students lose: teachers with added experience, who have a stronger role in student improvement. The consequences of this trend — which is consistent across the U.S. — are concerning to educa...

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[FCAT reading scores set to change, and that has some worried](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/23/2011)

Florida's move to ratchet up its FCAT scoring system, making the state's reading and math tests tougher to pass, is mostly a done deal. But a disagreement has flared up about how to score the eighth, ninth and 10th grade reading sections of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. The Florida Department of Education has decided to pull together another committee to help the State Board of Educ...

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[Charter Schools USA appeals Orange charter school rejection](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/23/2011)

Orange County this week became the fourth school district to face an appeal from Charter Schools USA after rejecting one of its school applications. The county last month rejected the plan to open Renaissance Charter School at Orlando in Fall 2012. The rapidly expanding, Fort Lauderdale-based charter management company operates 28 schools in Florida, including eight under the Renaissance umbrella...

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[Seminole teacher fired after tirade gets her job back](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/23/2011)

SANFORD — A Winter Springs High School teacher fired last year after a profanity-laced tirade against a handicapped student got her job back Tuesday, along with back pay. Under court order to reinstate Cydney Abrams, the Seminole County School Board reluctantly agreed. The 5th District Court of Appeal upheld a state hearing officer's decision that Abrams' infraction did not warrant dismissal...

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[Teachers union confronts school board on scheduling issues](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/23/2011)

Updated: 8:58 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2011 Posted: 8:38 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2011 The head of the union representing the Palm Beach County School District's roughly 12,000 teachers asked school board members Tuesday night to fix a scheduling problem at middle schools that he said is leading to teachers working all day with no breaks and super...

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[School board lauds departing chief as calming force, 'wise man'](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/23/2011)

The Palm Beach County School Board bid goodbye Tuesday to a superintendent they say "brought calm and healing to a district divided" during his very short tenure. "What you accomplished in nine months is massive," School Board Member Jenny Prior Brown told Superintendent Bill Malone. "You did it with grace and humility." Malone, who was hired by the board in February to r...

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#### [Hire the inspector general](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/23/2011)

Any illusions that Palm Beach County School Board members might have had of getting partial oversight from the county's government watchdog agency at a discounted price seem long dead. Inspector General Sheryl Steckler reiterated last week what she has said for months: If the school board wants her agency's services, it has to give her full jurisdiction to audit and investigate potential waste, mi...

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#### [After sheriff cites hazing in FAMU death, parents say band was abusive](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/23/2011)

On the same day Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings announced that hazing was involved in the death of a FAMU drum major, the Orlando Sentinel learned that several parents have been complaining for months about verbal and physical abuse within the school's prestigious marching band. Robert Champion collapsed aboard a parked charter bus in front of the Rosen Plaza hotel Saturday night af...

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#### [From farms to schools](#)

(Sebring Highlands Today © 11/23/2011)

Earlier this year, Florida became one of only three states in the nation where the school lunch programs will be handled by the state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services instead of the Department of Education. The transfer will officially occur in January. Scott Kirouac, Highlands County Farm Bureau president, thinks the change will benefit both the agricultural community and local st...

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#### [USF president Judy Genshaft faces new twist in USF Poly split](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/23/2011)

TAMPA — Judy Genshaft says she isn't rattled. Yes, a powerful state senator has lashed out at the University of South Florida president, calling for an investigation into her leadership. And now here comes a fellow university president with a diss, saying he's "willing to help" one of her campuses break away if asked. As the USF Polytechnic-split saga continues to unfold, Genshaft stayed o...

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#### [Pasco County School Board upholds rejections of charter school applications](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/23/2011)

LAND O'LAKES — Pasco County School Board members on Tuesday upheld its staff's recommendations to deny requests for four charter schools, though they expressed concern about the process not allowing those wanting to open the schools enough time to revise their applications based on district feedback. "We could make this process a little more black and white," said board member Allison Crumble...

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#### [Anderson Cooper show wants Hooters waitress from Pinellas school controversy](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/23/2011)

Anderson Cooper's daytime show Anderson wants to hear from the Hooters waiter caught up in last week's Pinellas school controversy. Leah Ramker, Tampa Bay marketing director for Hooters Management Corp. in Clearwater, said Tuesday that a producer from the show called Sunday. The waiter, Brittany Morgan, 23, could not be reached by the St. Petersburg Times. Ramker said Morgan has not decide...

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[20 students accused in college-exam scandal in N.Y.](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/23/2011)

GREAT NECK, N.Y. — At least 20 current or former high school students from an affluent New York suburb of have been charged in a widening college entrance exam cheating scandal. Thirteen students from the Great Neck area, a cluster of Long Island communities with top-ranked schools that send virtually all their graduates to college, were implicated in the latest round of charges, filed T...

[Tardy A-School Bonuses Could Be Smaller, Too](#)

(Sunshine State News © 11/23/2011)

Posted: November 23, 2011 3:55 AM Mirror Lake Elementary School in Broward County and Swift Creek Middle in Leon County won A grades for the last school year. Suncoast Polytechnical High in Sarasota County – like all public high schools in Florida – hasn't received its grade yet, delaying bonus money distribution at all public schools. | Credit: browardschools.com | swiftc...

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving! Please see the articles below.

*Deborah*

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**Tallahassee Democrat**

**Hazing suspected in FAMU student's death**

**Friends remember Champion's hard work, dedication**

**By Jordan Culver Democrat staff writer**

**November 23, 2011**

Shawn Turner, a drum major in the Florida A&M Marching 100, said Robert Champion exemplified everything it meant to be a drum major.

"He was very ambitious," Turner said. "He worked for everything — from 5 a.m. until the work was done and he was never late. A perfect gentleman."

Small wonder Champion's fellow drum majors gave him the name "The Example."

As a few drops of rain finally began to fall after a cloudy day, students, band alumni, musicians and professors made their way into the Lee Hall Auditorium for a vigil Tuesday evening in honor of Champion, who died Saturday at the age of 26.

Space was limited; the first floor of the auditorium was completely full. Few students were able to hold in their emotions as friends, band director Julian White and university President James Ammons paid tribute to a fallen Rattler.

"The 100 is better because he was one of us," White said. "The community is better because he lived among us."

White reminded those who attended to say things they need to say to loved ones before they are gone. He said Champion was meant to be next year's head drum major and White missed the chance to tell him before he died.

"If you love someone, tell them now," he said. "If you need to say something, say it now. I didn't know when I spoke to him it would be the last time I talked to him."

Emotions at the vigil ran high. People excused themselves despite ushers moving throughout the auditorium with tissues. One man was ushered out by his friends, sobs drowning out their words of comfort.

Prayers and stories brought tears to the eyes of those who came to honor the memory of Champion, but the musical selections were punctuated by audible sobs from the crowd. Three selections were played and all three received standing ovations from the crowd.

Alysia Boles sang with FAMU's Concert Choir and also gave remarks about Champion. One thing she said she would truly miss was Robert's ability to always give her a genuine smile and a wink in passing.

"God has gained a true and mighty champion," she said to the crowd after her solo. "An earthly king. A knight in shining armor."

Diron Holloway, a professor of music at FAMU, said it was "truly a pleasure" to be Champion's teacher, as Champion was always looking to improve his skills.

For two hours the rumors and allegations of hazing surrounding Champion's death took a backseat to the process of honoring the man he was. Hazing was mentioned only once throughout the vigil when Ammons promised to completely remove hazing from the university.

"These allegations of hazing make my heart hurt even more," he said. "No parent should have to worry about hazing on a college campus."

Students gathered around the Eternal Flame on campus and joined hands in prayer after the vigil was over. Turner said filling the void left by Champion will take time. He and Champion both came to FAMU with dreams of becoming drum majors, he said.

"He wasn't like a brother," Turner said. "He was a brother. He will be missed very much. After going through three- and four-adays together, seeing someone all the time, and now you can't see them at all? It's hard."

**Tallahassee Democrat**

**Editorial**

**Ammons takes action**

**November 23, 2011**

Suspending Marching 100 may be only the start

This is no time for alibis, no time for hard-to-keep promises, no time for warnings.

The death of a Florida A&M Marching 100 drum major, a death that late Tuesday was officially attributed to hazing, calls for action. It is a tragedy and an extremely dark hour for this university.

FAMU President James Ammons on Tuesday made a bold move in what no doubt will be a long and painful process when he suspended the Marching 100 band indefinitely. He also, for the time being, called an end to all performances associated with the FAMU Department of Music.

Drum major Robert Champion died Saturday in Orlando, after performing at the Florida Classic football game. Though the Orange County Sheriff's Office initially said foul play was not suspected, investigators came to Tallahassee on Monday as part of their effort to determine the cause of death. Rumors and social media had fueled speculation about hazing, a fact that could only have exacerbated the pain and shock of Mr. Champion's family in Atlanta.

Hazing has been a particularly stubborn part of the Marching 100 culture for more than a halfcentury. The late band director William P. Foster once said it dated back to at least the 1950s. Over the years, there have been hospitalizations, suspensions, criminal charges and lawsuits resulting from hazing in the band. This semester alone, 30 band members were suspended for involvement with hazing — a fact that was not part of Dr. Ammons' prepared remarks at Tuesday's media briefing but was confirmed, after a reporter's question, by director of bands and department chair Julian White.

Dr. Ammons vowed Tuesday that he would "make certain that we end this practice at Florida A&M University." But obviously, not enough has been done to root out this barbaric practice.

How could the president not have known or been told about those 30 suspensions?

The immediate suspension of the Marching 100 shows that Dr. Ammons means business — though, for the moment, the move, while dramatic, is mostly symbolic. Florida A&M's football season is over and the band has no performance engagements scheduled.

Beyond symbolism, Dr. Ammons said he would create an independent task force to fully investigate the Marching 100.

Though the task force should include representatives from FAMU, Dr. Ammons must be careful to keep it independent of the Music Department or alumni.

Its effectiveness must not be compromised by old-school loyalty, finger-pointing or the idea that the band itself is sacrosanct.

Dr. Ammons has even tougher decisions to make. The Marching 100 has been a source of pride and an important part of the identity of not only Florida A&M but indeed our entire community. Yet if the band is shown to be utterly corrupt and if hazing has continued to be tolerated as part of its culture, a long-term suspension and the dismissal of the band's leaders — to cut out the disease — may well be the only answer.

This is not one of Florida A&M's prouder moments. On Tuesday, Dr. Ammons showed he has the will to face a problem head-on and deal with it, no matter how difficult that might be. It's a time for the students, alumni and community to give him their support. It's a battle he won't be able to win alone.

**FOX News**

**Florida School District Denies Police Were Called Over Student Kiss**

**November 22, 2011**

FORT MYERS, Fla. – A Florida school district on Tuesday dismissed reports that an administrator called police after two 12-year-old students shared a kiss on the playground.

According to reports Monday, two female students were debating who liked a 12-year-old boy more when one of the girls walked over and kissed the boy. Lee County Sheriff's deputies were dispatched to Orange River Elementary School in Fort Myers, Fla., reportedly in response to the incident.

However, a statement issued by the school district Tuesday said authorities were "not called because one student kissed another on the cheek."

According to the statement, there was a "physical altercation" between two female students that prompted an investigation by authorities. During the investigation, a "separate, non-school related situation" was uncovered that required police and officials with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) be contacted.

"Our school leaders are experienced enough to know that one elementary school student kissing another on the cheek is not grounds to call police," the statement said.

"This school's administration did exactly what they were supposed to do and what every parent would expect – and demand – they do as school leaders," it added.

Earlier reports suggested that the administrator had initially contacted DCF to report the kiss.

"They called us and said they caught two children kissing on the playground," Sgt. Stephanie Eller told Fox News Radio. "The reality is it was probably something innocent between two kids on the playground."

Eller said the deputies took a report and documented the incident, but determined no crime had been committed.

"If it had been a crime at all it would have been a simple battery," Eller said. "The battery consists of the unwanted touching of one person to another."

"At this point, it doesn't look like we have anyone who was an unwilling participant in this," she said, referring to the playground smooch.

Eller said no one was arrested and that she suspected the school was being overly cautious.

Joe Donzelli, a spokesman for Lee County Public Schools, had told the Naples News that school district employees are required to call DCF if they suspect abuse.