

For more information:
Lynn Norman-Teck 305-216-6208

FLORIDA'S EDUCATION COMMISSIONER VISITS LOCAL CHARTER SCHOOL ON TUESDAY, MAY 6

*In celebration of National Charter Schools Week 2008, Dr. Smith
tours Mater Academy East Charter School & presents the principal with a proclamation.*

Little Havana, FL – Florida's Education Commissioner Dr. Eric Smith visited **Mater Academy East Charter Elementary School** located at 450 SW 4th Street near downtown Miami on Tuesday, May 6th. In celebration of National Charter Schools Week 2008, Dr. Smith presented the principal, Betty Riera, with a proclamation.

For four consecutive years, Mater Academy East Charter Elementary – where 91% of the students are classified as ESOL and 96% of the students participate in the free/reduced lunch program -- has exceeded expectations, and passed the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test with an 'A'.

Mater Academy East Charter School has developed a curriculum that incorporates traditional teaching with innovative programs and effective reading strategies in a nurturing environment with small class sizes and paraprofessionals for each grade level. Parents participate in the educational process through parental contracts and workshops offered to assist parents – many who are immigrant and unfamiliar with the state's education system -- with homework and test preparation skills.

For more than eleven years, public charter schools have been a vital component of Florida's K-12 public education system. **There are currently more than 104,000 students enrolled in more than 360 charter schools throughout the state.** In the past five years, the percentage of students proficient in reading public charter schools has increased at a faster pace than at the traditional public schools. From 2002 to 2006, the achievement gap between non-minority and African-American students decreased from 30% to 23% in Florida charter schools. Hispanic students in the state's charter schools have almost entirely eliminated the achievement gap between themselves and non-minority students.

#