

**DR. CARLO RODRIQUEZ CHAMPION OF  
SCHOOL CHOICE AWARD**

**APPLICATION**

**PRESENTED BY:**

**STEVEN L. HICKS**

**STEVEN L. HICKS**

**VP. OPERATIONS CENTER ACADEMY**

**17831 CRANBROOK DR. LUTZ FL. 33549**

**813-909-9272/FX 813-909-0414**

**EMAIL: [STEVEHICKS@CENTERACADEMY.COM](mailto:STEVEHICKS@CENTERACADEMY.COM)**

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SCPAC OF WHICH I AM VICE CHAIRMAN

## INTRODUCTION

Mr. Steven L. Hicks has spent all of his adult life serving the needs of children. After high school and before college he spent two years of his life picking up inner-city children and taking them to church. His desires to serve others lead him to attend a Christian college which could prepare him even further to serve the needs of people. After college he spent fifteen years as a pastor serving the needs of a diverse population of people. During that time as a pastor he was affiliated with a large private school serving the local community.

After ministry Mr. Hicks worked for a period of time as a Family Services Counselor for the Department of Children and Families. In this role he reached to the most economically challenged of our state. He worked with students placed in the Foster Care system.

For more than a decade he has worked with Learning Disabled Children starting out as a substitute teacher. After working in the classroom with students, he then became the principal of the school, and ultimately the lead person responsible for opening new schools to serve this very needy population.

Over the past decade his love for Special Needs Children has grown and today he is very active in working with a number of organizations that serve the needs of students.

He is married to his wife Lisa of 34 years and has two grown children. It is his desire to continue his education in an effort to serve children for the next couple of decades. Please consider him as your next candidate to receive the Carlo Rodriquez Champion of School Choice Scholarship Award.

# VITAE

## **Objective:**

My objective is to become the 2010 recipient of the Carlo Rodriguez Champion of School Choice Award. This award would enable me to further my education in a field that would enhance my effectiveness in meeting the needs of students every day.

## **Education:**

Bachelor of Arts, Baptist Bible College, Springfield, Mo.

## **Professional Experience:**

### **1999 – 2010 LLL Licensing Inc.**

VP. Operations – Center Academy/ Tampa Charter School

Regional Director – Center Academy/ Tampa Charter School

Director/Principal – Center Academy

### **1998 - Florida Department of Children and Families**

Family Services Counselor in Foster Care

### **1981 – 1996 Temple Heights Baptist Church / Christian School**

Associate Pastor and Staff Administrator

Assistant Pastor

Youth Pastor / Teacher

## **Volunteer Experience**

Vice Chairman SCPAC Statewide Committee

President Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools

*BrainStormSolutions LLC*

*Education, Training, and Management  
Solutions*

Dear Carlo Rodriguez Scholarship Award Committee;

This letter is to recommend Mr. Steven Hicks as a scholarship recipient for the Dr. Carlo Rodriguez Champion of Education Award. Steve Hicks has served as the vice chairman of the statewide School Choice Parent Advisory Council since January of 2008. Mr. Hicks has faithfully served in his position as a volunteer providing expertise and leadership to the statewide council at all of the face-to-face and conference call meetings. In his profession, Steve is a statewide leader in the area of private / McKay Scholarship Schools and is well known and respected by his private school peers and public school practitioners alike.

As the vice chairman of the statewide School Choice Parent Advisory Council, Steve has taken a leadership role in council meeting process and protocol. He has maintained a delicate balance between the needs and interests of private education stakeholders and public school Choice accessibility. Steve maintains a strong network of associates throughout the state and represents the statewide SCPAC Council with a professional, organized approach.

I believe that Steve represents the tenets of the Dr. Carlo Rodriguez Award and should receive strong consideration for receipt of the award. "The Dr. Carlo Rodriguez Champion of Education Award personifies the spirit of school choice in Florida," said State Board of Education Chairman T. Willard Fair and I believe that Mr. Steven Hicks has worked very hard to expand educational opportunities through School Choice for our students in Florida.

"This award brings recognition to those who lead the charge for public school choice in Florida," said Education Commissioner Eric J. Smith. "Choice is a vital component of our education system and empowers parents to choose the type of education that best suits the needs of their child." Steve Hicks is a key advocate for providing a variety of Choice Options to meet children's educational needs in Florida.

I believe The Florida Public School Choice Consortium should recognize this private school administrator who has demonstrated exceptional commitment to establishing and expanding public and private School Choice. My recommendation of Steve Hicks will allow his work with multiple education agencies who work with various school options in Florida to be recognized. I encourage the Nomination Committee to consider Steve's nomination based his work in providing an increased number of available school options, equitable practices for recruiting and enrolling students, innovative transportation plans, effective parent awareness and empowerment strategies and raising awareness of the benefits of School Choice.

Most Sincerely,

*Bill Storms*

Bill Storms, BrainStormSolutions LLC

Consultant for School Choice and Education Solutions,

Former Chairman, School Choice Parent Advisory Council

# Center Academy®

*“Your Child’s Link to the Future”*

November 15, 2010

RE: STEVEN L. HICKS

I have known Steve Hicks for over twenty years. We have worked together in two private schools during that time. For the past ten years Steve has been the vice president of operations for Center Academy. Center Academy is a group of private, for profit schools serving a population of learning disabled students in Florida and Georgia. As the president and chief operating officer I work closely with Steve as he supervises our eleven schools.

Steve is a great asset to our company. He is a strong manager of our school directors and is able to effectively oversee many issues on a daily basis. Steve deals with personnel, parents, students, and all outside contacts. He is able to multitask and stay focused on our mission of helping students be as successful as possible.

I strongly support Steve in his pursuit of an advanced degree in the field of education. His desire to continue his studies is evidence of his commitment to continually improve our program for so many families. I expect he will be successful in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Eric V. Larson, Ph.D.  
President and Chief Operating Officer



# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Dr. Eric J. Smith  
Commissioner of Education



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SUSAN STORY

November 16, 2010

Dear Selection Committee,

It is my pleasure to support Steve Hicks' nomination for the Dr. Carlo Rodriguez Champion of School Choice Award. I have worked professionally with Steve over the past ten years, and I know him to be a man of integrity, commitment, and passion for improving the educational opportunities for all students in Florida. He has expertise and experience in both the private and public sectors including private schools and charter schools. This is a further testament to his dedication to *all* children and his promotion of *all* school choices, regardless of affiliation.

Steve works efficiently and effectively with all facets of the school choice arena including: students, parents, school administrators, district administrators, stakeholders and legislators. His ability to bridge the gaps and engage all entities has assisted in the continued expansion of high-quality education choices across the state. He currently serves as the Vice President of the Statewide School Choice Parent Advisory Council appointed by the Commissioner of Education.

Steve's compassion, personality, and constant focus on the student embody those same qualities for which we honor Dr. Rodriguez. Having had the honor and privilege of working with Dr. Rodriguez and knowing that his number one goal was *always* the student, I strongly recommend Steve's selection for this award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jean Miller".

Jean Miller  
Deputy Executive Director

MICHAEL D. KOOL, ESQ.  
Executive Director  
Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice

## **DR. CARLO RODRIQUEZ CHAMPION OF SCHOOL CHOICE AWARD**

### **1. WHY SHOULD THE NOMINEE RECEIVE THIS AWARD?**

#### **OVERVIEW OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND AREA OF IMPACT:**

#### **AREA OF IMPACT: PARENTAL AWARENESS AND ASSISTANCE**

**Over many years of my adult career I have responded to the needs of parents daily regarding educational options for their children. As a parent of two children who attended both public and private I have a clear sense of what the options are and how to respond to parent inquires. As a parent of a child who participated in the choice program in our community I became very aware of the options available through the public school system.**

**At first I was a word of mouth advocate helping parents as education came up in discussions. As my children progressed through Gifted programs, Academies, Magnet programs and even athletic programs I was quick to help any parent seeking to explore educational opportunities for their child. For over a decade I have worked for a company that serves Gifted, Special Needs, Florida Tax Credit Scholarship, Charter, Virtual, McKay, and Private school students. I have become much more knowledgeable when responding to questions parents ask as a result of this experience.**

**For approximately ten years our company has been a part of the Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools. This organization serves the needs of parents and schools by providing information about the McKay Scholarship Program one of the many choice options in Florida. I currently serve voluntarily as the President of this organization. It is my goal to help as many students as possible learn about this program. As an organization we have printed brochures, sponsored commercials, hosted conferences, emailed schools and parents, developed newsletters and used every means possible to notify parents and schools of options available to them. The Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools serves all of the 1,100 private schools in the state of Florida that participate in the McKay Scholarship Program.**

**I am also involved in Legislative Initiatives that promote the viability of all choice options in Florida. Currently I serve on a Legislative Task Force made up of representatives of most of the choice options in Florida. Our goal is to work with the Florida Legislator to introduce and pass legislation that will protect parents School Choice Options.**

**As a result of working with such a diverse population of students in a myriad of School Choice Programs I feel my skills could only be enhanced by additional education.**

## **DR. CARLO RODRIQUEZ CHAMPION OF SCHOOL CHOICE AWARD**

### **1. WHY SHOULD THE NOMINEE RECEIVE THIS AWARD?**

#### **OVERVIEW OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND AREA OF IMPACT:**

#### **AREA OF IMPACT: EFFECTIVE PARENT RESOURCE CENTERS**

**Almost four years ago the Florida Department of Education applied for and received a grant from the United States Department of Education to promote Public School Choice in Florida. As a part of this grant a statewide committee of people appointed by the Florida Commissioner of Education would be formed to facilitate the requirements of the grant. The statewide committee would be made up of stakeholders representing the various School Choice options in Florida. This would also include parent advocates and members of the Florida Department of Education.**

**The “Mission” of this statewide committee is to “Inform all parents of all School Choice Options” so that they can make the most informed decision possible regarding their child’s education. The method of informing parents is a very simple one; create Parent Advisory Councils and Parent Resource Centers in every one of the school districts in Florida.**

**As Vice Chairman of the Statewide School Choice Parent Advisory Committee it is my responsibility to help in the completion of this mission. The program is in its third year and already there are several Parent Resource Centers located around the state. Parent Advisory Councils are also forming in various districts. In addition to Parent Advisory Councils and Parent Resource Centers the committee agreed to host a Statewide Parent School Choice Expo. The purpose of the Expo is to provide a central location for parents to come and hear about School Choice options for their children.**

**As a Board Member of this Statewide Committee I am encouraged to learn about the parents who for the first time are hearing of all the School Choice options for their children. I have personally talked to parents and informed them of options they had not considered which is what this grant is all about. If the grant is successful then every parent in the entire state with school age children will be fully informed of all of the available School Choice Option available to their child.**

**Included with this application is a summary report completed by the Chairman of the SCPAC for the Florida Department of Education outlining the status of this program and the positive results. There is still much work to be done.**



## Statewide School Choice Parent Advisory Council

Executive Summary by Bill Storms, Chairman

Ten Meetings held in North, Central and South Florida,

Ten Local Town Hall Parent Meetings Completed.

The “Statewide School Choice Parent Advisory Council” is completing its’ second year and has now conducted ten official meetings. The tenth meeting, a conference call, was held on April 5, 2010 to continue work on the Council’s Strategic Plan and complete planning on the five simultaneous Parent Town Hall Meetings scheduled for April 27, 2010. The ninth meeting, another conference call, was held on January 13, 2010 to plan the 5 simultaneous SCPAC Parent Town Hall meetings scheduled for March 23, 2010. The eighth meeting was held in Orlando on November 18, 2009 at the Dr. Carlo Rodriguez Champion of School Choice Summit. This face to face meeting at the Summit allowed the Council to complete much important work including the review of a Strategic Plan to develop local School Choice Parent Advisory Councils and to begin the planning for the local Town Hall meetings. The seventh meeting was a conference call on September 2, 2009 to work on the upcoming years Strategic Plan. The sixth was also a conference call and Council Members spent much of the time developing additional strategies to establish Local School Choice Parent Advisory Councils. The fifth was held on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at Florida Department of Education Turlington Building in conjunction with the “Academies on the Hill” Conference in Tallahassee. The Council’s Mission, **“All Florida Parents will be informed of all educational options and opportunities”** is now being shared with parents at the local, Town Hall level. In the meetings and back home in the Council Member’s regions, protocols for sharing parent information and concerns on all Choice Options have now been established and a **“Local School Choice Parent Advisory Council Orientation Toolkit”** has been published. This “Toolkit” was developed to help local parents and potential SCPAC Members understand the purpose and mission of the SCPAC Councils and provides a procedures guide to assist local members in establishing a fully functional local Council. The Parent Town Hall meetings along with the diligent work of the Statewide SCPAC Members have established a much needed communication link between local School Choice stakeholders and the Department of Education.

As evidenced in the highly successful local Parent Town Hall Meetings, Parent Resource Center Liaisons and the statewide group, composed of School Choice stakeholders including parents, school district Choice leaders, and others with a special interest in School Choice, is now established as a resource to interact with parents throughout the state on issues and concerns related to School Choice.

During the last year, the Statewide School Choice Parent Advisory Council and the Parent Resource Centers have made continuing progress in recruiting members for local advisory councils which. These local councils will meet on a local and regional basis.

The most significant task at this point is the establishment of the local Councils. Coupled with our Parent Resource Centers and School District School Choice Supervisors, the School Choice Parent Advisory Council is now working continuously to establish fully functional local School Choice Parent Advisory Councils in each district in Florida. With the two sets of simultaneous Town Hall Meetings, there has been a significant increase in the number of interested nominees for the local School Choice Parent Advisory Councils.

In directing the last ten meetings, including six conference call meetings, Chairman Bill Storms has led the group in discussions which attain the goals of the statewide council. In the previous meetings, the group established and reviewed goals, discussed meeting formats and protocols to be utilized, established Council By-Laws, edited and approved DOE Choice publications, worked on the design of easy to read Choice Information, learned how to and then conducted successful meetings with district superintendents, and continuously reviewed local member recruiting techniques. From the first organizational meeting in Orlando on November 18, 2008, the members have made significant progress in this innovative initiative.

During the final months of this second year of operation, all newly appointed members of the SCPAC have received a Certificate of Appointment from Florida Commissioner of Education, Dr. Eric J. Smith and have been empowered to act on the Councils behalf in their own regional area. The nine meetings of the SCPAC have been very productive and Council Members are now using the resources and information they have received to recruit parents and Choice stakeholders who are interested in serving on a local School Choice Parent Advisory Council so that they, in turn, may help others seeking information or currently taking advantage of School Choice.

If you are interested in serving on a local School Choice Parent Advisory Council, please contact Chairman Bill Storms at 941-356-2064 or directly by email at [captwindy@comcast.net](mailto:captwindy@comcast.net).

You may also contact Yolanda Miranda-Hill, Voluntary Public School Choice Manager at (850) 245-9077 or by email at [Yolanda.Miranda-Hill@fldoe.org](mailto:Yolanda.Miranda-Hill@fldoe.org).