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**EDUCATION COMMISSIONER NAMES FLORIDA'S FIRST-EVER DISTRICT DATA
LEADER OF THE YEAR**

*~ Putnam County Superintendent Tom Townsend recognized for using student achievement data
to drive improvement within his district ~*

TALLAHASSEE – Florida's Commissioner of Education Dr. Eric J. Smith surprised Putnam County Superintendent Tom Townsend with the first-ever District Data Leader of the Year Award (DDL) today during an awards ceremony in Tallahassee. The DDL award was created to highlight how leaders supporting and encouraging the use of data among their staff can change the culture of their classrooms. The DDL awards are also designed to recognize districts for communicating the relevance of student data to teachers, administrators, parents, and other education stakeholders. Superintendent Townsend received the award for his work in implementing the Learning Gains Index, an informative tool that uses student achievement data to help Putnam County administrators and teachers evaluate their work to determine ways they can drive continued student improvement.

"Data is one of the most important tools we can use to evaluate ourselves and whether we're instructing our students effectively," said Commissioner Smith. "Superintendent Townsend has done fantastic work creating a culture where data is valued and teachers are empowered to give their students the best possible opportunities for success."

In his nearly two years of service as Putnam County's superintendent of schools, Mr. Townsend has been a strong supporter of financial planning and transparency in the local public school system. His leadership in the creation of the Learning Gains Index, which quantifies teacher effectiveness in terms of student growth, has helped to better inform his educators about their work in the classroom by examining average student growth per teacher using FCAT scores.

"The data system that Mr. Townsend spearheaded is a great step forward for the teachers and administrators that call Putnam County home," said Chancellor of Public Schools Dr. Francis Haithcock. "I'm tremendously proud of his efforts to build these tools for his educators and I'm confident that they will lead to greater student performance in the years to come."

Joining Commissioner Smith for the award presentation was Joel Rose, the event's keynote speaker. Mr. Rose is the founder and CEO of School of One, an initiative within the New York City Department of Education that uses a mix of live and online instruction in order to provide students with customized teaching that is unique to their academic needs and learning styles. The initiative was named by Time Magazine as one of the top 50 inventions of 2009.

The District Data Leader awards ceremony was made possible thanks to the support and sponsorship of The Florida Education Foundation, Microsoft, Pearson, and ACT Incorporated. For more information about the Florida District Data Leader Award, please visit:

<http://www.fldoe.org/arm/1011ddlya.asp>

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