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Nation's Largest-Ever School Choice Celebration to Kick Off in Jacksonville Next Week

School choice supporters to ring in National School Choice Week 2015 with Official Kickoff at Florida Theatre, January 23, 2015.

US Sen. John McCain, Joe Trippi, Rev. HK Matthews, Superstar Athlete Desmond Howard to headline first of 11,000+ events nationwide

JACKSONVILLE – The largest celebration of school choice in US history will officially start on Friday, January 23, 2015 at a special event in Jacksonville, Florida.

National School Choice Week 2015 will kick off at the Florida Theatre at 12:30 pm on January 23. The event is the first event of an unprecedented 11,082 independently planned and independently funded special events taking place across all 50 states during the Week, which runs until January 31, 2015.

The goal of the Week is to shine a positive spotlight on effective education options for children, and to raise awareness of the importance of, and benefits of, school choice in a variety of forms.

More than 1,900 students, parents, and teachers will attend the Official Kickoff celebration, which will be nationally televised – on tape delay – on two cable television networks. The event's speakers include:

- **US Senator John McCain** (R-AZ), a longtime school choice supporter, who will be touring the NFL-YET Academy, a public charter school in Phoenix, and addressing a National School Choice Week event at the school.
- **Rev. HK Matthews**, a noted civil rights pioneer who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King in Montgomery and Selma, and was arrested 35 times for peaceful protests to demand integration during the US civil rights movement.
- **Joe Trippi**, Democratic strategist and FOX News analyst, who managed Howard Dean's 2008 presidential campaign and is a renowned national and international political advisor.
- **Desmond Howard**, a school choice advocate and former college football and NFL player, winner of the 1991 Heisman Trophy, Super Bowl XXXI MVP, and current ESPN commentator.

Additional speakers include **Gary Chartrand**, chairman of the Florida State Board of Education; **Frank Biden**, the president of Mavericks in Education and the brother of Vice President Joe Biden; **Jeanne Allen**, pioneering education reform champion and founder of The Center for Education Reform; **Wendy Howard**, the founder and executive director of the Florida Alliance for Choice in Education; **Christie Bassett**, 2015 Florida Teacher of the Year and a teacher at

Highlands Park Elementary School in Polk County, Florida; **Jason Fischer**, member of the Duval County School Board; **Lisa Graham Keegan**, senior advisor to National School Choice Week and the former superintendent of public instruction for Arizona; and **Randan Steinhauser**, an advisor to National School Choice Week, who will join the event live via satellite from Austin, Texas. **Andrew Campanella**, the president of National School Choice Week, will serve as the event's host and anchor.

The event is centered around testimonials from students, parents, and teachers who benefit from an array of education options – including students and graduates from traditional public schools, public magnet schools, public charter schools, private schools, online academies, and homeschooling.

“Florida is a national leader in providing quality, effective education options for children,” Wendy Howard said. “National School Choice Week provides an opportunity for the Sunshine State to demonstrate to the nation the basic but transformational message that school choice works.”

“National School Choice Week will break records as the nation's largest celebration of educational opportunity in American history,” Campanella said. “We are grateful for our partner organizations and supporters in my home state, Florida, for their work in making the inaugural event of this special week, so memorable.”

The event's planning partners include:

- Florida Alliance for Choices in Education
- Charter Schools USA
- Step Up for Students
- Coalition of McKay Scholarship Schools
- American Federation for Children
- Florida Charter School Alliance
- National Institute for Educational Options
- Urban League of Greater Miami
- Agudath Israel of America
- Florida Virtual School
- Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options
- K12
- Black Floridians Care
- Foundation for Florida's Future
- Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops
- PublicSchoolOptions.org
- Center for Education Reform
- James Madison Institute

For more information, please visit www.schoolchoiceweek.com and www.schoolchoiceevent.com.

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Held every year in January, National School Choice Week is an independent public awareness effort spotlighting effective education options for children, including traditional public schools, public charter schools, public magnet schools, private schools, online learning, and homeschooling. National School Choice Week is America's largest-annual series of education-related events.