**2015 Fall Leadership Conference**

On September 21-22, 2015, district volunteer and community involvement coordinators met at the Florida Department of Education’s Fall Leadership Conference in Orlando, Florida. The Fall Leadership conference was held in conjunction with the Florida Department of Education’s Educational Strategies and Student Engagement Institute. The Fall Leadership conference, which originated in 1975, has been providing training modules and materials for district coordinators for over three decades.

Approximately 30 coordinators attended the two-day training wherein a variety of guest speakers presented on a wide range of topics. Cat Keen, National Service Programs Director with Volunteer Florida, spoke about the Power of Service, sharing information about the impact of national service and volunteerism. During the session, Ms. Keen provided an overview of the availability of national service funding from Volunteer Florida through AmeriCorps and the Volunteer Generation Fund.

Mindy Haas, Florida Parent Teacher Association (PTA) President and Janet Lamoureux, Family Engagement Chair for the Florida PTA, spoke about PTA and Schools in a presentation entitled “We are in this Together.” The talk focused on how the Florida PTA and school districts could work together diversifying volunteers to meet the specific needs of families and communities and fostering student success.

Conference participants also took part in the Florida Department of Education’s Faith-Based Advisory Council panel discussion. The discussion focused on how to start and sustain faith-based afterschool and summer-school projects through cooperative efforts with faith-based organizations. Julie Houston Trieste, Communications Specialist with the School District of Palm Beach County, conducted a workshop about the effective uses of social media, communicating with parents in a crisis and connecting with students to provide services to the school. Pam Carson, Senior Manager for Community Resources for Orange County Public Schools, offered a workshop on Orange County’s Faith-based Adopt-a-School Initiative, which has resulted in the formation of 100 school partnerships.

In addition, Dr. Valerie Brim of Pinellas County School District, led a workshop on Linking Family and Community Engagement to Learning. To conclude the two-day conference, Adriane Jackson of Broward County Schools, trained participants on useful strategies for building sustainable school-business partnerships.