

## PR – Just Read Florida Event

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**LAKE BUENA VISTA, September 28, 2006** - Governor Jeb Bush today joined nearly 300,000 middle school students statewide in an attempt to break the Guinness World Record™ for the “Most People Reading Aloud Simultaneously in Multiple Locations.” The event, Breaking a World Record: Reading Aloud!, overseen by the Just Read, Florida! office, aimed to bolster reading among middle school students. The record attempt was aired via a live public broadcast and Webcast from Disney-MGM Studios. Promptly at 11:25 a.m., Governor Bush led the students in reading an excerpt from the book “Peter and the Starcatchers” written by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson. Governor Bush was joined by Lt. Governor Toni Jennings, Education Commissioner John L. Winn, K-12 Public Schools Chancellor Cheri Pierson Yecke, Ph.D., Just Read, Florida! Executive Director Evan Lefsky, Ph.D., and 120 middle school students from the Orlando area.

“Not only is reading is the key to learning and the foundation for success in school and life, but it is fun,” said Governor Bush. “Today, middle school students across Florida are reading together in an attempt to break a world record. I am confident we will succeed.”

According to Guinness World Records™, the current record is 155,528 students from 737 schools throughout the United Kingdom who read William Wordsworth’s poem “Daffodils,” on March 19, 2004. Jane Feber, an eighth grade teacher from Mandarin Middle School in Duval County, came up with the idea of breaking the record and shared it with Governor Bush. Since the idea first emerged many months ago, the Just Read, Florida! office has worked with school districts statewide to ensure all the proper documentation and certification is in place to validate the event under the rigorous requirements of Guinness World Records™. (In the coming months, the state will receive confirmation as to whether or not the attempt was successful.)

“During the past three years, Florida’s students have received national attention for reading improvement,” said Commissioner Winn. “Today marks our entry into the international stage of reading performance.”

Florida’s middle school students have made significant improvements in reading. This year, 223,000 more students are reading on grade level or above grade level compared to 2001, and improvements in middle school reading tripled that of any previous single year gain. Additionally, there has been a renewed focus on reading at the middle school level and tremendous participation in the Department of Education’s Shoot for the Stars: A Record-Breaking Year for Middle Schools initiative.

“Peter and the Starcatchers,” published by Disney Editions, is the prequel to the beloved classic “Peter Pan” written by J.M. Barrie. In the prequel, Barry and Pearson answer questions about Peter Pan and how he and the Lost Boys come to live in Neverland. The book spent 47 weeks on the New York Times® Best Seller List.

To view the Webcast of the event, please visit [www.JustReadFlorida.com](http://www.JustReadFlorida.com).

PHOTO: 2006 Walt Disney World Ambassador Michael Collier with Governor Jeb Bush and Peter Pan at the Just Read event at Disney MGM Studios.