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District launches The Great Water OdysseySM for fourth- and fifth-graders

PALATKA, Fla., Jan. 25, 2006 — Through the magic of cartoon animation and computer technology, fourth-graders can now experience a “time machine” and fifth-graders can determine if their make-believe hometown has enough water to build a water park.

Eleven months after The Great Water OdysseySM was first introduced by the St. Johns River Water Management District, fourth- and fifth-graders in St. Johns and Putnam counties today launched the Odyssey’s new adventures.

Utilizing history, geography, math, reading, social studies and science, The Great Water OdysseySM is a computer-based curriculum that uses a CD to supplement classroom lessons to teach children about the importance of Florida’s water resources. Students at James A. Long Elementary in Putnam County and Julington Creek Elementary in St. Johns County demonstrated today how they can use the CD, working alone or in groups, to study science content and reading through a focus on water.

The third-grade Odyssey was kicked off in February 2005. In the new fourth-grade version, students will visit some of Florida’s earliest inhabitants and witness some of Florida’s colorful history via a “time machine.” They will learn about habitats, watersheds, history, the aquifer system and how human activity affects water and Florida’s environment. They may unlock games along the way, including Fish Chomp, Build a Beast and Math Maze.

In the fifth-grade version, students are challenged to help the mayor of the fictitious town of Olliewood determine whether there is enough water in the town’s water supply to support a water park.

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Trying to get enough points to build a water park, fifth-graders will learn about the biology of farming and landscaping, reinforce math skills, and learn to meet the needs of a town while maintaining water levels necessary to support natural systems.

While games include Design a Landscape, Water's Journey and Watering Woes, The Great Water OdysseySM correlates to Florida's Sunshine State Standards and includes opportunities to prepare students to be successful on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

The program is free to educators, including private and home school teachers, within the District. Educators begin by attending a workshop and obtaining the materials, which are free of charge for educators within the District's 18 counties. After the workshop, educators receive the necessary components, including the grade-specific curriculum CD, a comprehensive educators' manual with additional exercises and reading materials, and rewards for students. Educators then guide their students through the adventures.

More than 80 teachers have been trained to teach the third-grade program, with 2,100 students participating in the first year. Thirty-six educators have pilot-tested the fourth- and fifth-grade programs.

For more information about The Great Water OdysseySM, contact Eileen Tramontana, director of the District's education and volunteer programs, at (386) 329-4572 or visit the District online at www.sjrwmd.com/odyssey.

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