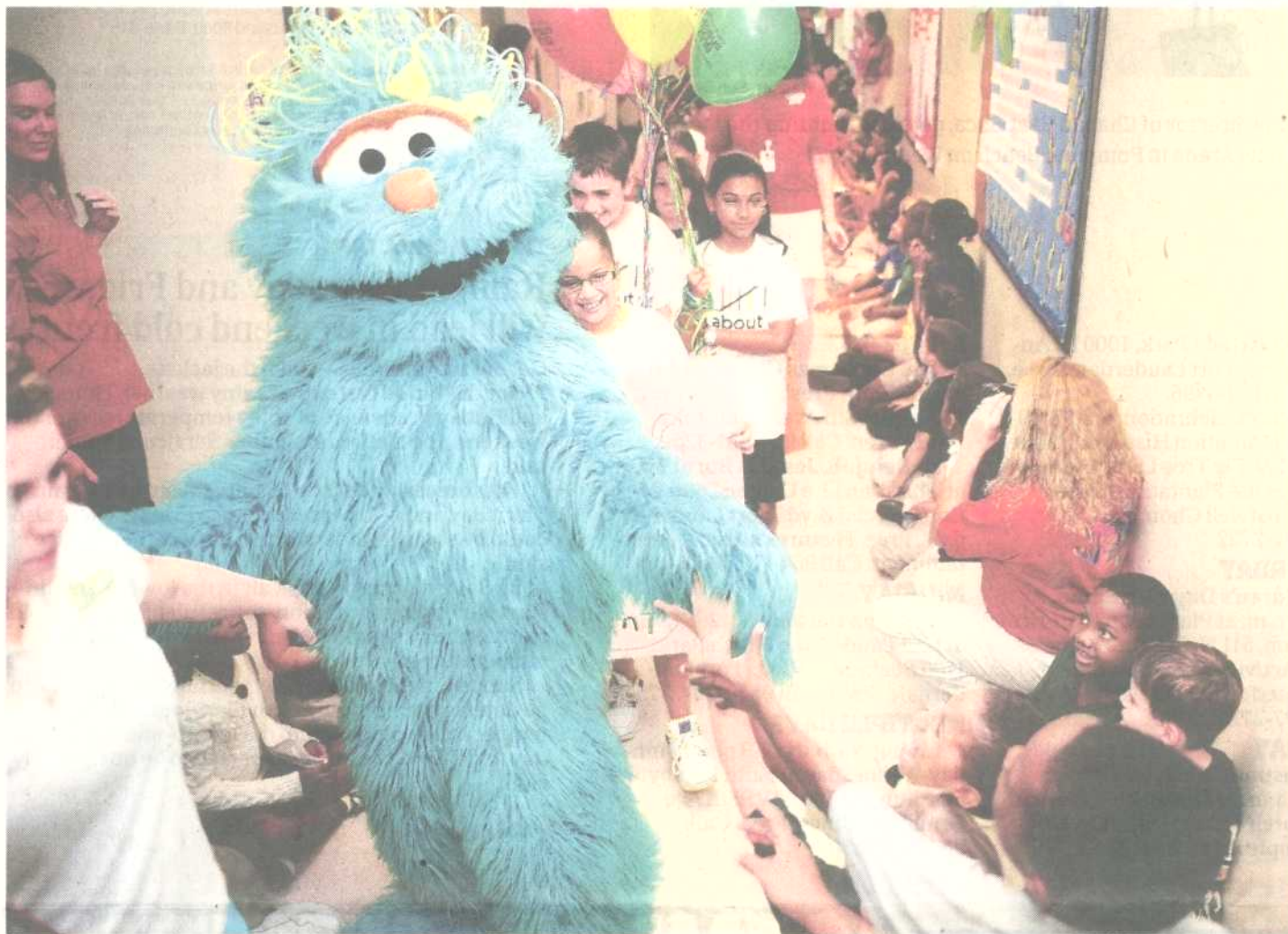


Census in Schools program unveiled at Nova Elementary



Carlina Jean, Sun Sentinel

Rosita, a *Sesame Street* character, greets students at Nova Blanche Forman Elementary during a parade to explain the importance of next year's census count. "Any child is a good spokesperson," said Renee Jefferson Copeland, chief of the 2010 Census in Schools program.

TODAY'S HOMEWORK: TALK UP THE CENSUS

By Georgia East
STAFF WRITER

DAVIE » Ariel Civelek was just a baby in the last U.S. census, but this time around the 11-year-old can tell her family how important it is to be counted.

Civelek was among hundreds of students at Nova Blanche Forman Elementary School who got an earful and an eyeful about the national survey at a rally in the school cafeteria Wednesday.

on Wednesday launched its 2010 Census in Schools program. The idea is for teachers to integrate census-related information into subjects like social studies and math.

"Any child is a good spokesperson," said Renee Jefferson Copeland, chief of the program, who spoke to the fourth- and fifth-graders at the rally.

Part of a \$13 billion effort to count every person in the country, the program is designed to reach

Making it count

The Census in Schools program is part of a \$13 billion effort to count every person in the country. The program is designed to reach 118,000 schools and about 56 million students. The goal is to improve response rates over the 2000 census, the last big na-

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Census goes to school to get students involved

lion students. The goal is to improve response rates over the 2000 census, the last big national count.

At the kickoff Wednesday, students performed a skit in which they pretended to be a family uncertain about the census. During the skit, a child encourages his parents to open the door to a census worker, despite their apprehension. Beside a prop bowl of spaghetti, the worker helps the hesitant parents fill out the form.

It's a scenario that could play out many times next spring when the forms arrive. Households can expect census forms in March and they should be returned by April. An army of census takers will follow up between April and July with those who do not return the forms in the mail.

Copeland said children historically have not been counted properly. Such mistakes can prove costly, since the results are used to determine how about \$435 billion in aid will be distributed to local, state and tribal governments.

"We're trying to develop a portrait and kids are a part of that portrait," she said. Several students said they have already started talking to their parents about the upcoming census.

Nova Blanche in Broward was selected for the kickoff, in part, because it's one of the most diverse schools in the area, Principal Charles McCanna said.

McCanna said his teachers have been incorporating some of the census curriculum available at www.census.gov/schools into their lessons. In one class, students took a survey of their own birthdays and then charted the number of birthdays each month, so they could get a sense of how census data is used.

The message hit home for 11-year-old Robert Harding.

"Everyone counts," he said.



Carline Jean, Sun Sentinel

Marilia Matos of the U.S Census Bureau explains to students the importance of the census. Nova Blanche was selected for the kickoff, in part, because it's one of the most diverse schools in the area, Principal Charles McCanna said.

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Renee Jefferson Copeland, head of the 2010 Census in Schools program