

PROPOSED

GREATER FLORIDA CONSORTIUM OF SCHOOL BOARDS' 2012 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Constitution of the State of Florida, Article IX - - Section I.

“The education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida. It is therefore a paramount duty of the State to make adequate provision for the education of all the children residing within its borders. Adequate provision shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high quality education....”

GOAL: TO INCREASE, ON A PHASED-IN BASIS, THE AVERAGE PER STUDENT FUNDING TO ENSURE THAT FLORIDA IS IN THE TOP HALF OF THE STATES AND CAN PROVIDE A WORLD CLASS EDUCATION TO ENABLE ITS STUDENTS TO COMPETE AND EXCEL IN THE GLOBAL MARKET PLACE.

PRIORITY ISSUES

FUNDING

In order to accomplish this goal:

Allocate sufficient state dollars with flexibility to enable school districts (traditional public schools) to support: guaranteed continuation budgets that provide for enrollment changes, inflationary increases, competitive salaries and benefits for teachers and other personnel, and quality program improvements including those mandated by SB 736. **Use state revenue to provide for this continuation budget as opposed to the state using increases in local property tax revenues as the source of additional funds.**

- Conduct an impartial third-party study of the Florida Price Level Index to reflect the cost of housing, insurance, poverty and transportation rather than wages.
- Guarantee, at least, the same dollars per FTE in total potential funds appropriated for FY 2006-07 adjusted for the three-year average of inflation, as this was the benchmark for eligibility for receipt of federal stimulus funds.
- Pending the fiduciary study, absorb any increase and/or reduce the FRS costs for employers and employees.
- Develop a state plan to reinvest a specific percentage of state growth revenue to the FEFP.

- Continue to authorize co-enrollment funding for high school students taking adult education courses who need credits for graduation or improved grade point average.
- Increase funding for Safe Schools, Transportation, Instructional Materials, and Supplemental Academic Instruction to accommodate higher enrollment and higher costs, and maintain these programs as categoricals with maximum flexibility.
- Uphold the 90 percent rule in the FEFP and fund state mandates for transportation and instructional materials entirely from state revenue and do not include this funding when calculating the 90 percent rule.
- Restore the program weights for Exceptional Student Education (ESE), English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and all secondary (middle and high school) career education programs to pre-2001 levels.

Stable Funding for Public Education

Identify alternative revenue sources, including efforts to enforce the existing state sales tax on all internet sales made in Florida and study a phase-out of exemptions on non-essential goods.

Local Discretionary Millage (LDM)

- Oppose further equalization of the LDM until the basic education program is funded to the 2006-07 level adjusted for the three-year average of inflation.
- Extend the voter-approved operating millage authority from four (4) years to ten (10) years and allow for voter approval of the half-cent sales tax for operational as well as capital construction purposes.

Funding

- Reinstate the funding for 251, 252, 253, and gifted students on a per student basis.
- Hold funding in abeyance for the School Recognition Program.
- Reject any new funded or unfunded mandates or new programs.
- Public School Funding should follow the student when the student's educational enrollment location changes between a non-traditional school and a traditional public school
- Restore pre-k funding to the FY 2010 level to eliminate waiting lists.
- Preserve Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Programs and other advanced academic programs by restoring funding to the 2006-2007 levels (.24 factor).

- Return the rate of local tax roll collections from 96 percent to 95 percent for FEFP calculation purposes.

HURRICANE/DISASTER RELIEF

Establish permanent statutory authority to assist school districts with hurricane damage without negatively affecting resources for other districts, including:

- providing an avenue for school boards to seek necessary waivers of state law for up to a year, such as shortening the school year, in order to resolve some of the immediate impact of hurricane damage; and
- funding all operational costs associated with shelter operations.

CLASS SIZE

- Fully fund the class size constitutional mandate and distribute all funds on a per student basis and eliminate all monetary penalties.
- Give traditional public schools the same exemptions provided charter schools.

GOVERNANCE

Voucher Programs

Oppose any further expansion of the Florida Tax Credit and John McKay Scholarship Programs.

Charter Schools

- Provide traditional schools the same laws, rules, and regulations as charter schools.
- Allow school boards to serve as the Board of Directors to establish their own charter schools within each district.
- Maintain school boards' authority regarding the disposition of local capital outlay funds and impact fees and authorize school boards to collect administrative fees for all students served by the charter school.

School Board Structure

Oppose any provisions impacting the school board's governance without local school board and community input.

Waiver of Statutes

Provide the authority for the governor or of the Commissioner of Education to waive statutes, except for those dealing with life safety issues, upon request of the school board for up to three years.

Articulation Programs and Agreements

- Allow local or regional determination in the operation of post-secondary and adult education articulation programs and dual delivery systems.
- Provide for statewide articulation agreements for school districts, community and state colleges and universities so that dual enrollment credit will transfer to and among all state higher education institutions.

School Board Calendar

Abolish the portion of Florida Statute that requires the first day of school to be no more than 14 days before Labor Day of each year and allow each district the authority to set its own start date.

Pay for Performance/Teacher Evaluation Systems

Provide the authority for school boards to design local evaluation and performance systems rather than impose a one size fits all mandate.

Constitutional Authority and Home Rule

Preserve school board constitutional and home rule authority.

CAPITAL OUTLAY

School Construction

Provide adequate school construction funds to support: new facilities, renovations, replacement schools, school maintenance, land acquisition, mandated class size reduction, hurricane shelter retrofitting, pre-kindergarten programs housed in public schools, and the additional costs of constructing environmentally efficient “green” schools.

Optional Capital Outlay Levy (2.0 mills)

- Restore the full optional 2.0 mill levy for capital purposes and reject any further reduction and continue the flexibility to use this revenue to pay property and casualty insurance premiums; to purchase equipment to implement on-line testing; and, to purchase software required to run equipment purchased with capital funding.
- Oppose any mandatory diversion of Local Discretionary Capital Outlay levy revenue from traditional public schools to non-traditional public schools.

Impact Fees

- Define school boards as “infrastructure”-- not “developers.”
- Maintain fees and reinstate local capital outlay funding for the purposes that they were collected.

Relocatables

Allow, but do not require, local governments and school boards to include the capacity of temporary relocatable facilities in the level of service calculation.

Critical Needs .25 Mill Levy

Allow the critical needs .25 mill levy without a referendum.

Student Station Costs

Provide for a district or regional index for the per-student-station cost cap to keep pace with changing market place increases for labor, materials, and code requirements.

General Obligation Bonds

Extend the maximum term for GOBs from 20 to 30 years and allow school boards to schedule the maturities.

Local Sales Tax

Expand the allowable use of locally-voted sales tax to include operating expenses that maintain, renovate, or repair existing school facilities and maintain, secure, or upgrade school technology equipment.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND STATE TESTING PROGRAM

- Establish and fund better systems to develop, implement, and audit valid and reliable state tests and expedite the scanning and scoring to provide better, more reliable student data.
- Develop and fund the teacher/administrator evaluation and performance pay system and provide maximum local flexibility for local collaboration and negotiations for the implementation.
- Fully fund end-of-course exams and provide that EOCs should not be the determining factor in receiving credit; should not exceed 30 percent of a student’s total grade; and, allow students to retake the exams.
- Modify the state’s criteria for “intervene status” to ensure clarity, consistency, and fairness.
- Provide for the same level of student and educator accountability for all state providers.

OTHER ISSUES

Student Safety

Prohibit reading, writing, or sending text messages on an electronic device while operating a motor vehicle in a school zone.

Best Practices of Assessment Programs

Require the state DOE to conduct a “Global Best Practices” review of professional and student assessment programs.

DJJ Funding

- Ensure that any additional funding for Juvenile Justice centers supplements rather than supplants funds available for the basic education program.
- Allow districts to waive the \$45 fee for adult education basic or GED courses offered to students in jails, stockades, or DJJ facilities.
