

School Board of Sarasota County, Florida
2017 Legislative Platform

1. Ensure constitutional authority of school boards

Locally elected school boards are keenly aware of the unique needs of the community that it serves and is best positioned to make the decisions necessary to ensure the greatest opportunities for students.

2. HB 7029 - cost of construction

Pursuant to the cost studies required in HB7029, adopt a fair and equitable cost cap for construction that also provide an option for exceptions without being subject to penalties listed in FS1013.64. Specifically, the cap should consider the factors on **Attachment 1.**

3. Address shortage of substitute teachers by allowing recent retirees to work as substitutes

Amend Florida Statute 238.181 to allow teachers to return to the classroom as substitutes within three months of retirement rather than being required to wait 12 months as mandated in the current statute.

4. Support an accountability and evaluation system that is valid, fair, reliable and fully funded and provide school districts all possible flexibility in implementation and should not violate federal law by imposing requirements that are above and beyond the scope of the federal legislation. See key factors on Attachment 2.

5. Stabilize school funding and enhance local discretion in expenditures. See attached details. See Attachment 3.

6. Amend F.S. 1002.395 (5) as follows:

(5) Scholarship funding tax credits; Limitations. -- (a) The tax credit may be adjusted annually based on current utilization of the tax credits and scholarships, in addition to revenue projections of the funding sources. **See Attachment 4.**

Attachment 1 – HB 7029 – Cost of Construction

- Variation of commercial construction costs among Florida’s counties and regions;
- Removal from consideration of costs for site purchase, site improvement (both on and off site) and attending infrastructure improvements that may be imposed by local government, water management districts, etcetera, including but not limited to those associated with environmental and mitigation efforts;
- Exempt upfront investments that minimize the overall cost of building ownership over its life through investment in green technologies, energy reduction technologies, selection of construction materials and construction techniques which decrease long term operational costs;
- Removal of costs of infrastructure for both technology and safety and security;
- Exempt construction requirements from non-life safety and federal requirements found in SREF (State Regulations for Educational Facilities);
- Costs associated with extended construction schedules on student occupied campuses;
- Adjust costs to account for decisions made by local School Boards in the interest of impacting learning;
- Other factors as may be determined in studies being conducted and due for reporting to the Legislature by the Office of Economic Demographic Research (EDR) and the Office for Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA).

Attachment 2 – Accountability and Evaluation System

- Ensure that the assessment system can be supported by local infrastructure and does not have an unreasonable negative impact on instructional time.
- Follow ESSA law and provide for assessment in grades 3-8 and once in high school.
- Revise Florida statutes and related State Board of Education Rules regarding 3rd Grade promotion and retention to:
 - Provide clearly defined alternative pathways for student promotion and retention with a more balanced approach that considers both assessment results and local evidence of student performance;
 - Ensure that the final decision on student promotion or retention is made at the local level; and
 - Ensure that student promotion or retention is not dependent upon, or denied by, a single assessment result.
- Require the Department of Education to establish concordance scores between FSA and nationally normed assessments including ACT/SAT, AP, IB and others, for possible use by districts to substitute national exams in lieu of FSA for reading and/or mathematics. Consideration must include computer-based implementation logistics including ESE/504 accommodations and accurate measurement of ELL progress.

Attachment 3 –Stabilize School Funding

- Restore the FTE definition to provide for six periods and fund additional instructional time for dual enrollment and virtual programs and allow school districts and colleges to establish local agreement provisions that may include their own cost structure provisions related to the delivery of dual enrollment.
- Restore 7th period Advanced Placement programs, the International Baccalaureate program, the Advanced International Certificate of Education program and Certified Career and other Professional academy courses that require more than 24 credits to graduation.
- Restore grant funding for the Adults with Disabilities Program.

Attachment 4: - Scholarship Funding

Amend s 1002.395(5), F.S. as follows:

(5) SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING TAX CREDITS; LIMITATIONS.—

(a) The tax credit may be adjusted annually based on current utilization of the tax credits and scholarships, in addition to revenue projections of the funding sources.

- ~~1. The tax credit cap amount is \$229 million in the 2012-2013 state fiscal year.~~
- ~~2. In the 2013-2014 state fiscal year and each state fiscal year thereafter, the tax credit cap amount is the tax credit cap amount in the prior state fiscal year. However, in any state fiscal year when the annual tax credit amount for the prior state fiscal year is equal to or greater than 90 percent of the tax credit cap amount applicable to that state fiscal year, the tax credit cap amount shall increase by 25 percent. The Department of Education and Department of Revenue shall publish on their websites information identifying the tax credit cap amount when it is increased pursuant to this subparagraph.~~

This common sense change will allow the legislators, not bureaucrats in DOR or DOE, to set the amount of increase based on current usage, revenue projections and any pending tax cuts plans for Corporate or Lease Taxes.

This change does not eliminate increases in the scholarship tax credits, just eliminates the automatic 25% increase which more than doubles the amount allocated every 4 years. The increase for this year is estimated at \$137.5 million bringing next year’s allocation to \$687.5 million.

The automatic 25% increase is not only unprecedented, but also unsustainable in the near future as revenue projections and plans to cut corporate income and lease taxes are being considered.

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|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2012-2013 | 2015-2016 | 2020-2021 | 2024-2025 | 2028-2029 | 2032-2033 | 2036-2037 |
| \$229 million | \$550 million | \$1.07 Billion | \$2.2 Billion | \$4.5 Billion | \$10 Billion | \$20 Billion |

Budget items should be decided on an annual basis. Not passing this common sense change will tie the hands of future legislators as they grapple with declining revenues and competing state priorities.