

**GREATER FLORIDA CONSORTIUM
OF
SCHOOL BOARDS'
2015 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 GOALS

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY/GOVERNANCE/UNFUNDED MANDATES

Ensure that, in all cases, legislation be evaluated to provide that it does not conflict with the constitutional and home rule authority of school boards to “operate, control, and supervise” all public schools within their school districts.

FUNDING

Allocate sufficient state dollars with flexibility to enable school districts 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.

- Increase Base Student Allocation (BSA) for FY 2015-16 by \$368.56 or more to truly restore funding to the FY 2007-08 appropriated per student level.
- Restore the ESE Guaranteed Categorical allocation to the pre-recession level of \$2,220.56 per student or greater.
- Restore the 0.50 mill capital outlay taxing authority to local school boards to meet the school maintenance and technology needs of their community.

- Fund the infrastructure cost and acquisition of computers/technology for the expansion of digital instruction and mandated testing.
- Collect and earmark the internet sales tax for public schools.
- Oppose further equalization of the local discretionary millage.
- Restore the FTE definition to provide for six periods and fund additional instructional time for dual enrollment and virtual programs.
- Fully fund a new categorical program for the 300 lowest performing elementary schools and allow the school districts the flexibility in providing the additional time.
- Base the class size requirement on the school-wide average for all public 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.
- Increase the cap for vehicle purchases and property and casualty insurance from \$100 to \$150.
- Oppose any mandatory diversion of Local Discretionary Capital Outlay levy revenue from traditional public schools to non-traditional public schools.
- Establish a long-term, stable, and recurring revenue source to provide increased 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.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

- Require that all publicly funded schools have the same laws, rules, and regulations.
- Require a \$250,000 performance bond upon application.
- Maintain school boards’ authority to negotiate a performance contract with a charter school by repealing the standard contract.
- Maintain school boards’ authority over local capital outlay funds.

- Grant final authority to approve or reject charter school applications.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND STATE TESTING PROGRAM

- Suspend high stakes testing.
- Create a workable accountability system, not to be implemented before July 1, 2017, that must include student, teacher, principal, school and school district assessment, and professional development.
- Provide that any accountability measure developed must be statistically reliable and validated in Florida.
- Reduce the number of state mandated tests and use the results solely for diagnostic purposes.
- Allow school districts to choose nationally normed tests as an alternative to state mandated tests.
- Repeal requirements for districts to adopt EOCs in every subject unless provided by and funded by the state assessment program.
- Allow alternative ways for Post-secondary Readiness Test compliance, such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, AICE, or Dual Enrollment programs.