

PROPOSED

GREATER FLORIDA CONSORTIUM OF SCHOOL BOARDS' ~~2010~~ 2011 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 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. **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, and transportation costs 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.

- Increase funding for Safe Schools, Transportation, Instructional Materials, and Supplemental Academic Instruction to accommodate higher enrollment and higher costs, and maintain these programs as categorical 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

- Establish a financially stable and expanding source of state revenue for Prek-12 that includes plans to replace the phase-out of America’s Recovery and Reinvestment State Stabilization Funds and funds–public schools to at least the 2006-07 level adjusted for the three-year average of inflation.
- 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 unfunded mandates or new programs.

- Give school boards local options by January 2011 to develop programs for increased instructional time (i.e., longer school day, week or year) supported by corresponding additional state funds for full implementation by the 2013-14 school year.
- Preserve Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Programs and other advanced academic programs.
- Return the rate of local tax roll collections from 96 percent to 95 percent for FEFP calculation purposes.

HURRICANE/DISASTER RELIEF

Establish permanent provisions 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;
- funding all operational costs associated with shelter operations; and,
- including shelters in concurrency requirements.

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 Scholarship Program or any other new voucher programs.

Charter Schools

- Restore school boards' final authority for the governance of 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.

Expenditure Requirements

Oppose any legislation that dictates a specific percentage of a district’s operating budget that must be allocated to “direct classroom instruction.”

Waiver of Statutes

Provide the authority for the Governor 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.
- 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.

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.

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

Revise the per-student-station cost cap to keep pace with changing market place increases for labor and materials.

PROPERTY APPRAISAL

- Impose a deadline for local property appraisers to certify final valuation of the roll by June 30th of each year.
- Increase the fees paid by appellants of property tax assessments to cover the cost of the Value Adjustment Board operations, particularly legal fees mandated by the 2008 Florida Legislature.

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.
- Provide that end-of-course exams should not be the determining factor in receiving credit; should not exceed 30 percent of a student’s total grade; and, students should be allowed to retake the exams.

- Do not count FCAT scores for English Language Learners for at least two years after enrollment.

OTHER ISSUES

Virtual Education

Allow virtual education reporting of FTE in all reporting periods for total 12-month FTE limit of 1.0 and open virtual enrollment to any Florida student entering kindergarten.

Student Safety

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