

**PROPOSED
GREATER FLORIDA CONSORTIUM
OF
SCHOOL BOARDS'
2009 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM**

PRIORITY ISSUES

FUNDING

GOAL: 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.

Adequate 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 growth, inflationary increases, competitive salaries and benefits for teachers and other personnel, and quality program improvements. Use new 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, minimally, the same dollars per FTE in total potential funds for FY 2010 that are appropriated for FY 2009.
- 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.
- Maintain the 90 percent rule within the Florida Education Funding Program (FEFP) and reject moving categoricals into the base FEFP.
- Restore the program weights to fund Middle School Career Education and the 1.5 weight factor for high school vocational programs.

Additional Revenue Sources

Conduct a comprehensive review of all current sales tax exemptions, and repeal as appropriate, except on food and medicine.

Budget Shortfalls

The following strategies should be used to mitigate the need for Education Budget shortfalls for 2008-10:

- Reduce/eliminate School Recognition awards and restore flexibility to the use of lottery funds;
- Establish moratorium on new programs;
- Establish moratorium on unfunded mandates;
- Provide flexibility in the use of all appropriated funds; and,
- Use Working Capital Trust Fund to avoid further reductions to education.

Local Discretionary Millage

Give school boards the option of levying up to .51 of Local Discretionary Millage (LDM) and oppose further equalization of the LDM until the basic education program is adequately funded.

Extend the voter-approved operating millage authority from four (4) years to ten (10) years.

CLASS SIZE REDUCTION

Continue to fully fund Class Size Reduction (CSR), pursuant to the constitutional amendment, but not at the expense of the basic FEFP, and delay the implementation for one more year which will adhere to the deadline stipulated in the amendment.

Provide full state funding for the cost of building additional schools and classrooms to meet the state's responsibility under the current class size reduction amendment and distribute the funds based on the districts' utilization needs.

Adjust the statutory language to maintain the Class Size Reduction at the current school average which allows flexibility when an additional 19th, 23rd or 26th student shows up in a core content class.

HURRICANE/DISASTER RELIEF

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

- ~~creating a special trust fund to assist school districts with hurricane recovery;~~

- holding districts harmless for all losses of funding resulting from a hurricane;
- 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.

GOVERNANCE

Strategic Planning

~~Establish a five year strategic plan that aligns with Florida's Enhanced World Class Standards and moves the State into the top half of states in per student funding, and fund the first year of the plan.~~

School Calendar/Year/Week

Allow school districts maximum flexibility in redesigning the school calendar to increase operating efficiency and savings which includes options in start dates, days per year and per week.

Charter Schools

Return the final decision and authority regarding granting a charter to the local school boards and more clearly define the responsibilities of the charter school and of the school board. In addition:

- repeal the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission;
- maintain school boards' authority regarding the disposition of local capital outlay funds and impact fees;
- authorize school boards to collect administrative fees for all students served by the charter school; and,
- stipulate that the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission, and not the local school board, is responsible for insuring that the charter schools it authorizes are in compliance with all fiscal and program requirements.
- extend a district's charter school exclusivity authority beyond one year until the statute creating the Commission is declared unconstitutional or is repealed.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

Oppose legislation that subverts or bypasses the constitutional authority of school boards and superintendents.

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-mills)

Restore the full optional 2.00 mill levy for capital purposes and continue the flexibility to use 2-mill revenue to pay property and casualty insurance premiums.

Impact Fees

Define school boards as “infrastructure”-- not “developers.”

Relocatables

Allow local governments and school boards to have the option to include the capacity of temporary relocatable facilities in the level of service calculation.

Student Station Costs

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

ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

Provide for statewide articulation agreements for school districts, community and state colleges and universities so that dual enrollment credit will transfer to all state higher education institutions.