

**GREATER FLORIDA CONSORTIUM
OF
SCHOOL BOARDS'
2014 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.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES

GOVERNANCE

Mandates/Reforms

Oppose additional reforms and mandates and require at least one-year lead-time for all new provisions.

Voucher Programs

Oppose any further expansion of the Florida Tax Credit and John McKay Scholarship Programs and require the same accountability for students attending these programs as is required for students attending traditional public schools.

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.

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 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.

Legislative Session Dates

Place a constitutional amendment on the 2014 ballot for the legislature to convene annually in January to allow adequate time for budget development and new legislative initiatives.

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.

Sovereign Immunity

Reject increases in caps and maintain uniformity among local and state government agencies.

Workforce Development

Maintain the dual education delivery system that allows both the local school district and community college to offer adult programs.

FUNDING

- Conduct an impartial third-party study of the Florida Price Level Index to reflect the costs of housing, insurance, poverty, and transportation, rather than wages.
- Provide state funding for any increased costs to the employer's contribution to the Florida Retirement System.
- Develop a state plan to reinvest a specific percentage of state growth revenue in the FEFP.

- 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.
- Eliminate the wealth adjustment from the sparsity formula.
- Restore the program weights for Exceptional Student Education (ESE), English-for-Language-Learners (ELL), and all secondary (middle and high school) career education programs to pre-2001 levels.
- 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.
- Extend the voter-approved operating millage authority from four (4) years up to ten (10) years.
- Allow for voter approval of the half-cent sales tax for operational as well as capital construction purposes.
- Reinstate the funding for 251, 252, 253, and gifted students on a per student basis and provide state funding for additional pupil personnel services.
- Hold funding in abeyance for the School Recognition Program and reject any new funded or unfunded mandates or new programs.
- Provide that public school funding follow the student when the student's educational enrollment location changes between a non-traditional school and a traditional public school.
- Restore pre-kindergarten funding to the FY 2010 level to eliminate waiting lists and recognize space requirements in state facilities specifications (SREF).
- Preserve Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Programs and other advanced academic programs by restoring funding to the 2006-07 levels (.24 factor).
- Adjust the rate of local tax roll collections from 96 percent to 94 percent for FEFP calculation purposes.
- Provide state funding to support all technology and digital requirements that the legislature has mandated districts must meet by 2015 or delay that deadline.

CAPITAL OUTLAY

Public Education and Capital Outlay (PECO)

Restore and enhance funding to traditional public schools.

Optional Capital Outlay Levy (2.0 mills)

Restore the .50 mill levy by majority school board vote for critical operations or capital.

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.

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.

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

- Provide statewide assessments in multiple languages for the first two years of testing.
- Reinstate 3.5 as the passing writing score.
- 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 collaboration and negotiations for the implementation.
- Modify the state’s criteria for “intervene status” to ensure clarity, consistency, and fairness.
- Provide the same level of student and educator accountability for all state providers.

- Develop an alternative assessment model for measuring progress of students enrolled in ESE centers that appropriately measures student achievement and teacher performance, and establish statewide criteria for student placement.

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 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.

OTHER ISSUES

Student Safety

- Permit safety signage on school buses.
- Provide for traffic violation for any unauthorized vehicle, moving or parked in a school bus zone, when buses are loading and unloading.

Best Practices of Assessment Programs

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

Department of Juvenile Justice (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.

Elementary Physical Education

Amend the 150-minute/week requirement for physical education to allow that time to include other teacher-supervised, research-based physical activities that are age and developmentally appropriate.

Residency Requirement

Eliminate the one-year residency for in-state tuition eligibility requirement to attend public school K-12 and Post-secondary Education Programs.

Student Health

Require the Florida High School Athletic Association to make literature available to parents on the importance of having a cardiovascular assessment, such as an EKG performed on student athletes, and pursue mandatory screening prior to participation in any organized sport.