

# Leaders

A Newsletter for Florida School Board Members

## Task force suggestions could change the 'culture' of high school

**T**he high school reform recommendations made recently by a task force, could change the face of secondary education in Florida.

The 28-member task force issued 15 recommendations that were presented to the House PreK-12 Committee this month. Among the suggested changes: majors and minors for students and elimination of ninth grade retention.

Education Commissioner John Winn said the recommendations were based on five concepts: Every student needs to set goals; they should be challenged; "We need to energize them;" provide them incentives for advancement; and give them support.

If these recommendations are to be implemented (some require legislative action), the education community will have to undergo "a major cultural change," said Commissioner Winn.

It was also obvious from the task force's suggestions, that some of the changes have to begin in middle school.

Here are a few of the recommendations:

- ✓ Upgrade Florida's high school graduation requirements to better prepare students for the 21st century (includes rigorous core requirements, four years of math; minimum GPA requirements, earning a passing score on 10th grade FCAT).

- ✓ Increase opportunities in middle schools for earning high school level course credits, with an emphasis on algebra.

- ✓ Require minimum core course

completion to exit Grade 8 or to enter high school.

- ✓ Provide remediation summer "academies" between grades 5/6, 6/7, 7/8, 8/9 with emphasis on transitioning from Grade 8 to 9. FCAT "retakes" should be allowed after completing one of the academies.

- ✓ Help teachers meet higher expectations by providing student-specific, research-based professional development.

- ✓ Help principals meet higher expectations by providing them instructional leadership training.

- ✓ Encourage more opportunities for high schoolers to earn a high school diploma and a higher level degree, certification, or competency at the same time.

- ✓ Require a minimum nine-week career education class for middle school students.

- ✓ Provide tools so middle school students can develop a five-year education plan that includes high school and postsecondary.

- ✓ Expand academic advisement

and support services in high schools.

- ✓ Eliminate grade level retention in high school, with high school graduation being based on proficiency and earning the required credits and GPA.

- ✓ Ensure that Level 1 and Level 2 readers in middle and high school receive intensive reading instruction.

The task force was made up of superintendents, school board members, teachers, principals, school administrators, and the business community. Among the members: Commissioner Winn; Sen. Evelyn Lynn, R-Ormond Beach; Supt. Rudy Crew, honorary member, Miami-Dade County; Seminole Supt. Bill Vogel; Madison Supt. Lou Miller; Volusia Supt. Peg Smith; Nancy Bostock, Pinellas County School Board; Stephanie Kraft, Broward County School Board; Dr. Wayne Blanton, FSBA executive director; Dr. David Mosrie, Florida Association of District School Superintendents' CEO; and Jim Warford, Florida Association of School Administrators CEO. The task force's web page is at [www.fldoe.org/hsreform](http://www.fldoe.org/hsreform).

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# Leadership Calling

## Co-teaching lawsuit on hold

**T**he proposed lawsuit by some school districts and the Florida School Boards Association that would force the state to recognize co-teaching as a viable class size reduction mechanism, has been postponed, at least until this year's legislative session ends.

FSBA Executive Director Wayne Blanton said there is a strong possibility the Legislature will act this session to restore the co-teaching option. The State Board of Education last year ruled that co-teaching could not be utilized to meet class size requirements.

SB 1146 by Jacksonville Republican senators Jim King and Steve Wise, provides that each teacher assigned to any classroom must be included in the calculation to determine if a classroom meets class-size limits.

The association will hold on to the money, in an interest bearing account, from those districts which have contributed to the legal action and is encouraging other districts "to continue to give consideration to joining in the lawsuit. If a satisfactory solution is reached, all monies would be returned with interest. If not, we will be in position to file the lawsuit in a timely manner," said Dr. Blanton.

## FSBA Legislative Days coming: Have you registered?

**F**SBAs' 19th Annual Day in the Legislature is coming March 22-24 to the Doubletree Hotel in Tallahassee.

The session includes a March 22 legislative briefing from FSBA staff and district legislative liaisons and a legislative breakfast meeting March 23 with legislative leaders. Time has also been set aside for individual legislative visits by school board members.

Because of changes in rules governing what legislators can and cannot receive from lobbyists and others, the reception scheduled at the DoubleTree Hotel March 22 will be for FSBA members only. There is also a reception March 23 at the Governor's Club for FSBA directors.

Sheila Costigan, Leon County School Board and FSBA's Legislative Committee chair, strongly encouraged school board members to make appointments with their legislators. "The importance of a scheduled meeting with your delegation cannot be over emphasized," she wrote in a memo to FSBA members.

## Upcoming Events

**March 7**  
Legislative Session Begins

**March 22-24**  
FSBA Day in Legislature

**April 6-11**  
NSBA Annual Conference, Chicago, Ill.

**May 5**  
Legislative Session Ends

**June 14-16**  
FSBA Annual Spring Conference, Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay, Tampa



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# State wants to fill those 32,000 teacher vacancies; so do school boards

**A** couple of weeks before Gov. Jeb Bush unveiled his teacher recruitment plan, former FSBA President Tom Greer was before a House education committee asking for help in attracting more teachers to Florida.

The DOE estimates the state will need nearly 32,000 new teachers by next school term. While competitive salaries with other states may be unrealistic, different recruitment methods may not be, Mr. Greer, Osceola County School Board, told the committee.

With Florida colleges only graduating some 6,000 teachers a year and assuming all of those graduates go to work in a Florida school, that still leaves the state about 26,000 teachers short.

"We're going to Pennsylvania and Ohio looking for teachers," Mr. Greer said. "We were short about 110 teachers this year. These are people who will change students' lives in Florida."

Mr. Greer suggested the state institute a "loan forgiveness" program similar to what the governor later announced.

He also said his district is looking at state-approved methods to attract more teachers, such as the alternate teaching route provided by the Legislature a year or so ago, that makes it easier for professionals in other industries to obtain a teaching certificate. For instance, Mr. Greer's district is partnering with a local community college and university to allow school administrators "who want to be teachers to attend classes at no cost to them. The County's Education Foundation pays the first two years, and the district the last two," he said.

"We also take one or two of our new teachers and train them to recruit. We then take them to career fairs in other states. It used to be teachers would be standing in line at our booth to come to Florida. Now we have to go out and convince them to come to our booth so we can recruit them," said Mr. Greer.

Some of Governor Bush's teacher recruitment recommendations, released late last month, include:

- A new \$40 million grant program to support school districts' efforts to recruit and retain teachers, giving school districts the flexibility to use the funds as they see fit, such as signing bonuses, housing assistance, a down payment on a home, training and professional development, or payment of student loans.

- Differentiated pay for teaching in a shortage subject area, working in a high-need school, assuming additional duties outside the classroom, such as serving as a mentor, or producing

high student achievement in the classroom.

- Reimbursing teachers for up to \$10,000 in student loans for teaching in a shortage subject area and reimbursing up to \$78 per credit hour for up to nine semester hours annually for completing courses that prepare current teachers to teach in a shortage area.

- An education minor that would satisfy teacher certification requirements, something the State Board of Education, by rule, recently adopted.

## What's happening in Tallahassee? Tune to *Education Today* to find out

**F** SBA's popular *Education Today* television program will be back starting at noon (EST) March 10 and continuing every Friday through the end of the 2006 legislative session. Its purpose is to keep FSBA members and other educators updated on issues affecting education.

The program, hosted by FSBA Executive Director Wayne Blanton, is telecast statewide by the Florida Education Channel, a program initiative of the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium.

Dr. Blanton's first guest will be Rep. Joe Pickens, R-Palatka, former school board attorney who chairs the House Education Appropriations Committee. Guests last year included Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings and key legislative leaders in the House and Senate.

*Education Today* can be seen on the Florida Education Channel 9418 (DISH Network 61.5), or state transponder 801.

Those with fast internet connections (broadband) can also view the program on their computers at [www.fec.tv](http://www.fec.tv). Click on the TV. After the broadcast, the program is also archived at "Education Today," which is located under "Special Series" at the same web site.

The Florida Education Channel also broadcasts over local cable channels in the following cities: Brighthouse Cable, Chipley and Graceville, Channel 12; MediaCom, Bonifay and Vernon, Channel 12; and Comcast, Marianna, Channel 62.



**FSBA executive director Wayne Blanton, right, and co-host Amy Ausley, chat with former Education Commissioner Jim Horne during a previous *Education Today* program.**

## From the Executive Director

By WAYNE BLANTON

# Class size reduction, 65% solution, high school reform await legislators



WAYNE BLANTON

**A** projected constitutional amendment which would require school districts to spend 65% of their funds in the classroom is now part of attempts to make class size reduction more palatable for school districts. These are just two of the major education issues facing lawmakers in the upcoming 2006 session.

Both the House and Senate have proposed constitutional amendments that would scale back class size requirements, calling for a school district "average" per teacher cap by the 2009-2010 school year. This district-wide classroom average would be the same as now: 18 students in preK-3; 22 in grades 4-8 and 25 in grades 9-12. However, districts wouldn't have to worry about each classroom meeting the requirement and they would have some latitude to exceed those limits by five students. In other words, a third grade class could house 23 students; middle school classes, 27 and high school classes, 30.

Included in the same constitutional amendment resolution is the requirement that "at least 65% of total funds, as defined by law, received by school districts for operational expenditures shall be expended for purposes directly related to classroom instruction..."

Known as the "65% solution," not a single county in Florida would meet the 65% requirement as it is now defined. For one thing, bus transportation is not included in the 65% calculations. Also not covered are attendance, guidance, health, instructional media, and instruction and curriculum development services, instructional staff training, and instruction-related technology.



Florida is very different from a lot of the other states, particularly those with hundreds of school districts where you could step out your front door and see three different districts. In these states, many students walk to school. These states don't have the bus transportation budgets that Florida school districts have.

Educators have received assurances from legislative leaders that more school budget areas would likely be included in the 65% definition.

Even if the Legislature adopts the joint resolution (currently HJR 447 and SJR 1150), voters must still approve the revised constitutional amendment in November.

The 65% Solution is being heavily promoted nationwide by First Class Education, an organization created by Patrick Byrne, president and chairman of Overstock.Com, Inc. ([www.firstclasseducation.org](http://www.firstclasseducation.org)). According to the web site, 20 states and Washington, D.C. are considering the proposal. Mr. Byrne's aim is to have this operational in all 50 states.

Other issues we'll be tracking include high school reform and the 15 recommendations issued by a task force (see story on Page 1), impact fees and the six recommendations put forth by another task force, and teacher recruiting (see Page 3).

Here are a few of the recommendations to the Legislature from the impact fee task force:

- Impact fee ordinances should address affordable housing.

- All impact fee collections and expenditures should be accounted and reported.

- The Legislature should consider additional or alternative funding sources for local governments to meet their infrastructure demands.

- There should be "no statutory guidance" regarding how impact fees are calculated; how they're shared between counties and cities; impact fee caps, or a model impact fee ordinance.

With all these issues facing education, it's critical that you get the word out to your legislative delegation. One way to do that is to attend our Day in the Legislature March 22-24 to be briefed on the issues, then meet with your legislators. I hope to see you in Tallahassee!

*Dr. Blanton is executive director of the Florida School Boards Association.*

# Special Report

## EDUCATION FAST FACTS (Compiled by FSBA)

- There are more than 2,609,000 students in Florida's public schools, which makes Florida the fourth largest public school system in the country.
- Over the last 5 years, Florida's public school K-12 student population has grown by an average of more than 56,000 students each year.
- The statewide average teacher salary is approximately \$41,500. The average benefits package – which typically includes retirement, health insurance and supplements – adds about 25% to the average salary. Nationally, Florida ranks 30th in average teacher salary, with the U.S. average at \$46,726.
- There are about 171,000 teachers in Florida's public schools. Nationally, Florida ranks 42nd in student : teacher ratio with a ratio of 17.5 : 1 as compared to the U.S. average of 15.7 : 1.
- Florida has more than 340,000 full-time and part-time public school employees, making the Florida public school system one of the largest employers in the state.
- The 2004-2005 basic operating budget for K-12 public education – as provided through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) and major categorical allocations – is approximately \$15 billion. This provides an average of \$5,735 per student. Nationally, Florida ranks 41st in per pupil spending.
- Florida must spend approximately \$83 million each school day to operate its public schools.
- The Florida Lottery is expected to generate about \$655.6 million for K-12 public education, with about \$442.1 million for school operations and about \$212.9 million for school construction debt service.
- A main source of state revenue is the sales tax. Each cent of sales tax generates about \$2.9 billion.
- Nationally, Florida ranks 23rd in per capita personal income, but 49th in the percent of personal income spent on K-12 education.
- According to 2005 FCAT results, 1,254 schools received a performance grade of A, 589 schools received a B, 619 schools received a C, 230 schools received a D, and 78 schools received an F.
- There are more than 3,400 public schools in Florida, including traditional public schools, charter schools, alternative schools, and other education centers.
- The average cost (*not* including land purchase) to build an elementary school is \$12-\$15 million, a middle school costs \$22-\$25 million, and a high school costs \$35-\$40 million. It takes two to three years to plan, design and construct a school.
- There are 67 school districts which match geographically to Florida's 67 counties. Each school district has an elected school board that consists of five to nine members. Each school district also has a superintendent. Of the 67 superintendents, 24 are appointed by their school board, 43 are elected by their community.

*Florida data is based on 2004-2005 fiscal year, national data is based on 2003-2004 fiscal year.*

## **School Impact Fees (Compiled by FSBA)**

Currently, 23 of Florida's 67 counties have enacted school-impact fee ordinances to help finance school construction. According to the Department of Education and the Legislative Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, preliminary figures indicate that school impact fees generated nearly \$255 million statewide in 2004, a 16% increase over the previous year.

For a typical 2,000-square-foot, single-family detached unit with 3 bedrooms, the following fees are collected:

Baker	\$ 1,500
Brevard	\$ 4,445
Broward	\$ 1,789
Citrus	\$ 1,861
Collier	\$ 1,778
Flagler	\$ 3,600
Hernando	\$ 4,266
Hillsborough	\$ 196
Lake	\$ 7,055
Lee	\$ 4,309
Manatee	\$ 5,850
Martin	\$ 2,300
Miami-Dade	\$ 2,448
Nassau	\$ 3,726
Orange	\$ 7,000
Osceola	\$ 7,608
Palm Beach	\$ 3,998
Pasco	\$ 4,314
Polk	\$ 8,596
Seminole	\$ 1,384
St. Johns	\$ 3,771
St. Lucie	\$ 4,955
Volusia	\$ 5,284

In many counties, the impact fee is indexed to increase with certain costs and is adjusted annually or upon a schedule set forth in the county's ordinance. In addition, several counties have recently commissioned studies that have led to more substantial increases in their impact fee amounts. Meanwhile, several other counties are considering imposing school impact fees.