

# Leaders

A Newsletter for Florida School Board Members

## New teacher pay plan signed by Governor Crist

**S**ay goodbye to the dreaded STAR program and hello to MAP. Gov. Charlie Crist signed his first major education legislation in late March creating the Merit Award Program for teachers and school-based administrators.

The bill-signing ceremony was attended by several FSBA members.

Rep. Joe Pickens, R-Palatka, who helped push the MAP bill in the house, compared this performance pay program to a popular scholarship program. Speaking at the bill signing ceremony, the chairman of the House Schools and Learning Council said, "My goal is that this becomes like Bright Futures. Every teacher who deserves it will get it."

Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, chairman of the Education Pre-K-12 Committee who pushed the bill in the Senate, commented: "Out of the debris of a flawed plan (STAR) we've created not a perfect plan, but one that will work."

He liked the fact that principals were also covered in MAP. "They're the leaders (of their schools) and they ought to be given extra rewards because of the performance of their students."

Governor Crist thanked Rep. Pickens and Sen. Gaetz "for this great bill that they brought to us this year" and noted that principals are also deserving of performance pay since "they are the CEOs of the schools." MAP covers both instructional personnel (teachers) and school-based administrators.

The STAR (Special Teachers Are Rewarded) program was one of the more controversial issues passed by the 2006 Legislature. Lawmakers allocated \$147.5 million to allow



*After signing the teacher performance pay bill, Gov. Charlie Crist congratulates Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, and Rep. Joe Pickens, R-Palatka, right, for their work in getting the MAP bill through the legislative process. Also viewing the bill signing are FSBA Executive Director Wayne Blanton (to Sen. Gaetz' right); FSBA President Sue Hershey, Martin County School Board (just behind Dr. Blanton); and Martin County Supt. Sara Wilcox (to Ms. Hershey's right).*

districts to reward high performing teachers with bonuses. School districts had to submit STAR plans to the State Board of Education for approval and spend their STAR money by the end of this fiscal year, June 30.

MAP does away with STAR. However, the \$147.5 million originally allocated to STAR now goes to the DOE to be disbursed among school districts based on each district's proportion of K-12 base funding. This money may be used to fund STAR plans that are implemented based on the 2006-2007 proviso language. A district that has been asked to submit a revised STAR plan must submit it by May 1.

### In this edition. . .

- 2 Sen. Wise on Education Today**
- 3 Highlights of Day in Legislature**
- 4 Tax revolt just beginning**

**Special Report**  
**STAR makes way for MAP**

*Continued on Page 4*

# Leadership Calling

## Members attend meeting of Learning First Alliance

**F** SBA's Executive Committee attended the recent Learning First Alliance Conference in Washington, D.C.

The committee met with Aaron Wallace, FEA chief of staff in Tallahassee, Karin Brown, Florida PTA president, and Sandra Robinson, University of Central Florida Dean of Education.

"We continued our discussions during FSBA's Day in the Legislature in March," said FSBA President Sue Hershey, Martin County School Board. "We all believed that an alliance could, and should be, formed in Florida. We believe that the alliance has the potential for creating a common voice for education at the state and national levels."

## Wise visits *Education Today*



*Sen. Steve Wise, left, R-Jacksonville and chairman of the Senate's Pre-K-12 Education Appropriations Committee, was one of FSBA Executive Director Wayne Blanton's guests on the association's 30-minute television program, Education Today. The program, in its fifth year, was broadcast weekly during the 2007 legislative session. It is a statewide telecast of the Florida Education Channel, a program initiative of the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium.*

## Upcoming Events

### May 31-June 1

FSBA Master Board Forum, Panama City

### June 13-15

FSBA Annual Spring Conference, Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay, Tampa

### July 11-14

NSBA Southern Region Conference, San Antonio, Texas

### October 8-12

FSBA School Board Academy, Gainesville



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*Comptroller*

Jan Norris  
*Executive Administrative Assistant*

Patricia Peterson  
*Administrative Assistant for Board Development*

Mary Jane Angelotti  
*Office Administrator, FSBIT*

Florida School Boards Association  
203 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
(850) 414-2578 or Suncom 994-2578  
Fax (850) 414-2585 or Suncom 994-2585  
E-mail: fsba@fsba.org

Editor  
Andy Williams  
Communications & Consulting  
Tallahassee, Florida  
(850) 894-2226  
andyw313@earthlink.net

# FSBA's Day in the Legislature

FSBA had one of its best turnouts yet during its 2007 Day in the Legislature in late March. FSBA members heard key updates on property tax reform, teacher performance pay, and more, while also having the opportunity to visit with their legislators. Following are several pictures from the event.



*Claudia Brown-Curry, Escambia County School Board, meets with Rep. Curtis Richardson, D-Tallahassee, during FSBA's Day in the Legislature.*



*Bill Graham, Palm Beach County School Board, welcomes outgoing NSBA President Jane Gallucci, Pinellas County School Board.*



*Rep. Marti Coley, R-Marianna, receives a warm FSBA welcome from its Legislative Committee Chairman Lee Swift, Charlotte County.*

*Legislative Committee Chairman Swift, right, welcomes Rep. Joe Pickens, R-Palatka, to the FSBA breakfast. Rep. Pickens was one of several lawmakers who spoke to FSBA members about some key legislative issues.*



## From the Executive Director

By **WAYNE BLANTON**

# The tax revolt is just beginning



**WAYNE BLANTON**

**P**roperty tax relief is not something that's going away now that legislators have left town for this session. Regardless of any short term measures that were adopted this session, tax reform will remain a key issue we must continually monitor, because it will be back, if not in a special session later this year—a strong probability—then in the 2008 session

As anyone who owns a home knows, property taxes have exploded over the past couple of years, due mainly to higher assessments. In the last ten years, property taxes have risen 122%. All this has brought with it a loud cry for lawmakers to do something.

But remember that in that same time frame, the class size constitutional amendment came about, which means schools need more money to build more schools. The state has also grown by 650,000 students in that same decade. While enrollment figures have since leveled out—to only about 7,500 new students next year—we still have schools to build. So, anything that can inhibit what schools collect can be devastating.

I'm concerned about the assault on property taxes—the only stable source of income currently available to school districts—not only because a successful raid on the property tax vault would limit our options in meeting the needs of students, but if the tax structure is changed, we could all lose.

One of the options this session was to let voters decide, substantially via the constitutional amendment route, what changes should be enacted to Florida's tax code. One proposal would have severely scaled back property tax assessments while increasing Florida's sales tax rate.

Legislators were all over the map this session with tax reform measures, including eliminating property taxes on homes completely while relying on a 2.5 cent increase in sales taxes to make up the difference, to everything in between. Also, at the beginning there were promises that school districts would be able to escape such tax reductions, in other words they would be held harmless.

But even were cities and counties to take the major tax hits, they would still be faced with cutting their budgets. Can you spell "school resource officers?" In many districts they're paid for by cities or counties. That means districts would have to find the money in their shrinking budgets to hire these personnel.

Another proposal would have exempted homestead property from the state-mandated Required Local Effort (RLE) property tax levied by school districts, replacing it again with an added sales tax. That too would have been

accomplished with a constitutional amendment.

The major problem with this proposal is that the sales tax is not a stable source of revenue. It changes yearly. The most stable revenue source has been the property tax.

We also need to know exactly what any proposed change to the way taxes are collected will cost school districts and cities and counties.

But the scariest part of any of these scenarios is writing tax code changes into the Constitution. Once it's in the Constitution, it's pretty hard to get it taken out, particularly now that it takes a 60% majority to amend the constitution. If tax reform is done legislatively, then if it doesn't work one year, we can always come back the next and change it.

Of course we could just sit back and let the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission (TBRC), which began work again this year, do its job. Meeting once every 20 years, the TBRC has full authority to place tax issues on the 2008 general election ballot without legislative approval. It has until May 4, 2008 to submit any proposed constitutional amendments.

It is highly likely the TBRC will examine the property tax issue.

So, just because the Legislature has gone home, don't let your guard down. With tax reform still out there, I believe schools are facing some of their most critical challenges yet.

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

## Pay plan

*Continued from Page 1*

The state board may either approve the revised plan or deny the district eligibility to receive STAR funds for FY 2006-2007. The money can also be used to fund performance pay policies approved by the district school board which meet the requirements of the Merit Award Program with respect to the eligibility, pay supplement structure, and assessment provisions; or fund current performance pay policies. (*For complete MAP details, see the Special Report in this issue of Leaders.*)

## Special Report

# STAR makes way for MAP

MAP stands for Merit Award Program. It passed the Legislature and has already been signed into law by Governor Charlie Crist. MAP, a voluntary program, covers both instructional personnel (teachers) and school-based administrators.

To be eligible for MAP funds (the total legislative allocation could range from \$150 million to \$200 million), each school board must adopt a MAP plan that provides for an assessment and a merit award based on student performance and other criteria as negotiated locally in order to receive state funds.

At least 60% of the employee assessment must be based on student performance. All instructional personnel and school-based administrators are eligible as individuals or as instructional teams to receive MAP awards, with the exception of substitute teachers and paraprofessionals. To receive a MAP award as an instructional team, team members must be assessed on the performance of students assigned to the team members' classrooms or within the members' sphere of academic responsibility.

MAP supplements must be funded from funds appropriated by the Legislature and from any additional funds designated by the school district for MAP.

DOE may not distribute any portion of pro rata funding to a district or to a charter school if the district or charter school chooses not to adopt a MAP plan. Undistributed funds must revert to the fund from which it was appropriated.

By October 1 each year, districts must provide documentation to DOE showing expenditures of any state appropriation and districts must refund any undispersed appropriations to DOE. If undispersed funds are not remitted by November

1, an equivalent amount will be withheld from the district's FEFP funding.

The MAP supplement must be at least 5%, but not more than 10%, of the district's average teacher salary. The MAP plan may include additional pay supplements for exemplary work attendance. The supplements must be distributed by September 1 of the following school year.

A teacher's assessment must consider the performance of students assigned to his/her class or within his/her academic sphere of responsibility and the assessment of school-based administrators must look at the performance of students assigned to his/her school. Student evaluation would be based upon his/her academic proficiency, learning gains, or both, and must be measured by the FCAT.

For non-FCAT courses, national, state, or district-determined testing instruments that measure the Sunshine State Standards, must be used.

Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, participating school districts must be able to administer end-of-course examinations based on the Sunshine State Standards in order to measure a student's understanding and mastery of the entire course in all grade groupings and subjects for any year in which the districts participate in the program.

Up to 40% of the employee assessment must be based on professional practices. For teachers, the professional practices component must be based on the principal's assessment; for school-based administrators the professional practices component must be based on the district superintendent's assessment.

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The professional practices assessment criteria must include the ability to maintain appropriate discipline; outstanding knowledge of subject matter; ability to maintain a collaborative relationship with students' families; for school-based administrators, criteria must include the ability to manage human, financial, and material resources to maximize their use for direct instruction and the ability to recruit and retain high-performing teachers.

Each participating school board must submit its negotiated MAP plan to the education commissioner for review by October 1 each year. The plan must include the negotiated, district-adopted plan, or charter school adopted plan, if the district does not submit a plan of its own.

The commissioner must complete a review of each plan to determine compliance with MAP statutory requirements by November 15 each year. If a plan is not in compliance, the commissioner must identify in writing the specific revisions that are required. Revised plans must be finalized and resubmitted to the Commissioner by January 31 each year. The commissioner must certify those plans that do not comply to the Governor, Senate President, and House Speaker by February 15 of each year.

For purposes of the 2007-2008 school year, the initial MAP plan submitted for the 2007-2008 school year will also apply to the 2008-2009 school year. Thereafter, all plans submitted and approved within the time lines set forth apply to the following school year.

## What about STAR?

The bill kills the STAR \$147.5 million appropriation and repeals the *proviso* and implementing bill language relating to STAR. At the same time, the \$147.5 million is appropriated to the DOE to be allocated among school districts based on each district's proportion of K-12 base funding.

These funds may be used for any of the following:

1. To fund STAR plans that are implemented based on the 2006-2007 *proviso* language. A district that has been asked to submit a revised STAR plan must submit it by May 1. The state board may either approve the revised plan or deny the district eligibility to receive STAR plan funds for FY 2006-2007.
2. To fund performance pay policies approved by the district school board which meet the requirements of the Merit Award Program with respect to the eligibility, pay supplement structure, and assessment provisions.
3. To fund current performance pay policies. However, the school district may disburse the funds from the performance pay plan only in an amount equal to the amount of funds disbursed under its policy for the 2005-2006 school year.

The revised and expedited collective bargaining *impasse* procedures shall apply for those districts that choose to use the allocated funds for STAR or MAP plans. Any state funds from this allocation that are undisbursed as of September 1, 2007 must be refunded to the DOE. If such funds are not remitted by October 1, 2007, DOE must withhold an equivalent amount from the district's FEFP funding for 2007-2008.