

FLORIDA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION, INC

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2015 FSBA LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

The Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) calls for the Legislature to fulfill the constitutional mandate to provide for a high quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high quality education by pursuing the following priorities.

Accountability & Assessments

Assessment and accountability measures must be designed to support and enhance student learning. Collaborative efforts that include education stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and district leaders must continue to ensure Florida's accountability system is valid, recognizes individual student learning styles, and accurately reflects student progress and achievement. Toward this end, FSBA urges the Legislature to:

- Extend, until fiscal year 2016-2017, the transition period for the implementation of accountability measures relating to student progression, teacher evaluation, school grades, and district ranking and allow districts to identify their own means for determining student promotion, graduation, and educator evaluations during the transition period;
- Halt the practice of using test results for any purpose other than diagnostic purposes;
- Provide paper based option, at the expense of the state, for all state required state and local assessments;
- Enhance state funding for educator professional development and training on Florida State Standards, the related assessments, and required use of technology;
- Assemble an independent representative panel that includes, but is not limited to, representatives appointed by state education related associations, legislative leaders and the Governor, to oversee the implementation of the revised accountability system.

Funding

A strong and consistent financial investment in education is vital for the academic success of students and for the economic prosperity of all Floridians. Such an investment must include new revenue sources, must be stable and equitable, and must not shift state funding responsibilities to school districts. In support of these objectives, FSBA urges the Legislature to:

- Provide sufficient per student funding to place Florida in the upper quartile nationally and ensure that funding for each categorical allocation within the FEFP is sufficient to cover actual costs, growth, and inflation;
- Eliminate the cap on funding for courses beyond a base 6-period/1.0 FTE day;
- Provide additional funding for the extended school day instruction for the lowest performing elementary schools, ensure that the funding is earmarked for the participating schools, and allow local flexibility in scheduling of the additional hours of instruction.

Facilities

Excellence in education cannot be accomplished without adequate funding for a sufficient number of well constructed and well equipped school facilities. Ample, equitable, and stable funding must be provided to ensure that school facilities offer environments that encourage and enhance teaching and learning and support new technology. To achieve this, FSBA urges the Legislature to:

- Restore the authority for school districts to levy, by simple majority vote, up to 2.0 mills for capital purposes;
- Identify new state revenue streams for public school construction, remodeling, upkeep and maintenance, insurance, life-safety, and technology;
- Provide funding, from PECO or other state revenue sources, for qualified Critical Need Special Facility Construction Account Projects.
- Modify the current definitions for “utilization” and “capacity” to reflect actual usage of facilities and develop an equitable PECO distribution formula that is based on need.

School Choice Options

Public school choice programs, such as charter schools, virtual schools, dual enrollment, voluntary prekindergarten, and magnet programs, can offer enhanced opportunities for students to excel. However, such programs must be subject to local authority and uniform accountability. To ensure that school choice options present academically sound opportunities for student success, FSBA urges the Legislature to:

- Repeal provisions calling for a standard charter school contract and empower the local school board with the final decision-making authority over charter schools within the district, including decisions to accept, reject, renew, or terminate the charter contract.
- Ensure that all schools that are available as choice options are held to the same fiscal and academic accountability standards;
- Establish increased oversight and accountability for “for profit” charter and virtual management companies and oppose expanding the use of public funds to support for-profit schools;
- Repeal the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program and ensure that public funds are not spent on any voucher program that is not required to meet the same public and academic accountability standards as public schools.

Local Authority

Locally elected school board is keenly aware of the unique needs of the community that it serves and is best positioned to make the decisions necessary to ensure the greatest opportunities for students. In support of the constitutional authority of school boards to operate, supervise and control public schools, FSBA urges the Legislature to:

- Repeal the requirement for the opening date for schools to be no earlier than 14 days prior to Labor Day.
- Place a moratorium on enacting or enforcing any new, existing, or expanded responsibilities for school districts unless state funding for such responsibilities is identified and provided.