

**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2015 STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM**

**GOAL STATEMENT**

*The Florida Legislature should establish a five-year strategic plan to restore, stabilize, and increase funding through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) to achieve at least the national average in per pupil expenditures to provide the highest quality education and to enable all of our students to be empowered to lead productive and fulfilling lives as lifelong learners and responsible citizens.*

**2015 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY POSITIONS**

**FUNDING:**

Restore the state's investment in K-12 education by increasing the Base Student Allocation (BSA) to at least pre-recession levels of \$4,163.47 and the total per student funding of \$7,307.90.

Revise the Value Adjustment Board proceedings to include:

- Proof of the property owner consent/knowledge of an appeal;
- Limit appeal rescheduling to only one for good cause;
- Payment of interest at the market rate; and
- Require the property appraiser to finish all appeals by June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year.

Amend state statutes to allow school districts to levy the Prior Period Funding Adjustment Millage based on the property appraiser's estimate of the prior year gross taxable value.

Modify the penalty for non-compliance with the constitutional class size requirement to be based on the school-wide average for *all* public schools.

Conduct an impartial third-party study to develop a cost of education Index which focuses on cost differences integral to K-12 public school district operations reflecting such costs as average teacher salaries, health insurance for employees, property insurance per FTE, and transportation costs per FTE.

Increase funding for Safe Schools and revise allocation formula so that each district's allocation is equal to fifty percent of prior year eligible district expenditures.

Fully fund the infrastructure cost and the acquisition of computers for the mandated expansion of computer-based administration of statewide testing, and the digital content conversion required by 2015-2016.

Provide school districts funding to cover the full cost of offering dual enrollment courses through incentive funding to school districts/schools that offer such programs and have successful completion of dual enrollment courses by students.

Fully fund and allow school districts to determine locally how to ensure the lowest performing schools/students receive additional instructional time by either extending the school day or extending the school year.

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Amend F.S. 1011.61 to fully fund programs taken by students beyond the 1.0 FTE cap or 25 hours a week such as virtual classes outside the traditional school day and year.

Eliminate the statutory provision requiring the passage of end-of-course assessment for funding purposes.

Amend F.S. 1008.36 related to Florida School Recognition Program requiring FLDOE to distribute funds to eligible schools only after all school letter grades are released.

Fully fund the development of end-of-course (EOC).

Oppose the imposition of unfunded, state-mandated expenditures.

**ACCOUNTABILITY REFORM:**

Revise the current assessment system and accountability system to:

- Provide proper field testing in Florida of the entire new state assessment, not simply sample questions, ensuring the statistical requirements of validity and reliability;
- Provide a two-year transition of grading districts and schools to allow for field testing and setting appropriate baseline assessment data;
- Authorize alternate methods for assessing learning and achievement for special populations such as ESE and English Language Learners (ELL) students;
- Ensure two years of language acquisition for ELL students;
- Suspend accountability consequences for another year;
- Provide Florida's statewide assessments in multiple languages as allowed by federal regulations;
- Eliminate the practice of using student performance on a single standardized test as the sole basis of student and school performance; and
- Perform a comprehensive review of the entire assessment program.

Reinstate a special education diploma for students with disabilities.

Ensure charter and private schools receiving public monies adhere to the same teacher certification, student placement, and progression policies to ensure compliance with federal and state accountability requirements.

**CAPITAL FUNDING:**

Establish a long-term, stable, and recurring revenue source sufficient to fulfill the state's educational facility needs.

Restore the allowable discretionary voted capital outlay millage by .10 mills annually until restoration of the full 2 mills.

Oppose any diversion of Local Discretionary Capital Outlay levy revenue from traditional public schools to charter schools.

Fully fund the Public Education Capital Outlay Program that involves construction and maintenance programs for public school districts and ensure that school districts receive their fair share.

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**SCHOOL READINESS:**

Support state funding for a high-quality, full-day Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) program.

**CHARTER SCHOOLS:**

Repeal the requirement to use the standard charter contract.

Oppose any changes to current requirements regarding charter conversion of traditional public schools that dilute the role of parents, teachers, and community stakeholders.

Support capital funding for charter schools that:

- Creates neither a reduction of funding to traditional public schools in operating or capital funding nor a requirement for additional taxing mandate on the local school district;
- Requires public input; and
- Protects taxpayers' investment ensuring that capital funding be spent only on assets that can be returned to the public school district.

Establish a level playing field for traditional public schools by extending the current statutory flexibility such as the exemption from State Education Required Facilities (SREF), categorical funding, accountability, class size reduction compliance and related penalties assessed on charter schools.

Clarify that a charter school contract automatically terminates after a charter school has exhausted all of its administrative appeals after receiving two consecutive grades of F or upon voluntary closure.

Allow school districts with charter school enrollment exceeding 15 percent to limit approvals of charter school applications through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to locate in areas of highest need or through the formulation of district/charter collaborations.

Allow charter schools to weight low-income and educationally disadvantaged applicants in admissions lotteries as recommended by the U.S. Department of Education guidance to create more integrated schools.

Improve safeguards of tax payer investments and transparency between traditional public schools and charter schools, including, but not limited to, implementing the following safeguards:

- Require charter school applications and lotteries be monitored by the local school board, or an appropriate independent entity, to ensure a fair, equitable, and transparent process for all students;
- Allow local school districts to negotiate an appropriate usage fee based on market comparables;
- Require funding to follow the student when transferring between charter and traditional public schools during the school year;
- Establish financial disclosure standards and requirements for charter school officers and related parties involved in financial decision making, similar to traditional public school standards;
- Require the state to create a pre-qualification process for charter school applicants; and

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- Require the same standards of governance, conduct and ethics for public officials to apply to charter school governing board members, charter school corporate officers and employees.

**TEACHER PREPARATION/COMPENSATION:**

Require teacher certification to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and align state standards to ensure that teachers are highly qualified in content areas as well as in pedagogy.

Educational program needs must include the ability for instructional staff to be qualified in order to certify students in vocational areas for industry-certified programs.

Amend state statutes related to the Student Success Act to clarify that:

- Only one annual evaluation is required for teachers; and
- Provide for annual supplements in lieu of base salary increases for highly effective teachers only.

Provide a three-year transition for student growth measures to become part of the teacher evaluation system as the Florida State Assessment (FSA) and local end-of-course exams are developed and implemented.

Allow districts to use FSA Reading/Math and/or school-wide data for instructional staff with no assessment until such time as local valid and reliable assessments have been developed.

**SAFETY:**

Require that the Florida High School Athletic Association 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 sports.

**FACILITIES:**

Provide local school districts the flexibility to use the Florida Building Code in lieu of the State Requirements for Educational Facilities.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:**

Support legislation that attempts to strengthen the role of technical centers in the development of a skilled workforce.

Include representatives from the secondary schools' career and technical education programs in the state's Articulation Coordinating Committee.

**VIRTUAL EDUCATION:**

Modify the requirement to offer three different virtual offerings to students.

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**POLICY STATEMENTS:**

**Funding**

Fully fund class size reduction requirement while providing increases to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) and other components of the FEFP.

Examine Florida's tax structure and phase out sales tax exemptions for non-essential goods and services; ensure that internet sales remit necessary sales tax to Florida.

Support maximum flexibility in the use of categorical funds.

Maintain the integrity of the FEFP and equity of funding among school districts.

Oppose any prescribed expenditure such as the "65 percent solution" as a mandate in the Florida Constitution and further oppose any such legislation, unless established as a spending goal with the definition of expenditures to include all instructional support expenditures.

Oppose compression of the Discretionary Millage.

Support equivalent supplemental funding for the participation and the attainment of a diploma for Advanced Placement, Cambridge (AICE) and International Baccalaureate programs.

Maintain the current required employers' contribution rate to the Florida Retirement System by absorbing any planned increase in local employer's contribution.

Oppose legislation that increases the sovereign immunity liability limits on governmental agencies.

Commit to long-term funding stability for teacher performance pay and teacher evaluation systems.

Provide maximum flexibility with the funds appropriated.

Allow school districts to locally establish contract provisions inclusive of cost structures with postsecondary institutions related to the delivery of dual enrollment.

Increase ESE per pupil funding to account for both student growth and inflationary cost particularly in level 254 and 255 to provide early identification and intervention services for students with autism.

Support grant funding to create new and innovative programs and academies.

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**Capital Funding**

Provide adequate school construction funding to support new and existing facilities, technology, maintenance, land acquisition and class size reduction needs through the establishment of long-term, stable and recurring revenue sources to fulfill the state's educational facility needs.

Oppose any further reduction in capital millage available to school districts for the purpose of balancing the operating budget.

Oppose any attempt to equalize the capital outlay levy.

Oppose the deletion of impact fees unless replaced with another revenue source.

Expand the allowable use of a locally voted upon sales tax to include operating expenses that maintain, renovate, or repair existing school facilities or maintain, secure, or upgrade school technology equipment.

**Governance**

Oppose legislation that subverts district governance of constitutionally elected local school boards and elected or appointed superintendents.

Oppose legislation that modifies the governance structure of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Oppose legislation that breaks up large school districts.

**Choice**

Support increased accountability measures for all publicly funded school choice options.

Oppose all publicly funded programs that lack equitable and sufficient accountability measures.

Oppose implementation of additional or any increases in funding for voucher programs while requiring more accountability from schools receiving Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (FTCS) funding.

**Academics**

Support legislation that will require high-quality training in reading and English language development for teachers responsible for instructing English Language Learners (ELL).

Support the development of high-quality English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards.

Oppose legislation that would limit offering gifted programs to eligible high school students.

Support legislation that delays Academic Scholarship Signing Day until May of each year.

Support legislation that ensures that Florida State Assessment (FSA) testing not be administered during religious holidays.

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Require the state to provide a minimum of one-year lead time on new state requirements for school districts.

Maintain the current dual delivery system of post-secondary programs.

Support amending F.S. 1009.534 and 1009.535 adding the attainment of the Advanced Placement Capstone diploma as one of the eligibility requirements for Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

Create a statewide taskforce for Hispanic Heritage Education modeled after the African-American History taskforce.

**Student Safety**

Support legislation that proposes a “slowing down zone” within an area prior to entering a school zone.

Support funding to provide training for students, parents, teachers, school administrators, counseling staff, and volunteers to learn how to recognize behaviors that lead to bullying and harassment.

Ensure any casino authorized in Florida is at least 1,000 feet from a school or land designated for school purpose.