

**THE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF COLLIER
COUNTY**
Preliminary 2021 Florida Legislative Platform
*Scheduled for Review and Approval by the School Board
on December 7, 2020*

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Increase in the Base Student Allocation and state categorical programs to cover enrollment increases, workload changes and inflation
- At least one-year lead time for effective date and implementation of new programs or program changes
- Provide local control and flexibility for constitutionally elected school boards to meet local community needs and expectations through an agreement with the State Board of Education

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- Reduce the number of state-required exams— Florida State Assessment (FSA) and End of Course Exams (EOC)—to not exceed the minimum required under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act; for FY21, waive the assigning of school grades and teacher Value-Added Model (VAM) scores, and waive the use of WIDA (World- Class Instructional Design and Assessment) as an accountability tool using it only as an exit exam for English Language Learners (ELL) services.
- Provide PreK-12 funding (Florida Education Finance Program) no less than that recommended, particularly for instructional personnel compensation, by the State Board of Education (9/23/20) to the Governor for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Provide differentiated funding for Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) programming that employ teachers with current Florida educator certification and increase the funding per student to at least \$2550 per FTE (Full Time Equivalent).
- Expand acceleration for students on Florida Standard-Access Points (FS-AP) including work-based learning experiences.
- Continue the investment for mental health services by providing funding to increase mental health personnel (such as school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists and school nurses) to expand and enhance mental health services available through school and community-coordinated services, and to provide enhanced wrap-around services.
- Identify means to assure governance oversight of charter schools that is consistent with that required of public agencies; examples may include electing charter governing board members by school parents, authorizing sponsors with Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) approval to remove board members for violation of Florida laws, misfeasance, malfeasance or nonfeasance in office.

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RATIONALE FOR LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Reduce Assessments

CCPS has been systemic and thoughtful in reducing local assessments significantly since 2017. The state assessments have not been reduced during this same time, with the exception of the elimination of Algebra 2 and the planned elimination of Geometry. The State of Florida currently exceeds ESEA assessment requirements by two (2) exams (Civics EOC and U.S. History EOC).

Due to the incredibly challenging circumstances of an international pandemic, it is appropriate to maintain state testing to monitor progress with removal of teacher VAM scores and school grades. Due to shifting instructional models and disruptions to schooling, it is not valid or supportive to place sanctions or other judgments on educators or schools for external factors.

WIDA is an extensive exam administered once per year, in addition to other state and local assessments, to students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs). The administration of WIDA reduces learning time for ELLs due to being pulled from instruction to take the assessment. Additionally, the administration of WIDA is a significant stressor on school staffing due to the extensive time and individual administration. Ongoing progress monitoring and use of local and state assessment data is sufficient to gauge the needs of ELLs.

FTE Funding

The Base Student Allocation (BSA) has had minor increases in funding over the last few years. From FY18 to FY19, it increased 0.01%, from FY19 to FY20 by 1.79% and from FY20 to FY21 by 0.93%. At the same time, the FRS rate has increased from FY18-FY21 4.29%, 2.54% and 18.06% respectively. Inflation rates have also increased by 1.9%, 2.36% and 1.2% respectfully. As a result, School Districts are finding it increasingly difficult to balance the budget. While it is true that total student funding has increased by 1.82%, 3.18% and 2.33% respectfully, these categorical funds are restricted in use and come with further requirements. At minimum, the BSA should increase by at least the increased rate in FRS in order to be sufficient to cover actual costs and inflation.

Funding for VPK Services

Given evidence that high-quality early childhood programs have positive effects on cognitive development, and long-term effects on school achievement and completion, a differentiated funding is requested for early childhood programs employing VPK instructors with current Florida Educator's Certificate to teach children any age from birth through 6th grade. As the state's prekindergarten program is voluntary over 100,000 children remain unenrolled annually which creates a significant disparity in readiness. Parents need encouragement to enroll their children.

Acceleration Points in Special Programs

Students on Florida Standard-Access Points (FS-AP) participate in a variety of career experiences and career and technical education (CTE) coursework, however, due to their disability, they are ineligible for state acceleration points. Based on this inequity and to encourage career-based programs for students on FS-AP, it is requested that these students earn state acceleration points for completing Modified Occupational Points (MOCPS) in certain CTE courses or completing a series of career experiences.

Continue Investment and Funding for Mental Health Services

Students and families continue to have significant stressors and needs for support in mental health. First Lady DeSantis's Hope for Healing Florida initiative is intended to "help young people reach their full potential and lead healthier lives". To do so, additional categorical funds should be provided for needed staff. Currently, school health is an unfunded area that all school districts must creatively address; the result is typically not realizing the optimal ratio to support students' physical and mental health needs. The front line for averting crisis with students is often vigilant and caring school counselors, licensed mental health professionals and school psychologists. With a local increase of 26% in Baker Acts for children (year-to-year from August-October as reported by David Lawrence Center) the needs are significant. Relationships with qualified and credentialed staff are essential for students to reach their full potential and lead healthier lives.

Governance Oversight of Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools receiving public funds, both state and local. While a charter school's governing board and school management are required to follow various regulatory requirements, they are not subject to the same sanctions as public agencies for acts of misfeasance, malfeasance and other civil or criminal violations of state law. State law concerning charter school governance should be clarified to assure equal application of requirements and consequences if those requirements are not met or are violated.