

## PROPOSED PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS 2014 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

### Constitution of the State of Florida, Article IX - - Section I.

“The education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida. It is therefore a paramount duty of the State to make adequate provision for the education of all the children residing within its borders. Adequate provision shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high quality education....”

### A. FUNDING ISSUES

#### PROPOSAL: PROVIDE A STABLE, FAIR, and EQUITABLE SOURCE OF REVENUE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Funding for excellence is essential for a successful public school system. Stable funding should be appropriated with few restrictions, with high expectations, and with strong accountability measures in order to meet the individual needs of students on the local level.

Pinellas County priorities for operating funds include:

- Extending the school day and year for students needing additional learning time.
- Inflationary costs.
- Moving toward increasing teacher salaries to the national average.
- Continuing to meet the Florida Constitutional class size mandate.
- Increasing student achievement at all levels.
- Increasing the graduation rate and lowering the dropout rate of our students.
- Providing support to meet all technology and digital requirements in law.
- Providing funding for district created end-of-course exams.

Per Student and Classroom Funding: The May 2007-08 state appropriation per student for Pinellas County Schools was \$7,396.09; the April 29 2013 legislative per student appropriation is \$6,723.46 Even with the increase last year of \$402.09 per student, the loss in dollars per student is still \$672.63 less than May 2007.

The 2014 legislative goal should be to restore per student funding to the May 2007 appropriation level.

#### 1. Class Size Issues:

- Provide operating and capital outlay funding to allow districts to continue to decrease class size as required by Florida's current class size constitutional amendment.
- Continue to provide as much statutory flexibility as possible relating to implementation of the class size mandate, including allowing all public schools to be measured the same as charter schools. District schools must meet classroom by classroom measures; charter schools must only meet the school average per grade level.
- Eliminate statutory penalties for non-compliance until adequate and mandated state funding is provided to fully implement the constitutional requirements.

#### 2 One-half Mill Option: The Legislature lowered the maximum optional capital millage from 2.0 to 1.5 mills. It also ended the optional one-quarter mill for operations. Request

the Legislature to restore school boards' authority to levy up to one-half mill for operating or capital outlay needs by a simple majority vote.

- 3 Student Transportation Funding/Student Transportation Fuel Cost Adjustment: Fully fund the student transportation mandate. Currently the state provides less than 50% statewide of the funding needed, forcing the remainder of the funds to be taken from other local funding sources. Pinellas spent \$31.9 million in 2012-13, and received only \$12.9 million from the state, leaving a \$19 million gap. An inflationary adjustment should also be made for the unanticipated increase in fuel costs, which has greatly increased student transportation expenditures in all districts.
- 4 The legislature should minimize the impact on school district employer contribution rates.
- 5 Middle School Career Technical Education Funding: Restore weighted funding for career technical education programs in middle schools.
- 6 High School Career Technical Education Funding: Restore adequate FTE weights to high school career technical programs to support establishing new STEM programs, add appropriate industry certification programs and maintain existing programs to meet current industry standards.
- 7 Postsecondary Workforce Education Program Funding: Maintain postsecondary workforce funding levels to maintain current training programs. Allow for new program development and account for inflationary programs cost.
- 8 Adult Education Residency Requirement: Eliminate the one-year residency requirement for in-state tuition eligibility to attend school district and state college post-secondary adult education basic literacy programs and reduce the number of required documents for proof of residency from two to one.
- 9 TBA: Regarding Apprenticeship Program Funding provide specialized funding to ensure that districts are able to implement youth and adult apprenticeship programs.
- 10 Career and Professional Education (CAPE): Change the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards to allow CAPE (career and professional education) Academies the flexibility to implement applied math and science courses.
- 11 Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) Funds: Restore the public schools' share of PECO funds for school maintenance and renovation. For the last three years traditional public schools received no funds. Charter schools received over \$200 million.
- 12 Adults with Disabilities: Continue funding for the Adults with Disabilities Program.
- 13 Technology: Fully fund the cost of the technology needed to implement student testing requirements. The technology system should provide for data and test security.
- 14 Safe Schools: Fund the full cost of School Resource Officers and other expenses related to school security.

## **B. POLICY ISSUES:**

1. Accountability for the Florida Corporation Tax Credit Voucher Program: The legislature should mandate that private schools receiving public scholarship funds be held to the

same high standards of accountability that are applied to public schools. This would, at a minimum, require fully participation in Florida's accountability system, and mandate the use of certified teachers.

2. Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Center Grades: Exempt ESE Centers from the school grading system.
3. Student Safety: The Legislature should strengthen the enforcement of, and increase the penalty for, traffic violations in school zones.
4. School District Matching Grants Program: Increase the funding for this existing program. This program provides challenge grants to the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations (the Pinellas Education Foundation is a member) for programs that serve low-performing students, literacy initiatives and career education.
5. School Based Health Clinic Staffing: Provide additional funding to the State Department of Health to increase the number of both registered nurses and trained certified nursing assistants (CNAs) staffed into schools.
6. Millage Referendum for Operations: Authorize school boards to levy operating millage by referendum for up to ten years to renew a four-year referendum. Currently the maximum is only four years. The initial referendum would remain at up to four years. The ten-year option would allow for long-term planning for local priorities.
7. Universal Prekindergarten: Support a change to a fully implemented school year Voluntary Prekindergarten Program for up to a six hour day for 180 days and a summer program consisting of up to 210 hours funded on an FTE basis. Program accountability shall include a pre/post assessment.
8. Accountability Transition: Common Core/Testing: There is questionable value for continuing to use the current system of student testing for assigning school grades and possibility teacher pay. It must be revisited by the 2014 Legislature.
9. Dual Enrollment: Repeal the law enacted last year that provides that school districts pay the colleges and universities for students dually enrolled.
10. FTE Calculation/Virtual: Return to former process that allows both virtual programs and "regular" programs to collect the FTE earned. The change should ensure that districts receive full FTE for the provided instructional hours.

#### C. CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY/GOVERNANCE:

1. Statutory Changes: Local flexibility should be maximized when adopting changes in Florida Statutes.
2. Student Calendar: The Legislature should restore school board authority to adopt a student calendar that meets the needs of each individual district.
3. Charter School Authorization: Allow school boards to make the final decision on authorizing charter schools. The existing appeal system does not allow school boards to "operate, control and supervise all free public schools within the school district" as required in the Florida Constitution.

4. Charter School Standardized Contract: Oppose legislation that requires districts to use a standardized contract that is currently being drafted.