

## 2020 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

### Student Achievement – Florida Students and Teachers are **LEADING THE WAY!**

The release of the 2018-2019 school and district grades marked the 20th anniversary of school grades. Superintendents are proud of the success of their students and teachers.

- 👉 The percentage of schools earning an “A” or “B” grade increased to 63 percent.
- 👉 The number of “F” schools decreased to just 15 state wide.
- 👉 Of the schools graded an “F” in the 2017-2018 school year, 81 percent improved their grade by one or more letter grade.
- 👉 Of the schools graded a “D” or “F” in the 2017-2018 school year, 77 percent improved by at least one letter grade.
- 👉 Of the schools implementing a school turnaround plan, 63 percent improved their letter grade.
- 👉 Districts have also improved with 24 districts graded an “A” and for the second year in a row, there are no districts graded “D” or “F.”

### **QUALITY COUNTS 2019 Confirms Florida’s Success!**

- 👉 Florida’s overall rank for the K-12 Achievement category remained 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation.
- 👉 Florida’s achievement gap for low-income 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math students is tied for 10<sup>th</sup> lowest in the nation.
- 👉 Florida is one of only eight states to reduce the achievement gap for both low-income 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders since 2003.
- 👉 Florida is ranked #6 for reducing the achievement gap for low-income students in both 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading and 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics.
- 👉 Florida’s 4<sup>th</sup> grade students are #2 in the nation for achievement gains in both reading and mathematics.
- 👉 Florida’s 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are #3 in the nation for achievement gains in reading.

### **Florida Is Closing the Achievement Gap**

- 👉 Florida’s 2017-2018 Graduation Rate reached an all-time high of 86.1 percent.
- 👉 Almost all groups have increased their graduation rates. Black or African Americans increased 6.1 percentage points and Hispanic/Latino students increased 3.8 percentage points over 2016-2017.
- 👉 Florida is #1 in the nation for participation in Advanced Placement courses and #3 in performance.
- 👉 However, gaps remain in achievement among Black or African American students, Hispanic/Latino students, English language learners and students with disabilities. These gaps must be addressed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS AND CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

### Invest in Teachers and Teaching - Increase Teacher Salaries

Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers is critical to the academic success of our students. A five percent increase would cost just under \$575 million. The gross salary for each teacher would increase by just under \$2,440. The total cost of salary and benefits is \$2,832. *(The baseline figures are calculated on 202,419 instructional staff with an average salary of \$48,784)*

Any increase cannot be a one-time event. In order to retain our teachers and recruit quality individuals into the teaching profession, this effort must be maintained and sustained for at least five years to bring our teachers into alignment with, and even surpass, other states. Our teachers deserve no less.

### Maintain High Standards

The reconsideration of learning standards offers all Floridians a chance to affirm our definition of a high-quality education. A clear and universal set of expectations for the minimum set of knowledge and skills asserted through a Florida High School diploma is appropriate. Superintendents also want flexibility to include locally driven academic and life-readiness expectations in the curriculum.

As a part of this process, the State of Florida should extend its reconsideration of the educational standards to include the reconsideration of the accountability system. The accountability system must do better in informing the public on the impact that schools have on student learning. We need to find ways to minimize the impact of high stakes testing, to report on school climate, and to improve how we gauge student development in a comprehensive manner. Our accountability system should connect academic, career, social-emotional, and civic development.

### Enhance and Expand Career/Technical Education

The Legislature must continue its investment in career and technical education programs that support local school districts' efforts to prepare students for both college and career readiness and to build talent pipelines that are critical to support economic growth and development across our state.

#### ***To that end, the Legislature should:***

- Provide additional funding to achieve a fully equitable workforce education allocation model for the technical college system.
- Continue to appropriate \$6.5 million to school districts' workforce education programs for performance-based industry certifications earned by post-secondary students in the 2020-2021 school year.
- Include career dual-enrolled students in the acceleration calculation for state high school grades.
- Approve categorical funding for technical colleges to open and expand new CTE instructional programs that are deemed high-wage, high-skill, and in high demand to meet regional and state employment needs.

## School Safety and Mental Health

School safety remains our number one priority. Superintendents across our state continue to ensure the safety of their students and staff.

- ✎ Superintendents are thankful that the Legislature addressed many of our recommendations regarding safe schools during the last legislative session, including:
  - Increasing total funds for the Safe Schools allocation;
  - Clarifying that the Safe Schools allocation could be used for all safe-school officers;
  - Authorizing school districts to contract with security guards/agencies;
  - Reappropriating the guardian funds to continue and expand training for school guardians;
  - Maintaining funding for school hardening; and
  - Increasing funding for the Mental Health Assistance allocation.
- ✎ As districts are providing more mental health assessment and intervention services, the need for intensive, daily, services for some students has become apparent. The Legislature should fund services that will help these students and families.
- ✎ Overall, superintendents recommend that the Legislature continue to support funding for safe schools and mental health by increasing each of these categorical programs by 25 percent. Funding for school hardening should be at \$100 million; the initial allocation provided for school hardening.

## Sufficient and Sustainable Funds to Meet the Educational Needs of Florida's Public School Students

- ✎ The Legislature funded the Best and Brightest Teacher and Principal programs in the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). The changes in these two programs expanded the number of teachers and principals who are eligible to receive bonuses. Superintendents support this program's goal of rewarding high performing teachers and principals across our state, but we encourage further study in order to recommend more ways in which to reward high-quality teachers and principals equitably and in a recurring manner.
- ✎ The Legislature should continue to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) which assists school districts to fund increased employee salaries, benefits, and mandatory employer contributions to the Florida Retirement System, as well as rising fixed costs, such as utilities and health insurance.
- ✎ Superintendents also recommend that the Special Facilities projects in our small rural school districts that were recommended by the State Board of Education and Commissioner Corcoran be funded.
- ✎ Superintendents recommend that local control be expanded to extend, from 4 years to up to 10 years, the voter approved additional operating millage authorized in s. 1011.73, Florida Statutes.