







2021 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

Student Achievement – Florida Students Succeed!

-  Florida ranks 3rd in the nation for K-12 Achievement according to the 2020 Quality Counts Report by *Education Week*. This is a move up from 4th in 2019 and the highest ranking ever in K-12 Achievement for Florida.
-  Florida's K-12 Achievement grade also improved to B-, which is higher than the nation's grade of C.
-  Florida outperforms the nation in 15 of the 18 K-12 Achievement measures.
-  Florida is ranked 2nd in the nation for improving the high school graduation rate.
-  Florida is ranked 3rd for improvement in 4th grade math.
-  Florida is ranked 4th for improvement in 8th grade reading.

Recommendations for Continued Success During and After COVID-19:

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

- Provide adequate Base Student Allocation (BSA) funding for districts to absorb any increased contributions to the Florida Retirement System (FRS) and offset other underfunded categoricals.

II. Maintain and Continue to Invest in Teachers and Teaching

- Continue the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation (TSIA) so that school districts can maintain salary increases awarded in the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

III. Mental Health Services

- The mental health needs of both students and staff have increased significantly because of the pandemic and accompanying economic uncertainty.
- The need for intensive, daily services for some students is critical, and the Legislature should fund services that will help these students and their families.
- Telehealth availability and options should be increased to assist in filling the gap for those schools who do not have a mental health professional on the school site.

IV. School Safety

- The Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program is an important component to school safety. Continued funding for training of new guardians and annual training for existing

guardians was vetoed in 2020. Sufficient funding for this program should be appropriated to ensure the availability of guardians in those school districts that depend on guardians for school safety.

V. New Standards, Assessments and Accountability

- Florida adopted the New B.E.S.T. Standards in January 2020, right before the nation and state were engulfed by the COVID-19 Virus.
- Governor DeSantis and Commissioner Corcoran cancelled the administration of assessments in 2020, and, correspondingly, the state did not issue school grades.
- We should take this opportunity to examine the accountability and school grading system to verify the alignment of the standards with instruction, instructional materials, and assessments and ensure that student achievement is measured accurately and fairly.
- FADSS recommends that the 2021 assessments be used primarily to measure student performance for diagnostic purposes and that the state hold districts, schools, teachers, and students harmless for any negative consequences associated with the accountability system. Rather than issue school and district grades following this unprecedented year, allow those schools and students who beat the odds to be recognized and rewarded for their efforts through progress monitoring and other means. This would not only acknowledge the education disruption experienced by students and teachers, but it would also allow the results to be used to guide state and district leaders to bridge the achievement gap exacerbated by the pandemic where it is most needed.

VI. Enhance and Expand Career/Technical Education

- 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 district's workforce education programs for performance-based industry certifications earned by post-secondary students in the 2021-2022 school year.
- Provide 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.

VII. Superintendent Training

- FADSS implements a comprehensive certification and leadership development training program for superintendents that meets the requirements of section 1001.47, Florida Statutes. The program is designed to serve the current and future needs of practicing superintendents and other educational leaders in Florida.
- The Legislature has historically supported this program financially with an appropriation of at least \$500,000.
- This funding was vetoed in 2020 and needs to be restored so that superintendents can continue to receive this important, statutorily-mandated training program.