



The School Board of Lee County, Florida 2009 Legislative Priorities



Provide for Funding for Public School Operations Commensurate with a State Goal to Improve Instructional Outcomes

The primary goal of funding public education is to continually improve student performance. Lee County supports a powerful accountability system that strongly ties funding increases to student achievement. Florida currently ranks in the bottom quartile of states in providing per student funding for public education. We respectfully request that the Legislature:

- ▶ Establish a five-year plan to move Florida into the top half of states in per student funding and fund the first year of that plan.
- ▶ Provide funding for a 7th period day for high school students to expand the opportunities available to meet high standards.
- ▶ Allow for funding to the District for students taking courses at the Florida Virtual School during the school day.
- ▶ Review the procedures for estimating the total cost of instructional materials to include all of the true costs of newly-adopted materials.
- ▶ Maintain the 90% rule within the FEFP that stipulates that a maximum of 90% of a district's base funding may be generated by local tax funds with the remainder coming from state general revenue.
- ▶ Fund the operational cost of Class Size Reduction as required by the Constitution.
- ▶ Reject any new legislative mandates until we have met the national average for per student funding.

Re-establish Proper Governance of Charter Schools by Constitutionally Established and Elected School Boards

Article IX, Section 4(b), Florida Constitution: "The school board shall operate, control and supervise all free public schools within the school district and determine the rate of school district taxes within the limits prescribed herein. . ."

The School Board of Lee County supports charter schools and has approved charters that are well-planned and contribute to meeting the needs of the overall District. We are concerned that recent changes made in the charter school law are contrary to the responsibilities of the School Board to the citizens and taxpayers of Lee County. We respectfully request that the Legislature:

- ▶ Repeal the unconstitutional Charter Schools of Excellence Board.
- ▶ Amend appeals of school board denials of charter applications to the State Board of Education (SBE) so that SBE rulings are no longer binding.
- ▶ Maintain current school board authority over all local property taxes and impact fees.

Amend Statutes to Improve Instruction and Accountability

We respectfully request that the Legislature:

- ▶ Change the school grading system to remove scores of new District students for the first year of testing until both performance scores and learning gain scores are available for these students.
- ▶ Update the system for determining graduation rates and drop-out rates to more accurately calculate the true graduation rates in Florida.

Assist with Classroom Space Needs for Class Size Reduction, Growth in Students, and Replacement of Aging Facilities

We respectfully request that the Legislature:

- ▶ Maintain school impact fees for the purpose they were collected.
- ▶ Fund all of the capital costs of class size reduction.
- ▶ Preserve the distribution formula for class size reduction where district growth is a major factor.

Improve the State Pre-Kindergarten Program

We respectfully request that the Legislature:

- ▶ Provide per student funding that will reflect the desire for a high quality program.
- ▶ Plan for a Universal Pre-Kindergarten system that will ultimately provide certified teachers for the program.

For additional information, please contact:

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