



Osceola County
SCHOOL DISTRICT

2017-2018

Legislative Priorities for Osceola Schools

Osceola Legislative Delegation Meeting
September 22, 2017

Osceola's Top Priority

1. Secure Capital Funds for Osceola's High Growth

Issue: Osceola capital revenues have not kept pace with student enrollment needs to add and maintain adequate educational facilities. Since 2000, student enrollment has almost doubled from 31,884 to 63,031. At the start of the 2017-18 school year, Osceola schools are projected to be at 96% capacity, with 4,748 students assigned to relocatables. Osceola County is projected to grow by another 18,000 students over the next ten years.

Recommendation(s): Include designated funds for the High Growth District Capital Outlay Assistance Grant Program in Section 1013.738, Florida Statutes as an allocation in the 2018-2019 Florida Education Budget.

● Osceola's 1.5 Mill Capital Outlay Tax

School districts generate capital revenue by levying capital outlay taxes. By law, this tax millage is limited to 1.5 mills and is currently set at the maximum. Due to low property taxes and high student growth, Osceola faces a unique shortfall in ad valorem tax revenue generated for capital needs. Since 2007-08, Osceola's capital outlay tax generated per student has declined from \$976 down to \$549, which is a 44% reduction over the ten year period.

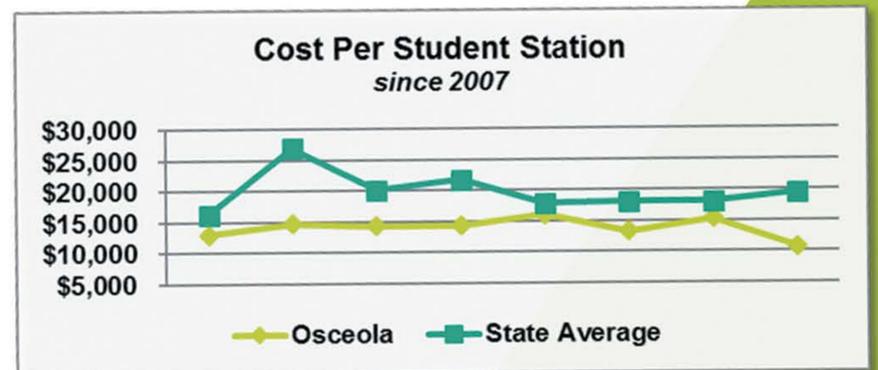
● Osceola's Cost Per Student Station Versus the State Average and Maximum

Osceola maintains its record for cost-effectiveness in school construction. Since 2007, Osceola has built schools with a cost per student station that averages \$5,858 less than the state average.

● Osceola's Shortfall in Capital Funding

► Osceola maximizes its available capital revenues and takes cost-saving measures wherever feasible yet still has a shortfall in capital funding. Osceola generates the maximum allowable for the 1.5 mill capital outlay tax, impact fees, infrastructure sales tax, and one-half cent school capital outlay surtax, yet our district is still falling behind due to deferred maintenance coupled with the expected continuance of high student growth.

► According to the current ten-year growth projection (2016-17 through 2025-26), Osceola has over \$300 million in unfunded capital needs, which include 1 high school, 2 middle schools, 2 K-8 combination schools, 3 elementary schools, 2 high school classroom wing additions, and land purchases. This projection includes all currently operating and proposed charter schools.



Contact Us!

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From Good to Great: Building a Legacy

2017-2018 Legislative Priorities for Osceola Schools



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Osceola's Secondary Priorities

2. Protect Osceola Taxpayers' Investment in Educational Facilities

Issue: Osceola has leveraged capital millage revenue over the years to build schools during periods of high growth and has responsibly managed its debt service levels. In addition, Osceola has been welcoming to high-performing, quality charter schools. As a result, the implementation of House Bill 7069 in its current form will significantly impact Osceola's capital budget by:

- ▶ further reducing limited funding to maintain current facilities and build new student stations to accommodate rapid growth in enrollment;
- ▶ increasing the cost of capital due to rating agency downgrades from the lack of certainty regarding this previously committed revenue source; and
- ▶ transferring \$3 million per year to charter schools that are predominantly owned and managed by private for profit corporations.

Recommendation(s): Amend the original language of House Bill 7069 to cap capital transfers to charter schools to no more than five percent (5%) of the 1.5 capital outlay millage.

3. Reform Florida's District Cost Differential (DCD) Formula

Issue: As a result of the current formula used to calculate the DCD, Osceola's taxpayers have sent \$67,586,779 to wealthier districts over the past twenty years.

During 2017-18, Osceola taxpayers will lose an additional \$4,772,676 to other school districts. These tax dollars belong in Osceola County and could go to increase salaries to help with the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers, along with offering more enriching academic programs for the students of Osceola County.

Recommendation(s):

- ▶ Support the joint study commissioned by Senate President Joe Negron at the request of Senator Dorothy Hukill and conducted by the Florida Legislature's Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) and Office of Economic & Demographic Research (EDR).
- ▶ Amend Section 1011.62, Florida Statutes (FS) to apply the findings of the joint OPPAGA/ EDR study by adjusting the formula used to calculate the DCD in order to ensure that school districts with lower tax bases receive their fair share of education funding without losing funds to school districts with higher tax bases.
- ▶ Establish a long-term plan to make Florida's public education system world-class with adequate and stable funding for hiring and retaining high quality educators.

4. Remove Barriers to Recruiting High Quality Teachers

Issue: Florida's teacher certification laws and regulations require teachers to pass the General Knowledge Test within the teacher's first year of employment, and far too few alternatives exist to provide Florida's educators with reasonable options to meet this requirement. Prior to the 2000-2001 school year, teachers had up to three (3) years to complete this certification requirement. At the close of the 2016-17 school year, this requirement cost Osceola sixty-(60) new teachers despite our best efforts to induct, mentor, tutor, and retain them.

Recommendation(s):

- Amend Florida's certification laws and regulations to permit the following flexible revenue-neutral options:
 - ▶ Permit an advanced degree to satisfy the General Knowledge Test requirement.
 - ▶ Expand the window for completion of the General Knowledge Test requirement from one (1) to three (3) school years.
 - ▶ Require the Florida Department of Education to:
 - Determine additional concordant scores from other nationally recognized rigorous standardized tests (e.g., ACT, SAT, ASVAB, CLAST, PRAXIS, GMAT, LSAT, USMLE, etc.) to satisfy the General Knowledge Test requirement; and
- Repeal state laws that prohibit teachers from using the following to satisfy the General Knowledge requirement:
 - ▶ GRE scores obtained prior to July 01, 2015; and
 - ▶ General Knowledge Test scores over ten (10) years old