

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF OSCEOLA COUNTY, FLORIDA

Human Resources and Employee Relations

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SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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Chief Human Resources Officer
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Director of Government & Labor Relations
District Chief Negotiator
John Boyd

2016-17

Legislative Priorities for Osceola Schools

1. Osceola's Capital Funds

Issue: *Osceola capital revenues have not kept pace with student enrollment needs to add and maintain adequate educational facilities. In fact, since 2008-09, Osceola's Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds meant to renovate existing schools have sharply declined. As of January 10, 2017, actual student enrollment is 63,031 students, and for 2020-21, projected student enrollment will be 72,495 students, which reflects a 15% increase in only five (5) years. Without additional capital funding for new student stations, Osceola schools are projected to be at 96% capacity in the 2017-18 school year. This percentage would be higher, but relocatables have been added in the current 2016-17 school year, and two (2) new charter schools have opened.*

Recommendation(s):

- Amend Section 1013.64(1), Florida Statutes – Funds for comprehensive educational plant needs; construction cost maximums for school district capital projects, to add subsection (i) "Public Education Capital Outlay funding will be distributed to all public schools, including charter schools and non-charter schools, based on the proportional facilities need as set forth in Section 1002.33(18), Florida Statutes."
- Amend Section 1013.738, Florida Statutes – High Growth District Capital Outlay Assistance Grant Program to ensure that Osceola students receive their fair share of funding due to increased residential construction in Osceola County and the resulting demands upon our public schools.

2. Osceola's Operating Funds

Issue: *Osceola has limited resources to meet the state's increasing number of unfunded mandates and serve our growing number of students and parents.*

Recommendation(s):

- Review the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) formula to ensure equitable funding by:
 - Adjusting the district cost differential (DCD) calculation, and
 - Removing the cap on Group 2 weighted full-time equivalency (WFTE) program funding.
- 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.

Why Does Osceola Receive Less Operational Funding?

- Osceola is currently ranked 66th out of 67 school districts in the State in operational dollars received per student at \$6,876. This is \$328 below the state average and \$2,236 below the district receiving the most funding per student.
- Osceola's property tax values remain low while student growth in our district continues to rise. The combination of these two trends results in lower funding available per student. Osceola is currently ranked 19th in the value of 1 mill, yet 40th in the value of 1 mill per student.
- The FEFP formula is designed to equalize the required local effort (RLE) portion of ad valorem tax generated by school districts throughout the state. The 0.748 mill discretionary tax is compressed to the state average for 48 school districts that generate below the average in collections. However, the nineteen school districts that generate above the state average receive \$209,551,215 more from the 0.748 mill discretionary tax, which causes further disparity in the operational funds available among school districts.
- Osceola's district cost differential (DCD) of 0.9855 results in a further reduction in funding available per student of \$65. With 12 of the 67 districts having a DCD over 1.000, an additional \$122,586,423 is being shifted from the lowest-generating 55 to the top 12 school districts.

3. Flexibility for State Assessment and Accountability

Issue: *Florida's accountability system, which assigns school grades of "A" through "F," has been in place since 1999 for eighteen (18) years. Like the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, Osceola County supports a rigorous accountability system that is fair, ensures that decisions are made in the best interests of students, and that recognizes the complexities of serving students with diverse needs. The passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides an opportunity to develop a better accountability system that will lead to increased student performance and provide parents and the community with a more comprehensive report on student and school performance.*

Recommendation(s):

- Amend Section 1008.22, Florida Statutes – Student Assessment Program for Public Schools and Section 1008.34, Florida Statutes – School grading system; school report cards; district grade, to support home rule and local control and to permit local School Boards the following flexibility:
 - **Alternate Assessment** – Require the Florida Department of Education to:
 - approve a list of nationally recognized high school assessments (e.g., SAT or ACT) from which school districts may select in lieu of the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) for Grade 10 English Language Arts;
 - continue to make the FSA available for students who need a concordant score on an alternate assessment; and
 - include the student's highest score, regardless of the assessment, within Florida's Accountability System. [ESSA allows states the flexibility of selecting a nationally recognized high school assessment.]
 - **Paper/ Pencil Test Administration** – Require the Florida Department of Education to provide school districts a paper and pencil version of each state test to use until efficient and affordable technology is available that substantially reduces the amount of time that students are tested and that classroom instructional time is disrupted.