

Mr. Agustin J. Barrera, Chair

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED 2008 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM OF THE GREATER  
FLORIDA CONSORTIUM OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

**COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, EFFICIENCY & GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

**LINK TO DISTRICT**

**STRATEGIC PLAN: EDUCATE AND ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS ON DISTRICT  
INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE MEANINGFUL  
RELATIONSHIPS**

The Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards is a coalition of ten school boards which have joined to assist each other in advancing educational issues of mutual concern. The members include: Broward, Charlotte, Collier, Indian River, Lee, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach, Pinellas, and St. Lucie.

In developing the Consortium's legislative platform, member districts were requested to submit legislative proposals for consideration and inclusion in its 2008 legislative platform. On September 14-15, 2007, representatives of the Consortium met in Port St. Lucie, Florida, to finalize the draft of their proposed 2008 Legislative Program. The draft program includes only those items which were approved by the School Board representatives in attendance. Further, it adheres to the Consortium's policy of including only a select number of issues in order to ensure maximum cohesiveness in the program and concentration of Consortium resources on its priorities. Additionally, a platform for the Special Session on budget reductions was discussed and finalized.

All ten Consortium school boards are being asked to review the draft program attached, and to take official action on it. Each issue must be supported by **all** Consortium members to be included in the final adopted program. If a member district votes to remove an issue from the proposed program, the issue is removed from the program. Once all member boards have officially adopted the 2008 Legislative Program, the Consortium will print and distribute the document to the Governor, State Cabinet, all legislators, and interested citizen groups.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
AGUSTIN J. BARRERA:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, adopt the proposed draft 2008 Legislative Program and the draft legislative program for Special Session of the Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards or modify it as deemed appropriate.

**H-22**

MEMORANDUM

September 21, 2007

**TO:** Selected School Board Members-Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards  
Lobbyists-Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards

**FROM:** Kathryn Hensley  
President

**SUBJECT:** **PROPOSED 2008 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON WAYS TO ADDRESS POTENTIAL STATE BUDGET CUTS TO THE K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM 2007-08 BUDGET**

Attached is the proposed 2008 Legislative Program of the Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards (GFCSB) and the GFCSB's Recommendations on Ways to Address Potential State Budget Cuts to the K-12 Public Education Program--2007-08. These documents are the result of a Consortium legislative meeting held in Port St. Lucie, FL on September 14-15, 2007. Please forward the proposed program and recommended budget cuts to your School Board for its action.

Please remind your Board that, under the Consortium bylaws, if any Board rejects any issue, that issue automatically is removed from the program. We realize that the special session may be in progress or over by the time all districts act; however, there will possibly be additional special sessions on the same issues in the future.

We will appreciate your expediting action on the GFCSB 2008 Legislative Program and Potential Budget Cuts so that we can move ahead in seeking support for the issues.

Please send the results of your School Board's actions to Florida School Services, Inc., Attention: Thomas Cerra at [tomcerra@gmail.com](mailto:tomcerra@gmail.com).

Thank you.

KH:pw  
Attachments

**GREATER FLORIDA CONSORTIUM OF  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
2008 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM**

**PRIORITY ISSUES**

**FUNDING**

**GOAL: INCREASE, ON A PHASED-IN BASIS, THE AVERAGE PER STUDENT FUNDING TO ENSURE THAT FLORIDA IS IN THE TOP HALF OF THE STATES AND CAN PROVIDE A WORLD CLASS EDUCATION TO ENABLE ITS STUDENTS TO COMPETE AND EXCEL IN THE GLOBAL MARKET PLACE.**

**Adequate Funding**

In order to accomplish this goal:

Allocate sufficient state dollars with flexibility to enable school districts to support guaranteed continuation budgets that provide for enrollment growth, inflationary increases, competitive salaries and benefits for teachers and other personnel, and quality program improvements. Use new state revenue to provide for this continuation budget as opposed to the state using increases in local property tax revenues as the source of additional funds.

- Conduct an impartial third-party study of the Florida Price Level Index to reflect the cost of housing, insurance, and transportation costs rather than wages.
- Increase funding for Safe Schools, Transportation, Instructional Materials, and Supplemental Academic Instruction to accommodate higher enrollment and higher costs.
- Reduce the ceiling cap that school districts pay in Required Local Effort (RLE) from 90 percent to 80 percent.
- Increase funding for Workforce Development, including adult vocational programs, and restore the program weights to fund Middle School Career Education and the 1.5 weight factor for high school vocational programs.
- Restore seventh-period funding for high schools and fund courses from the Florida Virtual School that are offered beyond the regular school day.

### **Class Size Reduction (CSR)**

Continue to fully fund Class Size Reduction, but not at the expense of the basic Florida Education Funding Program (FEFP).

Provide full state funding for the cost of additional schools and classrooms to meet the state's responsibility under the current class size reduction amendment and distribute the funds on a per Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) basis.

Fully fund the High Growth Districts construction program for the benefit of all counties experiencing enrollment growth.

### **Local Discretionary Millage (LDM)**

- Oppose further equalization of the .51 Local Discretionary Millage until the basic program is adequately funded.
- Extend the voter-approved operating millage authority from four (4) years to ten (10) years.

### **HURRICANE RELIEF**

Establish permanent provisions to assist school districts with hurricane damage without negatively affecting resources for other districts including:

- automatically creating a special trust fund to assist school districts with hurricane recovery;
- holding districts harmless for all losses of funding resulting from a hurricane;
- providing an avenue for school boards to seek necessary waivers of state law for up to a year, such as shortening the school year, in order to resolve some of the immediate impact of hurricane damage;
- funding all operational costs associated with shelter operations; and
- including shelters in concurrency requirements.

## **GOVERNANCE**

### **Charter Schools**

Return the final decision and authority regarding granting a charter to the local school boards and more clearly define the responsibilities of the charter school and of the school board. In addition:

- repeal the Charter Schools of Excellence;
- maintain school boards' authority regarding the disposition of local capital outlay funds and impact fees; and
- authorize school boards to collect administrative fees for all students served by the charter school.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY**

Oppose legislation that subverts or bypasses the constitutional authority of school boards and superintendents.

## **VOLUNTARY UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN (VPK)**

Provide a flexible model universal VPK program during the 180-day school year of up to six hours a day that can address the needs of the local community and fund it on an FTE basis. Require teachers to be certified and fully fund student transportation.

Place the VPK in the Department of Education to ensure a continuum of educational services, goals, and objectives.

## **REVENUE SOURCES**

Keep the promise to hold harmless school districts from any loss of operational or capital funds if the January, 2008 property tax Constitutional Amendment passes.

Conduct a comprehensive review of all current sales tax exemptions, and repeal as appropriate, except on food and medicine.

Provide school districts additional funds by using some of the revenue generated by casino gambling and other gambling establishments (card rooms) and distribute the funds through the FEFP formula based on a district's FTE.

## **CAPITAL OUTLAY**

### **School Construction**

Provide adequate school construction funds to support: new facilities, renovations, replacement schools, school maintenance, land acquisition, mandated class size reduction, hurricane shelter retrofitting, and pre-kindergarten programs housed in public schools.

### **Student Station Costs**

Revise the per-student-station cost cap to keep pace with changing market place increases for labor and materials.

### **Pre-kindergarten Classrooms**

Add pre-kindergarten space needs in the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) by including them in the School Plant Survey.

### **Construction Materials**

Exempt construction materials purchased by a contractor to be used for school construction from the state sales tax.

### **Optional Capital Outlay Levy**

Restore school boards' flexibility and remove restrictions in the use of funds generated from the 2-mill optional capital outlay levy.

### **Impact Fees**

Oppose the elimination of impact fees and define school boards as "infrastructure--not developers."

## **ADDITIONAL ISSUES**

### **Workforce Housing**

Enable school boards to recruit and retain high quality teachers by providing state funding for housing supplements to be used to assist teachers, who make a five-year commitment to the school system, to rent or purchase housing.

Continue and expand the initiative which provides funding incentives and flexible regulations for affordable housing for essential service workers, particularly teachers and other school personnel.

### **Cost-of-Living Adjustments**

Revise the formula that adjusts for differences in costs-of-living among districts to give additional emphasis to the higher housing costs in some areas compared to others.

### **Unfunded Mandates**

Oppose any new state mandated programs that are not accompanied by an identified specific source of state funds sufficient to cover the full program costs.

### **FCAT**

Administer the FCAT towards the end of the school year and ensure that it is graded by qualified independent test experts.

### **Graduation and Dropout Reporting**

Identify and implement national best practices for measuring graduation rates and drop-out rates to more accurately calculate such rates in Florida.

### **Certification Requirements**

Streamline certification for career/technical education.

### **Training for Constitutional Officers**

Provide funding for training for Constitutional Officers.

**GREATER CONSORTIUM OF SCHOOL BOARDS  
RECOMMENDATIONS ON WAYS TO ADDRESS POTENTIAL BUDGET CUTS TO  
THE K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM  
2007-2008 BUDGET**

**“The education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida. It is, therefore, a paramount duty of the state to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders.” (Article IX, Section 9 (a) of the Florida Constitution.)**

In keeping with this Constitutional provision, the Consortium recommends the following when considering reductions for the 2007-2008 budget:

- Support the Governor’s recommendation to preserve education K-12 funding by replacing \$120 million in recurring revenue with non-recurring revenue and thus protecting students, school districts and class size reduction from the impact of the cuts.
- Support the Governor’s recommendation to stimulate the economy by exercising the available \$315 million in bonding capacity of PECO funds on an accelerated calendar.
- Waive statutory, proviso, and implementing language to allow school districts total flexibility over use of all appropriated funds including: lottery, FEFP, categorical and 2-mill funds (particularly to pay for property insurance and vehicles); and class size reduction, in order to meet revenue shortfalls so long as school districts continue to meet student and fiscal accountability requirements. (This would include giving school boards the option of delaying textbook adoptions for one year.)
- Reduce or eliminate School Recognition awards (\$157 million) and the School Advisory Committee appropriation (\$28 million) and use these recurring funds to maintain the current level of per student funding; or, in the alternative, fund these programs, along with the Teachers’ Lead Program \$(48 million), with non-recurring dollars and use the recurring dollars to offset the budget cuts.
- Fund approved MAP plans ( performance pay) out of next year’s budget and use the \$147.5 million in recurring funds allocated to the program for this budget year to offset the budget cuts; and reallocate the anticipated \$45 million in unclaimed STAR (performance pay) funds to districts to offset the budget cuts
- Reallocate funds that normally would revert back to the state’s General Revenue Fund due to lower-than-anticipated student enrollment.
- Apply some of the state’s savings accounts, such as the Working Capital Trust Fund, to maintain the basic education program.
- Adopt emergency legislation to waive the penalty that requires districts who do not meet their class size reduction numbers, even by a tiny fraction, to transfer operating dollars to their capital outlay budgets.