



Just for Parents

New School Year, New Goals for Florida's students

The new school year is certainly a time to look forward to new challenges, new horizons and new goals. Everyone – students, teachers, parents and educators – is sharing that feeling of anticipation for new challenges.

But before we look forward, I'd like you to join me in looking back and celebrating your hard work. Everyone has played a role in focusing on student success and making Florida a national leader and we have many reasons to be proud:

Because of your hard work, Florida has:

- Leapt from 11th to 6th in the nation for educational quality in 2013, a measure that encompasses Florida's ranking as 7th in the nation for K-12 Student Achievement;
- Improved graduation rates for Hispanic students;
- Been a leader with robust Advanced Placement programs, ranking 2nd in the nation for participation in AP assessments and 5th in the nation in performance on those assessments; and
- Increased enrollment in accelerated STEM courses by 46 percent.

During my travels around the state, I talk about this extraordinary progress because everyone deserves to know that your efforts are paying off for students who have more opportunities after high school today than they ever had before.

You are at the center of our success in the past and our even brighter future. Your involvement every day in helping children learn is the key. As we move forward together, please feel free to email me at commissioner@fldoe.org with your ideas, thoughts and suggestions.

Thank you for all you do and thank you for making the upcoming school year our best ever.

Sincerely,

Pam Stewart
Commissioner of Education



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

What Parents Need to Know	2
More Florida Schools Earn "A" Grades	2
Upcoming Events	3
Hispanic Heritage Month	3
Personal Learning Accounts	4
Benefits of Career and Technical Education	4

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What Parents Need to Know: Academic Advisement



Understanding graduation requirements is key to helping your student receive his or her diploma. To support students and families in understanding those requirements, the Florida Department of Education has posted "What Students and Parents Need to Know" academic advisement flyers, on the [Graduation Requirements](#) webpage.

Academic advisement flyers are organized by the year a student enters ninth grade.

The links to the flyers are listed as follows:

[Students Entering Grade Nine in the 2011-2012 School Year](#) (PDF, 245KB)

[Students Entering Grade Nine in the 2012-2013 School Year](#) (PDF, 309KB)

[Students Entering Grade Nine in the 2013-2014 School Year](#) (PDF, 171KB)

[Students Entering Grade Nine in the 2014-2015 School Year](#) (PDF, 131KB)

For additional information on [local school district](#) graduation options, please contact your child's school.

More Florida Schools Earn "A" Grades as State Prepares for New Grading System with Focus on Student Success Factors

According to preliminary data released in July by the Florida Department of Education, the number of elementary and middle schools earning an "A" grade increased by 195 (seven percentage points) more than last year in the final year of the current grading system. Overall, 962 elementary and middle schools statewide earned the top grade.

Although the number of schools earning an "F" grade this year also increased, the Department is focused on ensuring all low performing schools are provided the necessary assistance and support they need to help their students achieve.

"The increase in the number of schools earning an 'A' this year is great news for students and teachers who have worked hard for this success," said Commissioner Pam Stewart. "I appreciate the work by the educators, families and students. I know they will continue to improve in the future even as we transition to a new grading system."

The new grading system will support the more rigorous Florida Standards and the Florida Standards Assessment, which will replace the FCAT. The new school grading formula will be more simple, transparent and lead to improved student achievement.

"The new grading system that will start next year will continue to be crafted with input from parents, teachers and educators," Stewart said .

Governor and First Lady Scott Announce Hispanic Heritage Month Contests

Governor Rick Scott and First Lady Ann Scott today announced the 2014 Hispanic Heritage Month essay and art contests, open to kindergarten through 12th grade students in Florida. The theme for Florida's Hispanic Heritage Month contests is "Hispanic Culture: Living the American Dream in Florida."

The Governor and First Lady also requested nominations for the Hispanic Heritage Month Excellence in Education Award, which will be presented to a Hispanic full-time educator in a Florida elementary, middle or high school.

Governor Scott said, "Florida's Hispanic community continues to contribute to our economic, cultural, and family values, and the 2014 Hispanic Heritage Month Contests will help students appreciate these contributions and encourage our young people to live their version of the American Dream. Last year we celebrated 500 years of history and cultural diversity throughout Florida, and the upcoming Hispanic Heritage Month adds to this celebration by recognizing the accomplishments Florida's Hispanic community have made throughout history."

Governor and First Lady Scott have chosen a Miami artist, Manena, as the featured artist for their observance of Hispanic Heritage Month. Manena's artwork will be



featured in the Governor's Mansion and highlighted during the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration.

Governor Scott's annual Hispanic Heritage Month Excellence in Education Award contest is open to all Hispanic, full-time educators in an elementary, middle or high school in Florida. Three winners will be selected: one elementary teacher (grades K-5), one middle school teacher (grades 6-8), and one high school teacher (grades 9-12).

Contest entries and nominations, student contest entries and educator nomination forms must be mailed to:

Volunteer Florida
Attention: Hispanic Heritage
Month Committee
3800 Esplanade Way
Suite 180
Tallahassee, Florida 32311

All entries must be received by Volunteer Florida no later than 5 p.m., EDT, September 12. For additional information about Hispanic Heritage Month in Florida, visit

www.FloridaHispanicHeritage.com.

August/September Events and Designations

August

Back to School

Throughout the entire month of August, students will be returning to the classroom. The transition from summer back to school can be tough for everyone. The daily routine established over the last 2 to 3 months is changing, and the time has come to go back to school. For helpful tips on how to prepare for the new academic year, visit [Back to School](#).

September

Attendance Awareness Month

Attendance has a major impact on academic achievement. Missing too many school days can lead to course failure and increase the risk of dropping out of school. Throughout the month parents, educators and communities can gain awareness about how to help fix the problem and promote school attendance. To learn more, visit the Count Us In! website.



Personal Learning Accounts

The Personal Learning Scholarship Account Program was established to provide options to parents of students with specific disabilities to better meet the individual educational needs their eligible children. Parents of eligible children may use the accounts to purchase approved products or services.

To be eligible to receive a scholarship, a student must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Is a resident of Florida;
2. Is eligible to enroll in kindergarten-grade 12 in a public school in Florida;
3. Has the following disability: Autism, as defined in [s. 393.063\(3\), F.S.](#); cerebral palsy, as defined in [s. 393.063\(4\), F.S.](#); Down syndrome, as defined in [s. 393.063\(13\), F.S.](#); an intellectual disability, as defined in [s. 393.063\(21\), F.S.](#); Prader-Willi syndrome, as defined in [s. 393.063\(25\), F.S.](#); or Spina bifida, as defined in [s. 393.063\(36\), F.S.](#); for a student in kindergarten, being a high-risk child, as defined in [s. 393.063\(20\)\(a\), F.S.](#); and Williams syndrome.
4. Is the subject of an IEP written in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education or has received a diagnosis of a disability as defined below from a physician who is licensed under [chapter 458](#) or [chapter 459](#) or a psychologist who is licensed in Florida.

Not Just Shop Class: The Benefits of Career and Technical Education

Career and Technical Education gives students a head start on college and careers in high-skill, high-wage and high-demand jobs.

Many Career and Technical Education, or CTE, programs allow students the opportunity to earn college credit, industry certifications or both. As an added bonus, many CTE programs connect to a similar state college program, which makes it possible for students to move from high school to college.

Students can receive industry certification in a number of career areas such as health science, hospitality and tourism, information technology and more.

According to the 2012-13 Career and Professional Education Act Enrollment and Performance Report, students enrolled in CTE programs on average had higher GPAs, were regularly present for school, took at least one advanced course, were less likely to drop out and were more likely to earn a standard high school diploma. For more information, contact your local school district Career and Technical director.

Staying up-to-date with immunizations

Both public/non-public school children entering, attending or transferring to Florida K-12 schools are required to have the following immunizations:

- Four or five doses of DTaP
- Three, four, or five doses of IPV
- Two doses of MMR
- Two or three doses of hep B
- Two doses of Varicella (kindergarten effective with 2008–2009 school year, then an additional grade is added each year thereafter).

In addition to compliance with all other immunization requirements, children entering, attending or transferring to the seventh grade in

Florida schools must complete one tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap).

August is also National

Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM). There are numerous events to highlight the importance of immunization for people of all ages.

For more information, visit the [Florida Department of Health](#).

