



Just for Parents

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Florida's School Grading Plan

Helping Florida's Communities Evaluate School Growth



Celebrating student success at Lost Lake Elementary with Lake County Superintendent, Dr. Susan Moxley and students Patricia Eckmann and Hannah Dorr.

As a school principal, I was skeptical when Florida's school grading system was unveiled almost 15 years ago. My worries were compounded when I found out that the Title I school I had just joined had received an "F."

Although it was disheartening at first, I was grateful to have measurable information on where we could improve. During the next year, we worked more closely with teachers, parents and volunteers to prepare students for academic success. In one year, we were able to jump from an "F" to a "C" and drastically improve student achievement.

I believed in our state's school accountability system as a principal, and I believe in it now as Florida's Commissioner of Education. I believe that it is a necessary tool for parents and the community. But most importantly, the school grading system should lead to improved student outcomes.

I had the opportunity to discuss the new school grading formula during last month's meeting of the State Board of Education, where I stressed the system must provide clarity and stability.

I believe my proposed school accountability plan provides a simpler, clearer formula for school grades, focusing on student success measures, which include student achievement, learning gains, graduation and earning college credit and/or industry certifications.

The proposal also focuses on how the entire system can become more transparent and easier to understand, including reporting all grade components as percentages with a maximum score of 100.

It has always been my belief you must measure what you value. We have had much success in raising student achievement during the past few years and it could not have been done without the incredible work of teachers and school staff.

I hope you will read the department's proposed School Accountability Plan at http://www.fdoe.org/board/meetings/2014_02_18/accountability.pdf and add your voice to the conversation.

Sincerely,

Pam Stewart, Commissioner of Education



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Parent Involvement

Faith & Community Outreach

Safe Schools

Dropout Prevention

Volunteer Recognition

21st Century Learners

Mentoring/Student Assistance



Education Buzzword: Individual Education Plan (IEP)

You may have heard your child's teacher talk about an "IEP" or "Individual Educational Plan" in his or her classroom. Every child with a disability who is eligible for exceptional student education (ESE) will have an individual educational plan (IEP).

An IEP is a written plan that describes what a child can already do and what a child needs to learn in order to reach his or her goals. The IEP also identifies the kinds of help the child will be provided. Your child's IEP will be written by a team of people at an IEP meeting. Parents are an important part of the IEP team.

Other people who can be at your child's IEP meeting are: an ESE teacher, your child's general education teacher, someone who understands the evaluations that have been done for your child and can explain them, someone from the school district who knows about special education, the school district's resources, other

people invited by you or the school and your child, if appropriate.

Before your child's plan is drafted, parents should share their

vision for where they want their child to be at the end of the IEP. Each plan is developed with one child in mind and must be updated at least once every 12 months. As a parent, you can request an IEP meeting at any time if you believe changes are needed. You can learn more about Individual Educational Plans and how to prepare for your first meeting by visiting <http://www.fldoe.org/e/e/pdf/iep-card.pdf>.



Florida Standards, Cursive Writing and More

Dr. Denise Barrett
K-12 Director of Standards Implementation
Florida Department of Education

At the department, we appreciate all the valuable input that you, Florida's families and communities, provided in making our newly adopted Florida Standards stronger and more rigorous. These new mathematics and English language arts standards are now more relevant to students' academic needs and abilities, especially with the addition of cursive writing.

Research suggests that the physical act of writing in cursive leads to increased learning comprehension and participation. The College Board found students who wrote in cursive for the essay portion of the SAT scored higher than those who printed their response.

Another major change to the standards was the inclusion of calculus to ensure Florida's accelerated students will be prepared for college success and



promising careers in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Other changes also include tying conventional concepts to real-world situations, including using money when teaching decimals. This specific change also helps Florida teachers incorporate more financial literacy instruction into their classroom.

Thank you for adding your voice to our standards conversation and for continuing to believe in raising student expectations and outcomes.

March is National Nutrition Month



Good nutrition in childhood helps prevent many health problems, including obesity, tooth decay, osteoporosis and iron deficiency.

Healthy snacks are an essential way to help children get the nutrients they need to grow and play. Offering healthy snacks can also help children form lifelong healthy eating habits.

However, children need your help to stay healthy and create healthy habits.

Here are some tips to enrich your child's diet

- Make favorite family dishes healthier by adding more fruits and vegetables.
- Offer low- or non-fat dairy products.
- For protein, serve lean meats, poultry, fish, lentils and beans.
- Limit high-sugar, high-fat treats and salty snacks.
- Encourage kids to drink plenty of water. Reduce or eliminate sugary drinks.
- Serve reasonable portion sizes. A heaping plate is not necessarily a healthy plate.

For more delicious, healthy recipes, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's

website at <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov>.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) also has an excellent parent-friendly website that provides numerous resources. Please visit <http://www.choosemyplate.gov> for topics to enhance your healthy lifestyle.

Healthy snacks with about 100 calories or fewer

- A medium-size apple (72 calories)
- A medium-size banana (105 calories)
- 1 cup steamed green beans (44 calories)
- 1 cup blueberries (83 calories)
- 1 cup grapes (100 calories)
- 1 cup carrots (45 calories), broccoli (30 calories) or bell peppers (30 calories) with 2 tbsp. hummus (46 calories)

Your family's food and physical activity choices affect their health today, tomorrow and in the future. To find out what your child is learning, talk to your child's teacher about your school's health curriculum and nutritional programs.

Upcoming Events and Designations

March is Women's History Month

- In 1987, President Ronald Reagan issued the first Presidential Proclamation recognizing March as Women's History Month.
- Visit <http://www.floridamemory.com/onlineclassroom/women-history/> for Florida resources on this special designation to share with your family.

Florida State Board of Education Meeting

- The meeting will take place on Tuesday, March 18, 2014 at 9:00 a.m.
- Agenda items are posted on the department's website one week before the meeting at <http://www.fldoe.org/board/meetings/>
- You can listen to the meeting live at www.fldoe.org.

Making Great Strides in the Sunshine State



Here are just a few note-worthy accomplishments that highlight our state's incredible teachers and students.

Florida Students Surpass Million Minute Marathon 2014 Reading Goal

Florida's students and teachers committed to reading more than 33 million combined minutes on January 13 as part of the 6th annual Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! Million Minute Marathon.

With a final total of reading more than 35 million minutes, students shattered the 2013 record of nearly 30.1 million minutes.

An estimated 1.2 million students from 59 school districts and three early learning coalitions participated in the effort.

The 2014 Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! events were made possible by the support of many educational partners, including the Florida Lottery.

To read more about this annual celebration, visit http://www.fldoe.org/news/2014/2014_01_30.asp.

Nine Schools Honored as PSA Contest Winners

To compete in the 2014 Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! Public Service Announcement contest, students created short videos focused on this year's theme "Reading Accelerates Success." First Lady Ann Scott and the Florida Department of Education wrapped up the weeklong celebration with a special ceremony at the Kennedy Space Center where Mrs. Scott recognized the winners of the public service announcement (PSA) contest and presented students with their awards and prizes.

Winners were chosen at elementary, middle and high school levels, with the winning schools awarded prizes sponsored by the Florida Education Foundation - \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second place and \$250 for third place.

The winning PSAs are featured on the Florida Department of Education's website and social media pages. For a full list of winning schools, visit http://www.fldoe.org/news/2014/2014_01_17.asp.

