



# **The State of Education in Florida: Moving in the Right Direction**

*- Education Commissioner Jim Horne  
Presentation before the Senate Education Committee  
December 11, 2003*

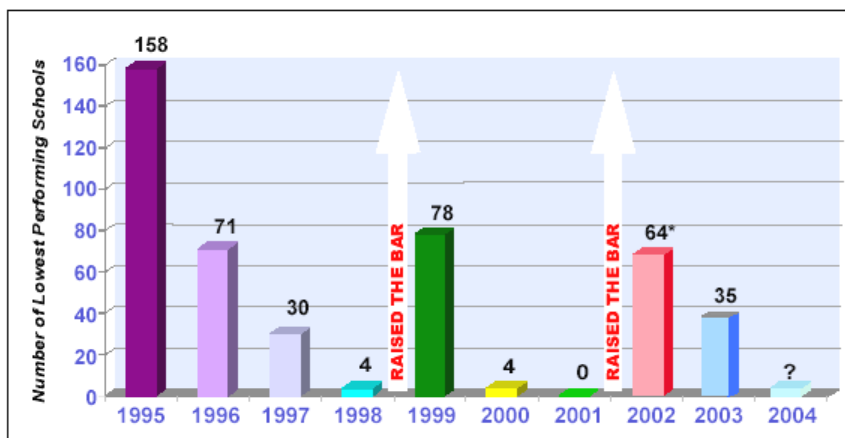
## **K-12 Public Schools**

- More students reading on grade level
- More schools using student-centered, data driven instruction to produce learning gains
- Closing the achievement gap
- Ending social promotion
- More nationally board certified teachers
- More students taking the PSAT
- More students taking advanced placement courses
- More students graduating, fewer dropping out

## An all-encompassing success story: Richmond Heights Elementary

- What do you call a school where...
  - Students are retained if they can't read, given extra attention, and make dramatic gains the next year
  - Instruction is student-centered and data driven
  - Teachers are dedicated and creative, using activities such as "reading under the stars" to instill a love of reading in their students
  - The principal encourages teachers to lead "by design, not by chance"
  - Parents and community members are engaged
- We call it a success!
- Richmond Heights elementary, a high minority, high poverty school in Orlando went from an F to a C in one year.
- Principal June Jones shared her story with us at the Governor's State of Education Address, a copy is included in your packets.

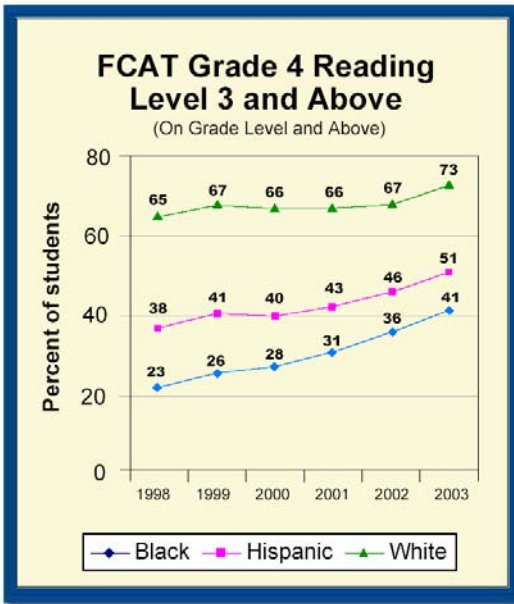
## Rising Standards and Higher Accountability Lead to Improved Performance



As expectations for school performance increase, Florida schools are rising to the occasion.  
The number of low-performing schools has decreased from 158 in 1995 to 35 in 2003.

**Raising the bar works!**

\*After the 2002 school grade appeals, the number of F schools decreased from 68 to 64.



### Closing the Achievement Gap on FCAT: 4<sup>th</sup> grade as an example

- While the percentage of white students reading on grade level has increased by 8 points, the gains have been most significant among minorities
- The percentage of African American students reading on grade level has increased by 18 percentage points since 1998
- The percentage of Hispanic students reading on grade level has increased by 13 percentage points since 1998

### Results driven by teachers

- Florida's teachers are using a data-driven, student-centered approach to helping students
- More than 18% of all the teachers that earned national board certification in the U.S. this year (1,448 out of 8,196) call Florida home
- We increased the number of nationally board certified teachers by more than 40% (from 3,492 to 4,940) this year

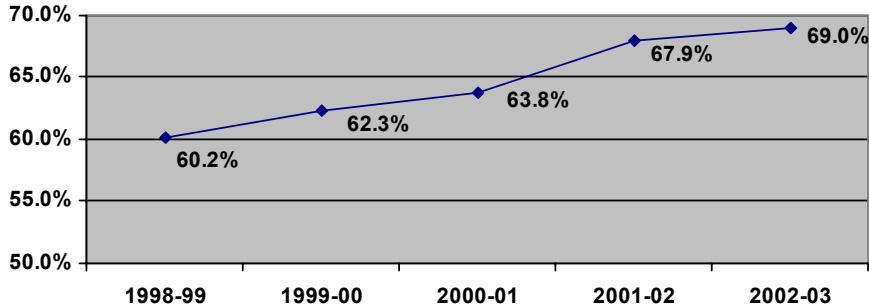
## **More students getting ready for college by taking the PSAT**

- The PSAT is an important indicator of aspiration to higher education
- Through our unique College Board partnership, we offer the PSAT free of charge to all sophomores
- As a result we have seen a dramatic rise in PSAT takers, especially among minorities
- 27% of all Hispanic sophomore PSAT takers in the nation call Florida home
- 17% of all African American sophomore PSAT takers in the nation call Florida home

## **More students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses**

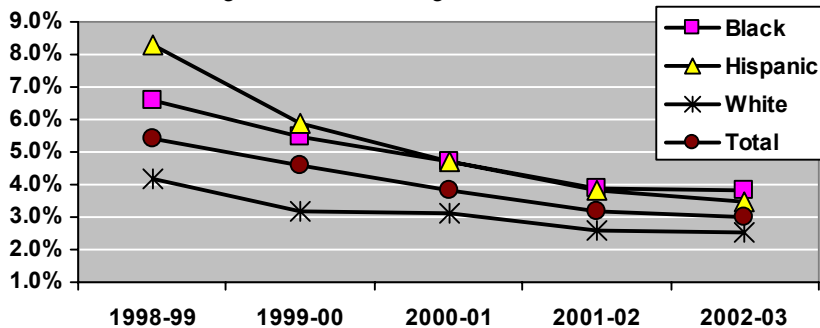
- The rise in the number of AP test takers in Florida is more than twice the national increase
- Our increase has been led by minority test takers
- Total number of test takers is up 75%
- Number of African American test takers is up 116%
- Number of Hispanic test takers is up 102%

## Graduation rate on the rise



- Unlike other states and national studies that use forecasting and statistical sampling to calculate graduation rates, Florida actually counts each student
- Recent reports on our graduation rate do not include GED recipients – even though a GED is every bit as valuable as a standard diploma
- No matter how you calculate our graduation rate, it is higher today than it was five years ago

## Decline in Florida's dropout rate led by minority students



- In 1998-99 the dropout rate was 5.4 percent – today it is 3.1 percent
- The most dramatic decline in dropouts has been among Hispanic students – from 8.3 percent in 1998-99 to 3.5 percent this year.
- The decrease in the number of dropouts has also been significant among African American students, where the dropout rate saw a 2.8 percentage point drop versus a 2.4 percent drop among the general population

## **Community Colleges**

- Nearly half of Florida's Community Colleges are in the nation's top 100
- Four of the nation's top 10 community colleges are in Florida
- The number 1 community college in the nation is Miami Dade College
- More students are earning Associates Degrees and going on to universities

## **More students are earning Associate degrees**

- While enrollment at our Community Colleges over the past five years has grown by 8%, the number of students earning Associate degrees has risen by 12%
- As of last year, the number of students successfully transferring into the State University system has risen 7% since 1998

## **Community Colleges open the door to higher education**

- More than 50% of all upper-division students in Florida's public universities begin their course work at a community college
- Close to 80% of all economically disadvantaged students in the lower division of higher education attend our community colleges
- Approximately 80 % of all ethnic minorities in the lower division of colleges and universities are enrolled in our community colleges

## **Community Colleges open doors for “non-traditional” students**

- 84% of the Florida community colleges students has some “non-traditional characteristic”
  - 67% of them in 2001-02 were part-time,
  - 35% were over 25, and
  - 23% were receiving Pell Grants
- The new wave of students coming to Florida's college campuses are poorer and more ethnically and racially diverse than any group ever seeking admission into college
- Despite these challenges, Florida Community Colleges continue to excel
- They continue to find ways via partnerships, innovative programs, and alternative access strategies to keep the door open

## **Community colleges are fulfilling our state's most vital needs**

- More than 48% of health profession students come from Florida community colleges
- More than 52% of education students come from Florida community colleges
- More than 37% of engineering and engineering technology students come from Florida community colleges

## **State Universities**

- The new Scripps facility in South Florida will help us become a national leader in research
- Centers of Excellence are already helping Florida bridge the gap between the laboratory and the marketplace
  - UCF is working on cutting-edge photonics
  - FAU is partnering with other institutions to explore biomedical and marine biotechnology
  - UF is developing regenerative health biotechnology

## **One Florida strengthens our State Universities**

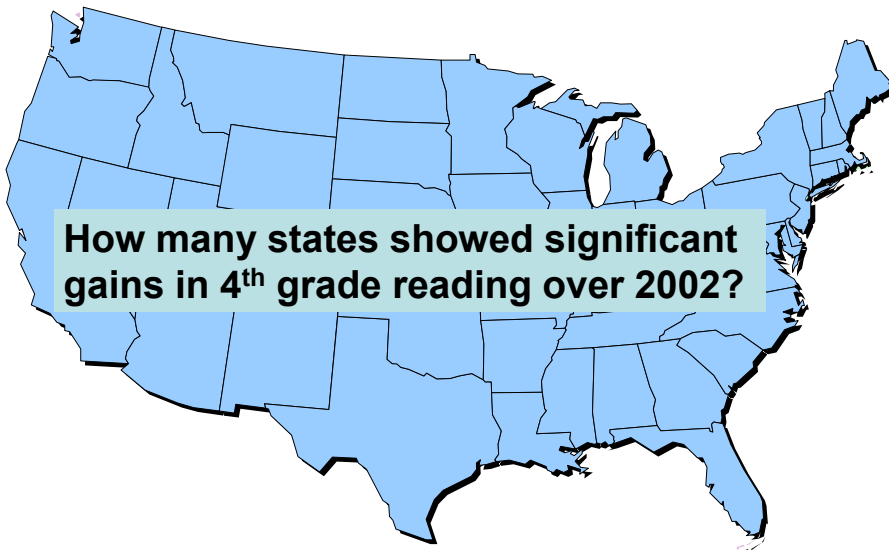
- Almost two thirds (64%) of the growth in freshman enrollment at our state universities this year consisted of African American and Hispanic students
- The percentage of university freshmen, graduate students, and overall enrollment comprised of minorities is higher now than ever
- We accomplished this without the use of racial quotas

## **As Governor Bush put it: “Florida is the state of education these days.”**

- From increasing access to higher education in a race-neutral way to making sure students master material before they move on, from holding schools accountable to giving parents real choices, Florida is often cited as a leader in education reform for taking bold steps
- While there has been some controversy surrounding our various voucher programs, the fact is that (as the president of the Black Alliance for Educational Options put it at our last State Board meeting), educational choice in America exists, the question is: should low-income parents have a choice?
- We believe they should, and studies indicate that the benefits of parental choice extend beyond individual students – choice becomes a catalyst for improvement in our public schools
- As Florida continues to serve as an example of true reform, it was fitting that the day Governor Bush delivered the first “State of Education” address, we received more good news about Florida’s progress on the national scene

## **NAEP: Florida leaping ahead of other states**

- The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been around since 1969 and is commonly referred to as “The Nation’s Report Card”
- It is the only assessment that allows us to compare one state to another
- Florida has made more progress on NAEP over the past 5 years than ever in its history
- While we are not yet at the top of the class, if we continue to improve at this rate, we will be

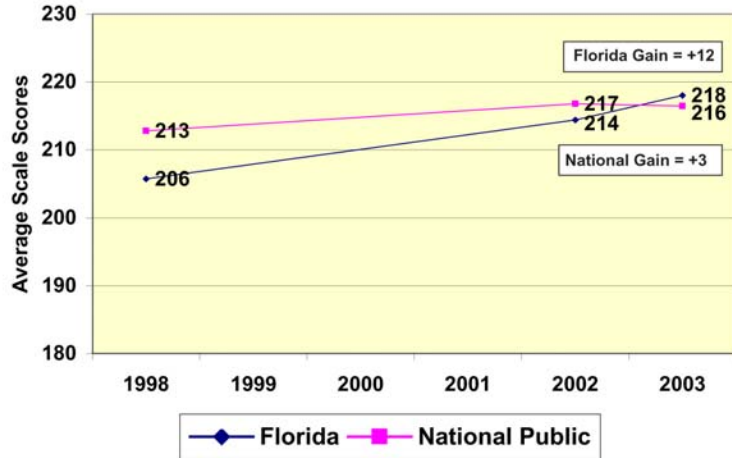




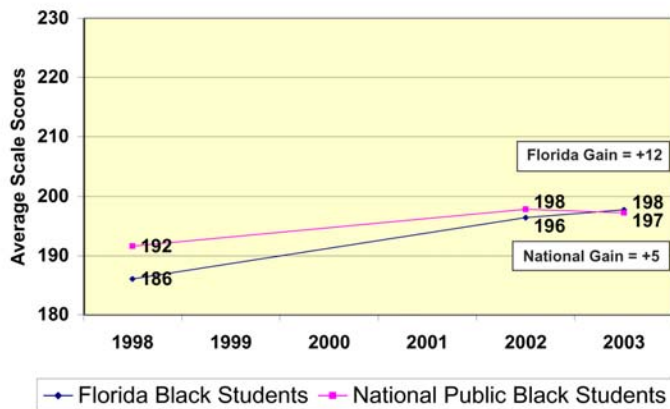
## **4<sup>th</sup> Grade NAEP: Outside validation of Florida's education reforms**

- Florida scored above the national average in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading for the first time
- Reading scores are up among all 4<sup>th</sup> graders
- In 1998, our overall median score was 7 points below the national average; today, it is two points above it
- In 1998, our median score among African American students was 6 points below the national average; today, it is a point above it
- In 1998, our median score among Hispanic students was 6 points above the national average; today, we have doubled our lead and are 12 points above the national average

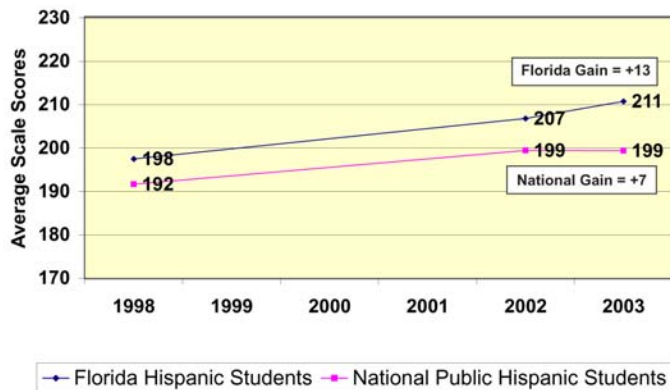
### NAEP Grade 4 Reading Scores - All Students 1998, 2002 and 2003



### NAEP Grade 4 Reading Scores - Black Students 1998, 2002 and 2003



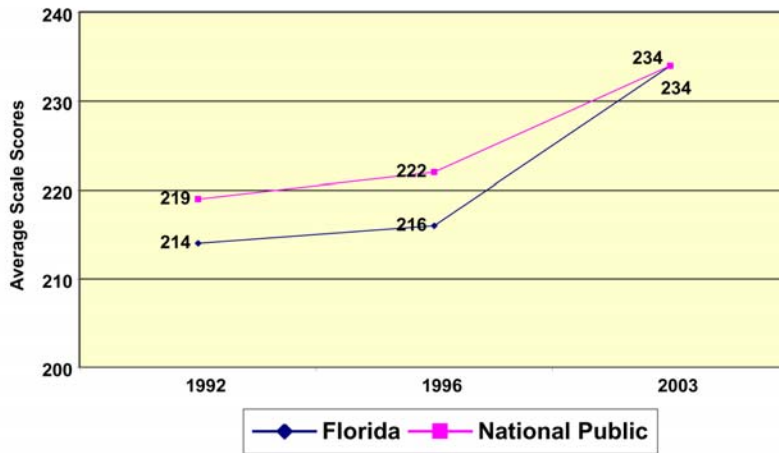
### NAEP Grade 4 Reading Scores - Hispanic Students 1998, 2002 and 2003



## 4<sup>th</sup> Grade NAEP: Outside validation of Florida's education reforms

- These results indicate that our focus on reading in the early grades through the *Just Read, Florida!* initiative is having a positive impact
- The impact in the lower grades has been across the board
- Our 4<sup>th</sup> graders have shown significant improvement in Mathematics as well
- Florida is at the national average in Mathematics for the first time

### Florida NAEP Grade 4 Mathematics Scores At National Average for the First Time



## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade NAEP: Indicates a need for Middle School reform

- While NAEP results in the lower grades are encouraging, our 8<sup>th</sup> graders (like their counterparts across the nation) are not improving
- Our 8<sup>th</sup> graders did not have the benefit of a focus on reading in the early grades, so we must redouble our efforts with this group
- As Chancellor Warford will tell you in just a few minutes, we have the recipe for success – focus on reading, qualified teachers, assessment, accountability, and parental involvement – and we must put that to work in our middle schools

The seal of the State of Florida is centered in the background. It features a circular design with a palm tree, a sun, and a figure. The text "SEAL OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA" is written around the top inner edge, and "IN GOD WE TRUST" is written around the bottom inner edge.

**“The State of Education in  
Florida is stronger than ever.”**

*- Governor Jeb Bush, November 13, 2003*