

**Annual Report on Paperwork and
Data Collection Reduction in
Florida School Districts**

**Presented to the
State Board of Education**

October 1, 2008

Introduction

The 2006 Florida Legislature, acting on the recommendations of the Paperwork Reduction Task Force created by Chapter 2005-31, codified in statute that the following activities occur annually, beginning in the 2006-07 school year [§ 1001.42(24), Florida Statutes]:

1001.42 Powers and duties of district school board.--The district school board, acting as a board, shall exercise all powers and perform all duties listed below:

(24) **REDUCE PAPERWORK AND DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**--Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year:

- (a) Each district school board shall designate a classroom teacher to serve as the teacher representative to speak on behalf of the district's teachers regarding paperwork and data collection reduction.
- (b) Each district school board must provide the school community with an efficient method for the school community to communicate with the classroom teacher designee regarding possible paperwork and data collection burdens and potential solutions.
- (c) The teacher designee shall annually report his or her findings and potential solutions to the school board.
- (d) Each district school board must submit its findings and potential solutions to the State Board of Education by September 1 of each year.
- (e) The State Board of Education shall prepare a report of the statewide paperwork and data collection findings and potential solutions and submit the report to the Governor, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives by October 1 of each year.

Generally speaking, Florida law requires school districts to designate a teacher representative, facilitate the efforts of that teacher representative to communicate with and speak on behalf of district teachers regarding possible paperwork and data collection burdens and potential solutions, and communicate those findings and recommendations to the local school board. School boards are required by law to submit findings and potential solutions to the State Board of Education by September 1 of each year, and the State Board of Education is required to submit a report of these findings and solutions to the Governor, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives by October 1 of each year. This report summarizes local and state findings pursuant to this law.

Overall, because law did not define a common reporting format for districts, varied responses were received, ranging from letters describing paperwork issues and charts comparing issues with district actions to analyses of online surveys completed by

teachers. A new option this year was to report issues, actions taken, and potential solutions to a statewide database. Almost half of the districts exercised this option.

Although many of the issues reported can be and are being alleviated at the district level, this was a good reflection exercise for districts. Leadership seemed to take a sincere interest in reducing the paperwork burden for teachers and some districts have made great strides in this direction based on teacher input. The Department of Education is interested in district findings as a means to explore simplifying paperwork burdens across the state.

Background

Paperwork reduction initiatives are not new to the Department of Education (DOE). From consolidating data entry systems and reducing duplication, to the most recent efforts that began with the passage of legislation creating the statewide Paperwork Reduction Task Force, paperwork reduction has been a concern of the DOE. Specifically, the department endeavors to decrease the amount of time a teacher needs to complete paperwork ‘burdens’ as part of the instructional day, as part of its statutorily-mandated goal to improve “quality efficient services” (§ 1008.31, Florida Statutes).

The statewide Paperwork Reduction Task Force was formed in 2005, as directed by the Florida Legislature, to recommend ways to reduce the burden placed on teachers, principals, and district staff. Its findings included evidence that a majority of the paperwork and data collection burdens placed on classroom teachers originate locally.

The following recommendations of the task force evolved into the statutory provisions addressed in this report:

1. School boards are not to exceed paperwork and reporting requirements mandated by the state without extensive public hearings, input from local paper reduction task forces, and detailed analysis of “burden hours” needed to complete the paperwork (hard copy and electronic) for the proposed mandate.
2. Each district school board must create a task force, comprised predominantly of teachers, to reduce the paper and electronic reporting requirements in their district and to report their actions to the Department of Education.

See § 1001.42(24), Florida Statutes, for the incorporation of these recommendations.

District Reports – Statewide Findings and Best Practices

District actions to reduce paperwork and data collection burdens resulting from this legislation varied greatly. From appointing a district designee to appointing district task

forces or work groups, it was evident that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to this issue. The goal is clear, though, that teachers need to have the time to teach and should not be burdened with unnecessary reporting requirements.

The majority of the districts reporting indicated that they are working to solicit input from teachers, principals, and other staff through either forming a committee or task force, a Web-based survey, or a combination of efforts.

All districts are working toward a process for paperwork reduction or evaluating paperwork requirements, and reported evidence that they had been using this process to reduce the paperwork burden.

Many districts have made a conscious move to Web-based reporting on various topics.

Paperwork burdens related to the following issues were most frequently noted: ESE, ESOL, Academic Improvement Plans (AIP), Student Attendance, Report Cards, Interims, and Progress Monitoring.

Districts are working to alleviate these issues by consolidating forms and making them electronic, participating in the statewide electronic Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for ESE students, changing to electronic grade books, creating teacher Web sites to communicate with parents, reporting progress monitoring online, and other innovative and successful initiatives.

Although many districts are employing similar strategies, specific examples from districts with a variety of student populations include the following:

Brevard

- Desktop reporting system that allows teachers immediate access to student and class data (achievement, attendance, contact information)
- Online IEP and AIP writing and monitoring
- Kindergarten students start school three days later to allow time for testing and paperwork
- Secondary schools have a seventh period day to allow for five extra planning periods each week
- One teacher work day per semester is devoted to paperwork
- Every school has a paperwork reduction committee chaired by the principal

Charlotte

- Outside of the classroom, all district vehicles have a wireless fuel system that records mileage and fuel consumption, eliminating the need to keep written logs

Collier

- Automated interim reports
- Elementary electronic gradebook provides defaults for interim reports and report cards

- Online end-of-course tests available for most 6-12 courses
- Electronic third grade portfolio
- Reduction in the number of ELL forms, all available online
- Shared drive to post lesson plans
- Online professional development evaluations

Escambia

- Benchmark assessments scanned and tracked by standard
- Piloting statewide IEP
- One district staff member designated to create and maintain district forms
- Consolidated online calendar of events

Gulf

- One teacher hired to do all ESE reporting for the entire district

Indian River

- Many forms consolidated or eliminated
- Some parent forms required if opting out of activity only

Liberty

- Online attendance and grade reporting system
- District-wide calendar
- Tool for online progress monitoring of reading, math, science, and writing
- Online professional development system
- Online substitute teacher training
- Online maintenance and technology requests
- District-wide message delivery system

University of Florida Lab School

- Online syllabi, unit plans, Web logs, and curriculum maps
- Online lunch fee payment
- Electronic weekly newsletter for parents
- Online transportation requests

Volusia

- Each secondary school has the option to utilize one teaching unit as an IEP facilitator to handle the majority of the paperwork for all of the ESE teachers
- Interactive modules for personnel training

State Progress on Reducing Paperwork and Data Collection Requirements

The DOE is implementing the recommendations of the Paperwork Reduction Task Force.

Initiatives that are already in motion include:

- Deployment of a statewide electronic IEP through the “Sunshine Connections” state portal
- Online IDEA entitlement applications (prepare, submit, and process online)
- Elimination or consolidation of redundant student plans like the AIP
- Elimination of district-prepared Assistance Plus reports for each State Board of Education meeting
- Online bid process for Instructional Materials vendors
- Web-based nomination process for State Instructional Materials Committee members
- A fully online K-12 reading plan (no more electronic files to submit)
- Automatic reporting to the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network that will save countless hours administering and reporting progress monitoring data
- Online process for No Child Left Behind Entitlement Grant work paper completion, monitoring, and report generation.

In addition, House Bill 511 passed in 2007, exempts academically high-performing districts from completing certain reporting requirements.

Plan for Distribution of Report Findings

As required by statute, this report will be submitted to the Governor, President of the Florida Senate, and Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives. In addition, this report will be provided to:

- District Paperwork Reduction Liaisons
- District School Superintendents
- School Principals
- Classroom Teachers
- Education Association Leaders

This report will also be posted on the Paperwork Reduction Web site, along with the individual district reports and contact information for district liaisons (www.fldoe.org/PaperReduction).

Contact Information

More information on the efforts of the State Board of Education and Department of Education regarding this issue can be obtained by visiting the Paperwork Reduction Web site at www.fldoe.org/PaperReduction or by contacting the Division of Public Schools at (850) 245-0509.