

Florida Association of District School Superintendents

Comments

State Board of Education

March 27, 2018

Hendry County - LaBelle High School

LaBelle, Florida

Introduction

Paul Puletti, Superintendent
Hendry County Public Schools

Dr. Kamela Patton, Superintendent
Collier County Public Schools

Accomplishments/Achievements

Hendry County Public Schools

Collier County Public Schools

Challenges

Implementation of SB 7026 – Student and School Safety

The bill places multiple demands upon the State Board of Education, Department of Education and school districts to ensure that our students, faculty and staff are safe in schools without interrupting teaching and learning. Full implementation of this legislation will require us to all work together to increase safety measures and secure mental health services for our students.

We appreciate the legislative appropriations, but many districts will have difficulty meeting the requirement to establish or assign one more more safe-school officers at each school facility. The additional Safe Schools appropriation is for additional school resource officers. If these funds are not sufficient, coupled with the underlying Safe Schools Allocation, superintendents are in the difficult position of having to consider participation in the Guardian Program when the school personnel and the community may be opposed to the program. In addition, the funds for the Guardian Program may not be spent due to superintendents and school boards not using the program. Superintendents request that you support

and recommend that these unspent dollars be used in districts for additional school resource officers or other school safety measures.

The bill also requires drills for active shooter and hostage situations. Superintendents support these drills but they must be accomplished with minimal disruption to teaching and learning and in a manner that does not unnecessarily frighten students, particularly elementary students.

Superintendents and their staffs want to collaborate with other major initiatives in the bill relating to school safety including:

- The establishment of the Safe Schools Office and the attendant duties of this office.
- The establishment of the school security risk assessment tool and/or the Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool.
- The development of the School Safety Specialist Training Program.
- The centralized integrated data repository and data analytics resource to improve communication and integration of data.
- Implementation of the Guardian Program.
- The development of the grant guidelines for the implementation of the appropriation for hardening schools.

Implementation of SB 7026 – Mental Health Services

The need of mental health services for students has been one of the top issues for superintendents over the past three years. Maximizing the funds appropriated through this act and other community resources to serve students and families must be a priority. The needs and corresponding resources vary significantly among school districts. However, no district is without need for additional resources and mental health professionals. We must work together to ensure that:

- The plans submitted by districts to implement the Mental Health Allocation maximize the assessment and treatment of students with mental health diagnoses and students at high risk of such diagnoses and the coordination of services with the student's primary care provider and other mental health providers.
- The multiagency network for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities is a true collaborative effort that provides children and their families with access to the needed services and supports.
- The required youth mental health awareness and assistance training program is implemented in a meaningful way to school district personnel.

Funding

The budget initially proposed by Governor Scott included an increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) of \$152 per student, which superintendents fully

supported. The State Board of Education also recognized the need for an increase by recommending an increase of \$ 136.77.

The budget passed by the Legislature reflects only a 47 cents (.01 percent) increase to the Base Student Allocation. School districts face growing challenges in meeting the day-to-day operations of schools. The BSA is the amount of money the state provides per student and is the main source of funding used to pay for operational costs in school districts.

The overall increase in the education budget is used to pay for the additional 27,000 new students entering public schools next year. The BSA also is used to pay for the inflationary costs for operating schools such as the state-required increase in retirement contributions (FRS) and increased costs in utilities, property insurance, and fuel for buses and health care for our employees.

With only a 47-cent increase in the BSA, Superintendents will be forced to cut their budgets – cuts that will impact students, schools and communities that are served.

Conclusion

As school leaders, we touch the future by educating Florida's future leaders and citizens. We must work together to improve the overall funding of public education to support a world-class system that prepares our students for tomorrow.