

Florida Association of District School Superintendents

State Board of Education

November 18, 2020

Tallahassee Community College

Student Union Ballroom

444 Appleyard Drive

Tallahassee, FL 32304

Comments

Welcome/Introductions

**Mr. Robert Pearce, Superintendent
Wakulla County School District**

Wakulla County Public Schools

Provide general comments about the district and district response to COVID-19.

General FADSS Comments

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to take center stage in the 2020-2021 school year. As such, school districts need the continued stability provided by Emergency Order 2020-06.

- While student enrollment in many districts was initially down significantly, enrollments have begun to increase with students returning to a brick and mortar setting. FADSS requests that any funding adjustment for the 2020-2021 school year not detrimentally impact districts that have lost significant numbers of students due to the uncertainty caused by COVID-19. Even with lower enrollments, districts have planned for responsible COVID-19 protocols and the return of students to brick and mortar schools throughout the school year. As students continue to re-enroll or transfer back to brick and mortar schools, the personnel and programs necessary to serve those students must be in place to accommodate their return both in the second semester and in the 2021-2022 school year.
- Along with funding stability, we recommend continued recognition of remote and innovative learning options for students. We agree with Commissioner Corcoran and the Governor that face-to-face instruction is the best way to deliver instruction. However, there are some parents and students who do not want to return to school while we continue to deal with the challenges of COVID-19. Continuing the innovative learning model for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year with full funding will allow districts to provide direct instruction for all students, including our most vulnerable, in these trying times.

We believe in the continued investment in teachers and teaching by continuing the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation.

- We must recognize the hard work and results achieved by Florida's teachers.
- We must also attract new professionals into teaching and high-quality educators from other states into Florida.

The need for intensive, daily, mental health services for students is critical should be funded to help students and families deal with the increased stresses of daily life.

- The mental health needs of both students and staff have increased significantly during the pandemic.
- A student's problems do not stop at the schoolhouse door.
- Telehealth should be increased to assist in filling the gap for those schools who do not have a mental health professional on the school site.

We must continue our efforts to keep students safe from harm in the school. While the current focus generally falls to COVID-19, school safety and security is still of paramount importance. Funding for the training of Guardians must be provided to ensure we have sufficient training and continued education programs for school guardians.

We should take this opportunity to examine the accountability and school grading system to ensure the alignment of the standards with instruction, instructional materials, and assessments.

- Florida adopted the New B.E.S.T. Standards in January 2020, right before the nation and state were engulfed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- State assessments were subsequently cancelled in 2020.
- This presents an opportunity to examine the existing accountability and grading system to ensure that both student achievement and school district performance are accurately measured and reflected.