

**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Update**

October 20, 2021

SUBJECT: K-12 Public Schools

PROPOSED BOARD ACTION

N/A

AUTHORITY FOR STATE BOARD ACTION

N/A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An update will be provided by Dr. Debra Pace, Superintendent, Osceola County on behalf of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) on items relating to K-12 education initiatives.

General Comments

Leaders and educators across our state continue to remain focused on getting our students back on track following the disruptive force of the pandemic over the past 18 months. We have just completed the fall FTE survey and are already nearing the end of the first nine-week grading period. Baseline progress monitoring results are being analyzed and intervention programs are being implemented to address student learning needs, in many cases exacerbated by COVID, quarantines, and other pandemic-related challenges.

One of the most significant challenges facing districts across the state are staff shortages, from teachers and bus drivers to custodians and food service personnel. In addition, the horrific surge of the Delta variant took large numbers of students and staff out of their schools during the first few weeks of the school year, but the steady decline in cases in the past few weeks and recent changes to student quarantine guidelines are helping to stabilize our learning environments. Despite all of this, we are proud to see that so many schools that were struggling prior to COVID-19 still managed to overcome all the obstacles to bring their school grades up in 2020-2021 – in some cases all the way to an A.

Osceola County School District

I am proud that in our school district, we have remained focused on our strategic plan and are using lessons learned from the pandemic experience to examine how we can do a better job of personalizing and customizing education to meet the needs of every one of our students and families while better using digital tools and technology to impact student achievement. We have seen an increase in enrollment from 67,574 students at the close of Survey 2 for the 2020-2021 school year to a current enrollment of 76,862, an increase of 9,288 students over the course of a year. Our Student Services Department has done a tremendous job with personal outreach to find students that the district was unable to locate during the first semester of last year, and this year, we have an increased focus on improving student attendance, as students and families seemed to get out of the habit of getting up and making sure students were in school every day.

In addition, we continue to have a strong partnership with Valencia College and have seen a steady increase in the number of students participating in Dual Enrollment each semester and completing their AA degree while earning their high school diploma, from 42 in 2018 to 132 in 2021. Furthermore, we had 178 high school students graduate as program completers in 2021 from Osceola Technical College through a dual enrollment vocational pathway, and students earned 2,429 industry certifications in Career and Technical programs at their high schools. We continue to partner with local businesses to grow career pipeline experiences in medicine and construction, and we partnered with Osceola County Board of Commissioners and the Urban League to leverage CARES Act dollars for rapid credentialing “upskill” programs for adults in our community who found themselves without jobs.

Finally, my colleagues and I know that creating a positive, safe school climate will help our districts, schools, and teachers meet key goals, including boosting student achievement and closing achievement gaps; increasing high school graduation rates; decreasing teacher turnover and increasing teacher satisfaction; and turning around low-performing schools. We remain committed to keeping a laser focus on what is best for our students, and educators across this state are dedicated to doing whatever it takes to ensure our students thrive.

Supporting Documentation Included: N/A

Facilitator/Presenter: Dr. Debra Pace, Superintendent, Osceola County