

**MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING**

July 16, 2025
Rosen shingle Creek
9939 Universal Blvd.
Wekiwa 7/8
Orlando, FL 32819

Chair Ben Gibson called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and welcomed members and guests to the State Board of Education meeting. The following members were present: Vice Chair Petty, Esther Byrd, and Daniel Foganholi. Kelly Garcia and MaryLynn Magar attended by phone. Chair Gibson recognized Kelvin Cochran, Senior Fellow and Vice President for the Alliance Defending Freedom, to deliver the invocation, and asked everyone to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Chair Gibson recognized Anastasios Kamoutsas, Commissioner of the Department of Education, to present his report. Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that Monday, July 14, 2025, was his first day as Commissioner of Education and expressed his gratitude for Commissioner Diaz's leadership, mentorship, and friendship. He also shared he is committed to enhancing student achievement, expanding workforce education, and ensuring school safety.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that three memos were sent out to Florida parents, teachers, and superintendents. The memos outline the rights and responsibilities for each of them. Resources for parents on addressing infringing rights; teachers' ability to make disciplinary decisions in the classrooms, and superintendents were warned about violating rights.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that he aims to ensure school districts are effective and respect everyone's rights, and seeks cooperation in expanding My Florida Schools Portal, a tool for parents to find educational options.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that Florida's progress-monitoring program has seen a significant increase in student performance, with 50,000 students on grade level since its inception. This has benefited hundreds of thousands of students, including those with disabilities, Hispanic, African American, and economically disadvantaged families. The program prioritizes education and interventions for all students.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that Florida's innovative policies have led to 28 districts achieving A and 31 districts achieving B grades, focusing on student success and reducing indoctrination.

Commissioner Kamoutsas recognized Principal of the Year, Josep Mikulski of Golden Gate High School in Collier County; Florida Assistant Principal of the Year, Bryan Alvare of Yulee Middle School in Nassau County; and School Related Employee of the year, Kelsie Rodriguez of Summers Elementary in Columbia County.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the Commissioner's Report. Ms. Byrd made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi. The motion passed unanimously.

Updates

K-12 Public Schools – Superintendent Vasquez, on behalf of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS)

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Maria Vasquez, Superintendent of Orange County Public School District, to provide the FADSS update. Superintendent Vasquez shared Public school districts adapt to changing economies and society by investing in career and technical education, training teachers, and focusing on professional development. Orange County Public Schools prioritize safety, with over 56,000 students participating in 60 CTE programs.

College System President Lorenz on behalf of the Council of Presidents (COP)

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Georgia Lorenz, President of Seminole State College, to provide an update from the COP. President Lorenz shared the importance of postsecondary education in attracting new businesses and expanding existing ones. Florida's state colleges contribute to regional economies and have received national rankings. Florida has been ranked number one in higher education and skilled workforce, and has surged to the number three best state for business in 2025. She also highlighted Workforce Capitalization Grants for various colleges, including St. Petersburg College, Miami-Dade, Santa Fe College, and the College of Central Florida. These grants have significantly impacted state colleges, fueling innovation, partnerships, and tangible outcomes for students, families, and regional economies. The recent enrollment data shows a 7.2 percent increase in full-time student enrollment.

Florida Education Foundation Update on Initiatives

Chair Gibson recognized Lindsey Zander, Executive Director of the Florida Education Foundation (FEF), to provide an update on the Education Foundation's initiatives. Ms. Zander shared that the aim is to ensure every student has access to top-quality education and opportunities for post-secondary education and career advancement. The foundation is led by a private sector board appointed by the Commissioner of Education, and has achieved operational efficiencies, programmatic improvements, and financial management. FEF is implementing its strategic plan, increasing capacities, streamlining efficiencies, and strengthening fundraising. The foundation has had a successful year, supporting various programs, including the Sunshine State Scholars Program, Summer Literacy Institute, and Teacher of the Year.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-1.0018, School Safety Requirements and Monitoring

Chair Gibson recognized Darren Norris Vice Chancellor of Safe Schools, for an overview of the next three items. Chancellor Norris shared that the proposed rule changes school safety protocols, emergency drill frequency to nine weeks, clarifies Safe School officer misconduct, and requires substitute teachers. Commissioner Kamoutsas withdrew rule 6A-1.0018 for further review.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-1.0019, Threat Management

Chancellor Norris shared that the proposed amendment requires a second District Threat Management Coordinator, addressing increased workload and staff turnover. It also

provides an August 1 deadline for notification to the Office of Safe Schools, updates team requirements, and requires the use of the Florida School Safety and Threat Management Portal.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to rule 6A-1.0019. Vice Chair Petty made a motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-1.0955, Education Records

Chancellor Norris shared that the proposal requires all threat management records to be included in the portal, which is an education record.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to rule 6A-1.0955. Ms. Byrd made a motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-1.09422, Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring System and Statewide, Standardized Assessment Program Requirements

Chair Gibson recognized Juan Copa, Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement, for an overview of the amendment to rule 6A-1.09422. Deputy Commissioner Copa shared that Florida's statewide progress-monitoring system improved student performance in English Language Arts and Mathematics, achieving 57 percent and 58 percent on grade level and above, respectively. Florida's graduation rate reached 89.7 percent thanks to the high expectations of this board and the hard work of Florida's students, teachers, and parents.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to rule 6A-1.09422, Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring System and Statewide, Standardized Assessment Program Requirements. Mr. Foganholi made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Articulation Coordinating Committee Policies: "Evaluation and Awarding of Postsecondary Credit for Prior Military Training, Courses and Occupations," and "Evaluation and Awarding of Postsecondary Credit for Military Medical Training and Experience"

Chair Gibson recognized Kathy Hebda, Chancellor, Florida College System for an overview of Amendment to Articulation Coordinating Committee Policies: "Evaluation and Awarding of Postsecondary Credit for Prior Military Training, Courses and Occupations," and "Evaluation and Awarding of Postsecondary Credit for Military Medical Training and Experience". Chancellor Hebda shared that the state of Florida is now the most military-friendly in the nation, with over 42,000 veterans and family members in college and 13 Purple Star Campuses. The proposed process would allow faster collaboration with experts to identify new military courses and use technology processes efficiently.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to Articulation Coordinating Committee Policies. Mr. Foganholi made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the 2025-26 Dual Enrollment Course-High School Subject Area Equivalency Lists

Chair Gibson recognized Chancellor Hebda for an overview of the 2025-26 Dual Enrollment Course-High School Subject Area Equivalency Lists. Chancellor Hebda shared that the Florida College System has updated the dual-enrollment high school equivalent list, which provides information on college credit courses' relevance to high school graduation requirements. In Florida, over 90,000 students participated in dual-enrollment in '23-'24, saving families over 89 million in tuition and fees.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the 2025-26 Dual Enrollment Course-High School Subject Area Equivalency Lists. Ms. Byrd made the motion with a second by Vice Chair Petty. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSENT ITEMS

Chair Gibson recognized Jane Newman, Stefano Farrell, Pam Croom, Sarah Hellier in opposition of the amendment to rule 6A-4.0021.

Chair Gibson recognized Juan Copa Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement for an overview of Consent Item 13. Deputy Commissioner Copa shared that the amendment updates the competency and skills for two subject areas, Media Specialist and Health Education K-12, and removes outdated language related to the fee schedule. The process involves collaboration with panels of experts and is a multi-month process. The changes emphasize adherence to rules, laws, regulations, and stronger connections between media specialists and student success.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve consent items 10-19. Mr. Foganholi made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Gibson recognized David Chappell, General Counsel, to provide a legal update. Mr. Chappell shared that the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in the Wood case, where Katie Wood, a transgender woman, was allowed to identify with her pronouns when she was a biological male. The court argued that the government's hiring of a teacher does not violate First Amendment rights, as the teacher's speech is part of their pay. The 11th Circuit struck down the preliminary injunction and sent the case back down to the trial court.

Chair Gibson shared this is his last meeting as Chair and has served on the board since 2017. He thanked the members for their trust and faith. He expressed gratitude for the incredible staff at DOE, the commissioners, and the leadership of the legislature and Governor DeSantis. He highlighted Florida's leadership in education, including keeping schools open during COVID, instituting accountability, and removing dangerous ideologies. He finished by sharing that he is most proud of the efforts to protect children and empower parents.

Chair Gibson requested nominations for the Chair of the Board. Ms. Byrd nominated Vice Chair Ryan Petty for Chair with a second by Mr. Foganholi. Nomination passed unanimously.

Chair Petty nominated Esther Byrd for Vice Chair with a second by Mr. Foganholi. Nomination passed unanimously.

Member Comments

Vice Chair Byrd expressed her gratitude for progress monitoring and the impact it has on Florida's education system. Highlighting the work behind the scenes, such as assessments, which have led to improved districts, better kids, better parents, and better teachers. Mr. Foganholi emphasized the importance of mentors, coaches, and people in education, including teachers and administrators, in providing support and opportunities for students, as they have experienced firsthand the transformative impact of mentorship and coaching on their lives, and expressed his gratitude for Ben Gibson's grace and service on the board. Ms. Garcia expressed gratitude to everyone for a smooth meeting, and her appreciation for the leadership of Chair Gibson, and looks forward to serving under Chair Petty. Chair Petty expressed his gratitude to Mr. Gibson for his exemplary service as a member, Vice Chair, and Chair, as well as for his hard work and friendship.

Chair Petty announced that the next meeting would be on August 20, 2025, in St. Augustine.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, Chair Petty adjourned the meeting of the State Board of Education at 11:15 a.m.

Chris Emerson, Corporate Secretary

Ryan Petty, Chair