

**MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING**

May 14, 2026
Miami Dade College
Wolfson Campus
254 N.E. 4th St., Building 3,
Chapman Conference Room 3210
Miami, FL 33132

Chair Ryan Petty 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: Dr. Grazie Christie, Layla Collins, Daniel Foganholi, and Erika Fritz-Ochs. Vice Chair Magar and Luis Fuste attended by phone. Chair Petty recognized Commissioner Kamoutsas to deliver the invocation and asked everyone to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Welcome

Chair Petty recognized Madeline Pumariega, President of Miami Dade College, to welcome the board. President Pumariega congratulated the commissioner on his appointment as the sole finalist for the presidency of Polk State College. President Pumariega shared that 15,000 graduates were celebrated at Miami Dade College, which leads Florida's college system with 2,000 industry certifications. She shared that this year, Miami Dade College will graduate 1,000 registered nurses to address community healthcare needs. The college has also initiated a second cohort of registered teacher apprentices, in collaboration with Superintendent Dotres, to combat teacher shortages, with an emphasis on mentorship, and 21 out of 28 colleges plan to submit proposals to the U.S. Department of Labor to improve industry certifications and literacy in essential future skills.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Chair Petty recognized Anastasios Kamoutsas, Commissioner of the Department of Education, to present his report. Commissioner Kamoutsas shared his recent visit to Miami Dade College for a commencement ceremony and emphasized the significance of this milestone in students' lives and the efforts of their families. He expressed his gratitude to President Pumariega for her commitment to education.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that he is honored to be recommended as the sole finalist for the presidency of Polk State College by the Presidential Search Committee. He expressed deep gratitude for the confidence and his passion for serving Florida's students. His commitment to the college system institutions will continue, and he looks forward to collaborating with the Board of Trustees and faculty to transform lives and equip students for successful careers. He expressed appreciation for the support of the State Board of Education and affirmed that the focus remains on prioritizing students in every decision.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that, in celebration of National Charter Schools Week, the Student Achievement Florida's Charter Schools report reveals significant learning gains and growth in charter school enrollment, showing that charter school students are outperforming peers in traditional public schools. He also shared the positive impact of Florida's school choice options on student outcomes.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that the unions are not the only entities opposing Florida school choice programs; Superintendent Brennan Asplen of St. Johns County School District has reportedly urged staff to submit complaints about the scholarship program to legislators and encourage the removal of certain public officials. Instead of addressing legitimate concerns, Superintendent Asplen perpetuates inaccuracies and false claims regarding Florida's scholarship programs and school choice options.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that Senate Bill 1296 has sparked considerable backlash from parents, teachers, and lawmakers, highlighting the need for greater accountability and transparency in unions, which are seen as prioritizing their influence over student success. The bill is designed to better address the needs of teachers and students, in contrast to unions' use of lawsuits for recruitment purposes. Governor DeSantis has pledged nearly \$6 billion to raise teacher salaries, but unions are accused of manipulating these funds during negotiations. This year's approval of salary increase plans by all school districts marks progress compared to four years ago. This legislation aims to further streamline this process, encouraging teachers to negotiate directly with employers to improve representation and accountability.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week, I want to celebrate the remarkable work of our teachers and shared the five finalists for Teacher of the Year across the state: Laurel Blackburn (Lee County, math coach), Sarah Twardy (Nassau County, U.S. history teacher), Kyndall Brown (Osceola County, agriculture teacher), Bree O'Donnell (Walton County, 4th grade math and science teacher), and Nicole Leon (True North Classical Academy, 6th grade literature teacher, recommended by the Florida Charter School Alliance).

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that the School District of Union County and the School District of Glades County are in financial emergency. In April, Vickie DePratter, Randy Beach, and Kathy Sneads were appointed to the Financial Emergency Board. This board has conducted three public meetings: the first on April 23rd for budget presentations; the second on April 29th to discuss staffing and insurance costs; and the third on May 8th to address additional staffing decisions and immediate needs for both districts.

Commissioner Kamoutsas recognized Felipe Salles Varallo as an outstanding student of the Florida College System. Mr. Varallo, an industrial engineering major at Miami Dade College with a 3.72 GPA and a Florida Bright Futures Academic Scholar, focuses on sustainability and public health research in biofuels and water quality. He won first place in the 2026 Mu Alpha Theta state math competition and has over 750 hours of tutoring as an Honors College Ambassador and peer mentor.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the commissioner's report. Ms. Collins made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 2, 2026, meeting. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi. The motion passed unanimously.

Updates

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

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Georgia Lorenz, President of Seminole State College to provide an update on behalf of the COP. President Lorenz congratulated Commissioner Kamoutsas

for his recommendation as Polk's 6th president. She shared that each graduate represents a journey supported by faculty, staff, and families, highlighting the impact of the Florida College System on real lives. In May, we celebrate students and families, while April acknowledged the Florida College System Month, highlighting the impact of our 28 state colleges. Florida state colleges are committed to maintaining safe campuses and developing a qualified workforce, contributing \$56 billion to the economy.

K-12 Public Schools – Superintendent Dotres on behalf of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Jose Dotres, Superintendent of Miami-Dade School District, to provide an update on behalf of FADSS. Superintendent Dotres shared key aspects of the district, emphasizing its strong academic performance, with 20 out of 21 tested indicators in Florida exceeding state averages, and highlighted seamless transitions from high school to college, the enhancement of early childhood programs, and the alignment of educational goals with the Florida 2030 Chamber Foundation and Miami Talent Goal 2040, fostering a connection between education and industry. The district is focused on providing a comprehensive educational experience that emphasizes a high school diploma plus additional qualifications. A new strategic plan, approved by the board, aims to engage the community and cater to about 300,000 students and 30,000 employees. The district, now the third largest in the U.S. with a 95.1 percent graduation rate, has a record of academic excellence as an A-rated district.

Update on School District Instructional and Administrative Staffing Data

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Paul Burns, Senior Chancellor, for an update on School District Instructional and Administrative Staffing Data. Sr. Chancellor Burns shared that at the last State Board meeting, staffing graphs for Glades and Union Counties were presented, comparing staffing trends to student enrollment. Following this, an analysis was conducted for the other 65 school districts, creating similar graphs. He summarized the findings by grouping the data into three main trends relating staffing numbers to enrollment across the state, focusing on trends in instructional and administrative staffing, highlighting fluctuations at both the school and district levels. The first section will address districts that are reducing administrative staffing due to decreased student enrollment, as noted by Superintendent Dotres. Dixie County's student enrollment dropped by 13.8 percent, from 2,100 to 1,800, prompting a 7.1 percent reduction in administrative staff. Hardee County saw a 12 percent decline in enrollment and a 17 percent cut in administrative costs. Putnam County experienced a 6 percent decrease in students alongside an 18 percent reduction in staff, reflecting a trend across several districts, including Baker and Okeechobee. In contrast, some districts, like Alachua County, increased administrative staff despite declining enrollment, with Alachua's student count dropping by 5 while staffing rose by 11 percent. Leon County lost about 2,400 students but hired 23 percent more administrators. Orange County experienced a slight 1.2 percent decrease in enrollment and a 16 percent increase in staff, while Pinellas County saw a 12 percent decline in both Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) and student enrollment. He shared a notable trend where a decrease in FTE staff accompanies an increase in administrative personnel.

Action Items

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

Chair Petty recognized Senior Chancellor Burns for an overview of the amendment to Rule 6A-1.0018, School Safety Requirements and Monitoring. Sr. Chancellor Burns shared that the rule, first adopted in 2021, establishes requirements for school safety reporting and training, along with procedures for compliance monitoring. Proposed amendments reflect feedback from staff and stakeholders over the past year, highlighting the Office of Safe Schools' ongoing commitment to collaboration and rule improvement. Changes provide guidance for school districts on safety compliance, outlining requirements for the Office of Safe Schools (OSS) to monitor various safety measures. Key requirements include the presence of a safe school officer, locked classroom doors, and mobile alert systems. The amendment seeks to codify OSS's responsibility for monitoring additional safety items related to the School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) and threat management rules.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the Amendment to Rule 6A-1.0018, School Safety Requirements and Monitoring. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi. The motion passed unanimously.

Consideration of External Operator Contract for Gulf Middle School in Pasco County

Sr Chancellor Burns shared that according to state statute and State Board of Education rules, school districts must submit a two-year turnaround option plan (TOP) if a school earns two consecutive D grades or a single F. Gulf Middle School earned its second consecutive D at the end of the '23-'24 school year, leading Pasco County Public Schools to submit a district-managed TOP in October 2024, which was approved. Despite this, Gulf Middle School received another D grade at the end of the '24-'25 school year and is currently in its second year of district-managed turnaround. Pasco County's request for an external operator as part of their turnaround option was approved by the State Board, contingent on the school achieving a grade of C or higher by July 2026. The chosen operator, MGT Solutions, has a proven track record in Florida for improving underperforming schools. The district's contract with MGT has been reviewed to ensure compliance with State Board rules and performance standards. In collaboration with the school district, Dr. Legg, Superintendent of Pasco County, played a key role in revising a contract to include performance indicators and growth metrics, ensuring the school meets a minimum grade of C. Notably, if Gulf Middle School achieves this grade by the end of the school year, the district will opt not to proceed with the contract.

Chair Petty recognized Superintendent Legg, who shared that in November 2024, upon taking over, concerns about Gulf Middle School's performance were evident, as reflected in its D grade status for three consecutive years. Compliments were given to the board and the State Legislature for providing effective progress-monitoring tools that enabled real-time score tracking. This led to decisive actions between May 15th and June 1st, resulting in the complete reconstitution of the school. Additionally, a partnership with MGT was initiated last year to begin immediate improvement efforts, as students could not afford further delays in their education. In a preliminary report on English Language Arts (ELA) scores, a notable 20 percent increase in proficiency and over 25 percent in learning gains were observed. Gains for the lowest 25 percent of students reached 65 percent, with a target of 70 percent. The district is committed to academic rigor, discipline, and performance, emphasizing the importance of immediate action and support.

Chair Petty recognized Commissioner Kamoutsas for a recommendation for Gulf Middle School. Commissioner Kamoutsas recommended moving forward on the contract with external operator.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve Commissioner Kamoutsas' recommendation for the External Operator Contract for Gulf Middle School in Pasco County. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-1.09514, Excused Absences for Religious Instruction or Holiday

Sr. Chancellor Burns provided an overview of the amendment to Rule 6A-1.09514, Excused Absences for Religious Instruction or Holiday. Sr. Chancellor Burns shared that Florida is committed to upholding constitutional protections for voluntary prayer and religious expression in schools. A recent proposal requires school districts to adopt policies that allow parents to request excused absences for religious instruction or holidays. The policies will ensure collaboration with parents to manage students' schedules and establish procedures for making up missed assignments. This amendment reinforces Florida's dedication to constitutionally protected prayer and parental rights.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the Amendment to Rule 6A-1.09514, Excused Absences for Religious Instruction or Holiday. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi.

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Amy Perwien in opposition.

Chair Petty recognized Kathleen Murry in support.

The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-6.0960, Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program

Chair Petty recognized Adam Emerson, Executive Director, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, to provide an overview of Amendment to Rule 6A-6.0960, Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. Mr. Emerson outlined the amendment to the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship rules, specifically addressing the funding procedures for Scholarship Funding Organizations (SFOs) that manage both the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship and the Family Empowerment Scholarship. It mentions three existing SFOs—Step Up for Students, the AAA Scholarship Foundation, and Sunshine State Kids—and indicates plans to approve a fourth. Due to the rise in SFOs, new protocols are needed to manage the carryforward of funds. State law permits SFOs to carry forward 25 percent of tax-credited donations to the subsequent fiscal year, while excess funds must support scholarships or be reallocated to other SFOs. He shared the outlines of the criteria for a Student Funding Organization SFO to receive a transfer of funds, specifying that the organization must have operated for three fiscal years and have clean audits. If multiple SFOs meet these criteria, priority will be given to those unable to carry forward 25 percent of their tax-credited donations. In the event of a tie, the commissioner will review and approve any fund transfer plans and establish additional protocols for future SFOs in accordance with Florida statute.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the Amendment to Rule 6A-6.0960. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of AltaVia Foundation as a Scholarship Funding Organization for 2027-28

Mr. Emerson provided an overview of AltaVia Foundation as a Scholarship Funding Organization for 2027-28. Mr. Emerson shared that approval is being sought from the State

Board for a new SFO, the AltaVia Foundation, with representatives from the organization present.

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Judith Marty, President of Doral College. President Marty shared that AltaVia is a Florida funding organization dedicated to providing educational opportunities for families. The mission emphasizes the importance of educational flexibility to meet individual student needs. AltaVia not only offers scholarship support but also assists parents in finding suitable educational environments for their children. The organization's vision is for every Florida family to have meaningful educational choices that align with their children's potential. With decades of experience, AltaVia aims to help students access opportunities for success, reflecting Florida's leadership in educational innovation and school choice.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the AltaVia Foundation, Inc. as a scholarship funding organization for 2027-28. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of New Bachelor Degree Program in the Florida College System, North Florida College Baccalaureate – Elementary Education

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Jennifer Hubles Page, President of North Florida College, to provide an overview of the proposed degree program in Elementary Education. President Page shared that the urgent need for teachers in six rural counties is evident, as supported by strong endorsements from local school district leaders. Many classrooms are staffed by non-certified teachers due to a teacher shortage, which the districts label a workforce crisis. Furthermore, aspiring students express a desire to become teachers, valuing the opportunity to earn a local bachelor's degree in education—critical for retaining them in their communities and allowing them to pursue their career aspirations. She shared that the advisory committee formed for this proposal was comprised of elementary teachers, school leaders, and administrators from all six service area districts, including charter schools. Their contributions ensured that the degree meets state standards while addressing the needs of rural North Florida classrooms. This proposal aligns with our mission to offer accessible, community-driven education that empowers students and strengthens rural communities.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education for North Florida College. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi.

Chair Petty recognized Luna Plaza, Idalia Quinteros, Kelile Lewis, and Yarliz Mendez-Zamora in support.

The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-6.0571, Career and Technical Education and Adult General Education Standards and Industry-Driven Benchmarks

Chair Petty modified the agenda, moving consent Item #12 Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-6.0571, Career and Technical Education and Adult General Education Standards and Industry-Driven Benchmarks to action.

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Ashley Meros Chancellor of Career and Adult Education to provide an overview of the Amendment to Rule 6A-6.0571, Career and Technical Education and Adult General Education Standards and Industry-Driven Benchmarks. Chancellor Meros

shared that Rule 6A-6.0571 defines Florida's curriculum frameworks for career and technical education (CTE) and adult education programs, detailing program standards and student competencies across 17 career clusters. The amendment introduces new and revised frameworks for the 2026-2027 academic year, ensuring alignment with workforce needs, technological advancements, and regulatory requirements while promoting high-quality instruction and student success, thereby reinforcing Florida's position as a leader in workforce development. Despite similar program lengths of 1,300 hours for medical assisting and 1,350 hours for practical nursing in Florida, their scopes of practice and labor market outcomes differ significantly, with practical nursing offering higher average pay at approximately \$28 per hour compared to \$19.90 for medical assisting. The proposed instructional design emphasizes adult learning approaches and acknowledges varied opinions on the sequencing of pharmacology courses. Core competencies related to patient safety and clinical skills remain mandatory, ensuring student competency prior to program completion while emphasizing collaboration with stakeholders to uphold the quality of medical assisting programs.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve Amendment to Rule 6A-6.0571, the Career and Technical Education Adult General Education Standards. Mr. Foganholi made the motion with a second by Ms. Collins.

Chair Petty recognized Carol Lee in opposition.

The motion passed unanimously.

Consent Items

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve consent items 11, 13-18. Mr. Foganholi made the motion with a second by Ms. Collins.

The motion passed unanimously.

Member Comments

Ms. Fritz-Ochs congratulated the commissioner on being the sole finalist for President of Polk State College, highlighting the positive impact of his leadership on Florida's education system. Additionally, commendation was given for the state's commitment of nearly \$6 billion to increasing teacher salaries, reflecting the importance of attracting and retaining quality educators for student success across Florida. Mr. Foganholi shared that it was a pleasure to be at Miami Dade College, and he congratulated the commissioner, Polk State College is gaining a great leader. Ms. Collins thanked Miami-Dade College for the beautiful venue and hospitality, and she emphasized the importance of not compromising teachers' pay for political purposes and the irresponsibility of involving students in protests, and expressed gratitude to the commissioner for his dedication to student welfare, his decision-making, and his passion for education. Dr. Christie shared warm feelings about Miami-Dade, where her mother pursued her education after facing barriers in Cuba. Her journey from being a mother of four to becoming a doctor highlights the power of the college system. Miami-Dade plays a crucial role in Florida's education system. Chair Petty thanked the board members for their commitment to educating the next generation with fidelity to guiding principles, and congratulated the commissioner, whose leadership in various roles, including general counsel and chief of staff, has been commendable.

Chair Petty announced that the next meeting would be on July 22, 2026, in Orlando, FL.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, Chair Petty adjourned the meeting of the State Board of Education at 12:20 p.m.