

Leaders

A Newsletter for Florida School Board Members

Governor wants to preserve 'direct classroom instruction'

With the Legislature facing a \$1.5 billion budget hole that it has to fill in a Special Session this month, Gov. Charlie Crist released his own budget proposals that essentially leaves education alone.

In a letter to Senate President Ken Pruitt and House Speaker Marco Rubio, Gov. Crist said his goal "has been to identify administrative reductions and operational efficiencies. . .to avoid reductions that impact direct services to Floridians." These cuts, he said, would "maintain essential state services to Florida's most vulnerable citizens. . .and preserve direct classroom instruction for our children."

The governor said he wants to protect K-12 education, the medically needy and prisons with cuts to higher education and juvenile justice, while tapping some trust fund reserves. He also is suggesting releasing more PECO (Public Education Capital Outlay) dollars for school construction which would stimulate Florida's sluggish economy.

"We want to preserve the funding in education to the classroom, we want to make sure the most vulnerable among us are protected while we reduce and tighten our belt," the governor said when announcing his proposed cuts.

The Legislature originally had set a September date for a special session on the budget, but cancelled it when it was obvious there was little agreement between the House and Senate over what to cut. A new session was scheduled for Oct. 3-12.

Governor Crist's comments ties in with some of his other public comments "that it was his intention to hold public school funding harmless to the greatest extent possible," said FSBA's Ruth Melton, legislative relations director. That has also been the theme of K-12 education since the Legislature ended the session with property tax cuts that, combined with the Jan. 29 constitutional amendment, could hurt public schools. "The governor has held true to his word with his budget cut proposals," she added.

While some of his proposals may fix the current deficit, the Legislature would face similar problems in the 2008 session. "He has called for a swap of \$120 million in FEFP

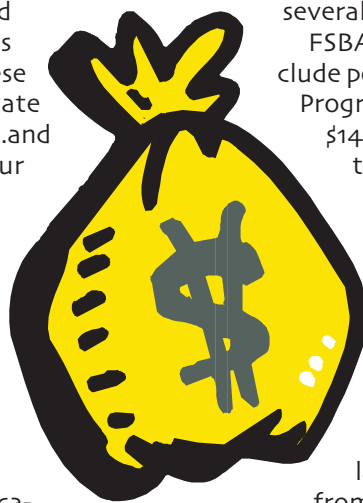
funding and replacing it with non recurring dollars," said Ms. Melton. "That's a short term fix because our constitution requires that the Legislature may not fund more than 3% of recurring money with non recurring money. Clearly, this is not a long term solution. We definitely are looking at the possibility of additional budget reductions and several years of a sluggish economy," she said.

FSBA has already issued its suggested cuts that include postponing implementation of the Merit Award Program (MAP), which replaces STAR and will cost \$147.5 million this fiscal year, granting school districts the flexibility to determine where and how to trim their budgets, and using some of the \$490 million in gubernatorial vetoes to plug some of the budget holes.

Another concern for school districts is the property tax reform amendment that's to come before voters next Jan. 29. Part 1 of the Legislature's property tax reform project which rolled back property taxes to 2006-07 levels, was passed during the regular session, but school districts were shielded from those direct cuts, even though they're seeing an indirect impact as cities and counties reduce support they give to schools such as providing crossing guards and school resource officers.

The next phase will be determined by voters. That constitutional amendment proposal would offer homesteaded property owners a choice: They could keep their current Save Our Homes protection that caps annual assessment

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Special Report
Escambia decision threatens school construction

Leadership Calling

Miami-Dade School Board member elected to CUBE

The National School Boards Association's (NSBA) Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) recently elected new members of its Steering Committee, including Ana Rivas Logan, Miami-Dade County School Board. The election came during NSBA's Annual Conference in San Francisco, Calif. earlier this year.

Ms. Logan has more than 20 years' experience in education, having served as computer and special education teacher, assistant principal, educational specialist, and adjunct professor.

"It is an honor and a privilege to serve and represent urban school board members from throughout this great and wonderful nation," said Ms. Logan.

CUBE annually issues an Award for Urban School Board Excellence. Miami-Dade was a runner up last year for the honor won by Norfolk Public Schools. Another Florida school district, Hillsborough County, was the 2005 winner.

"We also do research and development regarding urban issues that impact urban school districts," said Ms. Logan.



Ana Rivas Logan

Florida Learning Alliance meeting scheduled

An organizational meeting of the Florida Learning Alliance has been scheduled for Oct. 8 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Park Plaza Hotel, 415 North Monroe Street, Tallahassee.

The Florida Learning Alliance (FLA) is intended to foster more powerful and productive relationships among the business community, local governments, parents, and the education community.

"It is our hope that the FLA will serve to highlight and strengthen the links between a high quality public education system and strong economic development," commented Dr. Jack Lamb, Hillsborough County School Board and FSBA's FLA Committee chair.

Besides FSBA, leaders from the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, the Florida Association of School Administrators, the Florida Education Association, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Associated Industries of Florida, the Florida Association of Counties, the Florida League of Cities, the Florida Parent Teacher Association and Florida State University's College of Education have been invited to participate.

Upcoming Events

- Oct. 8** Florida Education Alliance, Tallahassee
- Oct. 12** Special Legislative Session (which began Oct. 3) scheduled to adjourn.
- Oct. 24** FSBA Committee Day, (1:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.)
Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay
- Oct. 25** FSBA Legislative Committee (9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.)
Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay
(Adoption of 2008 Legislative Program)
- Dec. 4-7** FSBA/FADSS/FSBAA/FEN/FERMA/FELL/SUNSPRA/FASA Annual Joint Conference, Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay



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FSBA announces technology awards program

To give school districts a chance "to showcase innovative technology programs around the state," FSBA has announced technology awards that will be presented in December and next June.

Use of technology has been a cornerstone of Lee County School Board member Jeanne Dozier's tenure since she was elected FSBA President earlier this year. At her installation speech, she challenged each school board member to share their technology ideas with others.

Called the FSBA Innovative Technology in Education Recognition Program, the awards will be presented during FSBA's conferences Dec. 4-7, 2007 and June 11-13, 2008.

Steven Donovan, who chairs Collier County School Board and FSBA's Technology Committee, said the awards program is "in keeping with our President's theme, 'Growing Together - Building Futures One Student At A Time By Using Power Tools In Our Schools.' This

program is designed to recognize school districts who display best practices for the innovative use of technology in all aspects of daily operations, such as curriculum and instruction, budget and finance, food service, etc. as well as to improve student achievement and safety and to increase overall efficiency."

An application form has already been sent to school board members. Completed applications must be submitted electronically and emailed, in MS Word format, to Ruth Melton at FSBA: Melton@FSBA.org. Deadline for the December award is Nov. 1 and for next June, May 1. Only one application per district per award cycle is allowed.

"The Selection Committee will choose three districts (small, medium and large, based on enrollment) to be recognized at a luncheon at the Joint Conference in December and three at

the Spring Conference in June," Mr. Donovan added.

Two criteria that the selection committee will review include:

1) How will the application of this innovative technology improve the operation of the district and what are the anticipated cost savings?

2) What data will you draw that will evidence improved district operations, student achievement, safety and cost-savings/

efficiency?

The application form includes complete information about the award. If you haven't yet received one, contact FSBA at (850) 414-2578.

"I encourage each of you to share this information with your district staff," added Mr. Donovan in a letter to school board members. "Please take advantage of this outstanding opportunity to showcase your school district."



Steven Donovan

In Memoriam Dr. Robert B. Ingram

Miami-Dade County School Board member, Dr. Robert B. Ingram, 71, died in early September.

"There is a sort of indomitable spirit that he embodied," said Dr. Rudy Crew, Miami-Dade superintendent. "This is an individual that had such a tremendous spirit, driven partly by his faith in God, and equally compelling was his faith and belief in children. He was a constant reminder about what was good and just."

"It's very sad. One of our own has passed away, one who has dedicated his life to education and to championing causes for children," commented Miami-Dade School Board member Ana Rivas Logan.

Known as "Dr. Bob" around the district, he was an innovator who made sure that opportunities were available to underprivileged students. For years he took students who had shown academic improvement on "Read to Lead" trips to Orlando and historic St. Augustine. He also forged a strong relationship between the Miami-Dade school district and a school in Kigalia, Rwanda, and enabled exchange opportunities for district teachers and students to visit there.



He was also well-known for his rousing graduation speeches at local high schools that inspired and entertained students.

In addition to his school board duties, Dr. Ingram served as a full professor and assistant to the president for urban affairs at Florida Memorial University.

He was the former mayor of Opa-locka and the former president of the National Conference of Black Mayors. He was a pastor at Mount Zion AME in Miami Gardens, chaired the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Program and served on the Value Adjustment Board.

He was the first African-American police officer to retire from the Miami Police Department and become chief of the Opa-locka Police Department and was the first African-American city manager in South Miami.

Dr. Ingram was first elected to the Miami-Dade County School Board in 1998.

He is survived by his wife Delores, two daughters, six granddaughters, one grandson and two great-grandsons.

From the President

By JEANNE DOZIER

Board members learn more about technology



Jeanne Dozier

Technology was one of the main focuses of the recent FSBA board of directors' retreat in Bonita Springs. Not only did the board approve a new FSBA technology award program but we had several presenters who showed us how to use some of the new enhancements to better serve our students.

As you know, technology is a key theme of my presidency this year.

I feel that by working together and sharing best practices, we can be successful in achieving this and other goals. Of course, we must strive to live up to these goals and continue to grow as school board members each and every day.

During the retreat, Bob and John Cerra of the Cerra Consulting Group shared ways on how we can bring technology to our advocacy efforts. They showed us how to develop our message, build our network and expand our technology tools.

We also were fortunate, prior to our dinner that evening to meet with Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp. How honored we were that he took time out of his busy schedule to visit with us.

Another key presentation, which mesmerized and energized us, was from Dr. Vonnie Bryan, principal of the very successful Franklin Park Magnet School in Fort Myers. She talked about "The Power of Expectations" and shared stories, strategies, exercises, and a myriad of other means to motivate and inspire us to be better board members. She truly is a one-woman show. She also took us on a virtual tour of her school. Besides being another example of technology in use, it was a great way to visit without getting out of our chairs.

In keeping with our theme this year, Lyn Stanfield, Cindy Seletos and Dr. Mark Benno of Apple, Inc., presented "Technology and Leadership: Preparing Our Students for Success in School, Success in Life." They included information on the policy issue of technology, why technology is important to the success of our students, how to measure success, and the FSBA Professional Development project.

During the regular Board of Directors' meeting, which followed the retreat, the Board voted to establish the technology award program I previously mentioned that's designed to recognize and share innovative uses of technology in school districts. The awards will be given at the December and June conferences. More information about the award program is included in this issue of Leaders.

We also voted to allow our executive director, Dr. Wayne Blanton, to acquire counsel to represent FSBA in the recent Florida Supreme Court ruling on COPS that affects us all. (See the Special Report insert in this issue of Leaders.)

I also shared information on the federal HR 3345 bill, Substitute Teaching Improvement Act, that was introduced in the House by Rep. Donald M. Payne of New Jersey. The main purpose of this bill is to authorize the Secretary of Education to establish a competitive demonstration grant program to provide funds for local educational agencies to increase the effectiveness of substitute teaching. The Bill has been referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. It was agreed that FSBA would prepare a letter in support of this proposed legislation.

With the retreat now behind us, we have begun to plan for the Annual Joint Conference in December. We will be returning to the Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay Dec. 4-7. Please be sure to mark your calendars because I hope to see you there. But, don't forget about Committee Day on Oct. 24 and Legislative Committee Day on Oct. 25. If you're serving on one of FSBA's committees, please plan to be at the Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay for those days.

Ms. Dozier, a member of the Lee County School Board, is FSBA's 2007-2008 President.

Direct instruction

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increases at 3%. Or they could accept a larger increase in the \$25,000 homestead exemption. Under the amendment, it would rise to 75% of the first \$200,000 of property value and 15% of the next \$300,000.

If this amendment passes, it could cost school districts \$1.8 billion in the next year.

"Among our concerns," said Ms. Melton, "is that in the next five years, we could lose more than \$7 billion in property tax income. The Legislature is saying they will hold us harmless, but there are no other sources of revenue to fulfill that pledge. Although we recognize there are profound problems and inequities in the property tax structure, the solution proposed by this amendment does not fully address those issues."

FSBA President Jeanne Dozier, Lee County School Board, agrees. "As we all know, a permanent funding source to take the place of property taxes has not been identified. Until such a source is established, we should be leery of what the end result would be."