

Leaders

A Newsletter for Florida School Board Members

New alliance aims to strengthen education, business links

An FSBA-sponsored organizational meeting of the Florida Learning First Alliance (FLFA) kicked off in early October in Tallahassee with some nine organizations representing school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, businesses, cities, counties and universities participating.

The national Learning First Alliance was created in 1996 by the National School Boards Association and 11 other national education organizations. Since then it has grown to include 17 members with more state-sponsored alliances on the way. As Anne Bryant, NSBA executive director, explained in a recent column, the goal of Learning First is to focus "on student learning, (to create) safe and nurturing places that promote student achievement and (foster) community and parent engagement."

Another goal is to encourage greater involvement in education from the business community, local governments and parents.

"It is our hope that the FLFA 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 Learning First Alliance Committee chair.

"We want to branch out and bring our community in with the schools," he added.

Speaking about the close relationship between education and business, FSBA Executive Director Wayne Blanton told the group: "If business thrives, education will thrive and if education thrives, business will thrive. I really think that education and business should speak on as many (education) issues as possible with a single voice. I think this is an opportunity to go forward and do a lot of good things."

FSBA President Jeanne Dozier, Lee County School Board, told the group that "we might not agree on everything but

we can come together and do what's best for education and the children of Florida."

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 participated.

Some of the issues that were developed after the discussions, a possible joint agenda, included:

- The business community wants to support public education, but needs to see better results. There's a possible "disconnect between the education community and the business community on what the outcome should be."
- All groups need to learn more about each other.
- When a "high quality system" of public education is mentioned, what does that look like?
- It's pre-K-20, not just K-12.
- What is needed to teach students to be successful in the work place?
- Educators need to work better with businesses to better identify the skills that are needed in the workplace.
- The ultimate goal of any student should be a successful career, one not necessarily tied to attending college.



FSBA President Jeanne Dozier and Barney Bishop, Associated Industries of Florida, discuss some of the key issues the Learning First Alliance can address.



Dr. Jack Lamb, right, Hillsborough County School Board, and Marshall Ogletree, Florida Education Association, share some ideas during a break at the first FLFA meeting.

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Leadership Calling

New Education Commissioner Eric Smith and Bill Daggett headline fall conference

Well-known educator Willard Daggett and Florida's new education commissioner, Eric Smith, will join several other key personages at FSBA's fall conference in Tampa Dec. 4-7.

Besides FSBA, other sponsoring organizations of that conference include the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, Florida Association of School Administrators, Florida Educational Negotiators, Florida School Board Attorneys Association, Florida Educational Risk Managers Association, Sunshine State School Public Relations Association, and Florida Education Legislation Liaisons. Site is the Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay.

Dr. Daggett, International Center for Leadership in Education, will discuss "Academics and CTE (Career and Technical Education) at a Crossroads." Dr. Tonia Stewart, director of Theatre Arts, Alabama, will be the featured breakfast speaker Dec. 7. Her topic is: "Grandma's Hands: A Power Tool Unmatched."

David Warlick, The Landmark Project, Raleigh, NC., will be the first general session speaker Dec. 5, discussing "Literacy and Learning in the 21st Century."

Dr. Smith will address conference participants Friday morning, Dec. 7.

There will also be concurrent sessions covering Web 2.0, The Shape of Information; Paperless Agendas; Managing HR in the Electronic World; Video Games as Learning Engines; Upcoming Hot Issues Facing School Boards; and Building Student Success through Online Instruction.

"This year's agenda is packed with informative sessions and plenty of opportunities to network and share best practices with board members throughout the state," said FSBA President Jeanne Dozier, Lee County School Board.

Look for FSBA technology awards at December conference

While it's too late to get in on the December technology awards, don't forget there will be a second series of awards that will be issued at FSBA's Spring Conference next June. Deadline for those awards is May 1, 2008.

The technology awards program was created to give school districts a chance "to showcase innovative technology programs around the state," commented FSBA President Jeanne Dozier, Lee County School Board, when she announced the program.

Called the FSBA Innovative Technology in Education Recognition Program, the first awards will be presented at FSBA's Fall Conference Dec. 4-7 in Tampa. The second round will be awarded June 11-13, 2008. Three districts—small, medium and large, based on enrollment—will be recognized at each conference.

Miami-Dade wins CUBE Award

Miami-Dade County Schools, a runner-up last year, was a winner in 2007 along with the Houston Independent School District, of the Urban School Board Excellence award issued by NSBA's Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE).

This is the second time in three years that a Florida district has achieved this honor which recognizes big city school districts that are making progress in educating children. Hillsborough won it in 2005.

Miami-Dade was recognized for its ability to build public trust and support for the school district. The judges also noted how the school board focused attention on the need to involve parents in raising academic achievement of their children through creation of the Parent Academy.

Houston was cited for the way it has adopted a decentralized approach to management that puts more decision-making authority in the hands of principals and teachers.

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Summit highlights sportsmanship initiatives

More than 300 member school representatives attended the first-ever Florida High School Athletic Association Sportsmanship Summit in Orlando earlier this year to hear messages about improving sportsmanship from fellow administrators and coaches. University of Florida head men's basketball coach Billy Donovan provided the keynote address.

The importance of sportsmanship in high school athletics was underscored through discussion of effective game management, working with contest officials, relations between coaches and parents, the use of technology to promote sportsmanship, and coaches as role models.

"I'm extremely pleased with the phenomenal turnout from our member schools," said Commissioner John A. Stewart. "Many of those attending shared what they do to promote

good sportsmanship. We hope to enlarge on that in the months to come."

FSBA at its spring conference in June in Tampa adopted a suggested resolution that school boards can use to promote good sportsmanship. It says that each school principal "should ensure that those individuals connected with his/her school adhere to the high standards set forth by the Florida High School Athletic Association..."

"Over the last couple of years, there have been incidents on football fields and basketball courts," said FSBA Executive Director Wayne Blanton. He added that while there are some good role models among professional athletes, recent incidents also show there are problems there as well.

Some of the ideas developed from the FHSAA conference included:

- Administrators, coaches and par-

ents provide role models for student-athletes.

- Coaches should be educators.
- Preseason meetings with student-athletes and parents can help coaches define expectations and goals.
- Coaches should provide teams with examples of acceptable behavior in winning and losing situations.
- Even one incident of unsporting conduct can detract from a contest.
- Administrators should be prepared to handle emergency situations during contests.
- Contest officials should be treated with respect on and off the field.
- Spectators should be educated about acceptable behavior before, during and after contests.

The FHSAA is the governing body for interscholastic athletic competition in Florida. It has a membership of more than 750 middle, junior and senior high schools.

In Memoriam: Dr. Harold James Henderson

Former Gadsden County School Superintendent Harold James Henderson, 61, who was also the first African-American elected to Gadsden's School Board, died in October.

A Gadsden County native, Dr. Henderson received his bachelor and master degrees in education from Florida A&M University and his doctorate from Lane University, Jackson, Tenn. He was elected to the school board in 1978, a position he held until 1992 when he won the superintendent's post. During his board tenure, he was chairman nine years and vice chairman for three. He served as superintendent for eight years.

He was also provost of Tallahassee Community College's Gadsden County Campus from 1986 to 1992. He served as chief legislative analyst to the speaker of the Florida House of Representatives from 1984 to 1986.

Dr. Henderson was the president and CEO of Henderson's Care Centers, which provides rehabilitative services to developmentally disabled children.

Current Gadsden School Superintendent Reginald James said one of Dr. Henderson's legacies is the dual enrollment program with TCC that he helped create. However, according to his "Celebration of Life" memorial program distributed at his funeral, Dr. Henderson said that his "greatest fulfillment was those years he spent in the classroom (Havana High School) teaching students."



Former Florida educator named new education commissioner

The State Board of Education has selected Dr. Eric J. Smith, a former Orange County principal and Volusia County administrator, as Florida's new education commissioner.

"Dr. Smith was chosen from a very talented and qualified group of candidates," said SBE Chairman T. Willard Fair. "He has the skills and experience that Florida's education system needs, and I look forward to working with him in the future."

Dr. Smith was chosen from an initial pool of 32 candidates that was later narrowed down to seven.

Prior to Dr. Smith being named as commissioner, he was senior vice president for College Readiness for the College Board, where he organized a new division to focus on a strategy to assist school districts in improving their high school graduates' enrollment and completion rates in higher education. From 2002-2006, Dr. Smith was the Superintendent for Anne Arundel County Public Schools in Annapolis, Maryland.

From the Executive Director

By **WAYNE BLANTON**

Property tax reform a “perfect storm;” billions of dollars at stake for schools



WAYNE BLANTON

A perfect storm may be brewing in Florida school funding. While the Legislators’ latest property tax reform proposal that voters will be asked to approve via a constitutional amendment next January is a light version of one adopted earlier this year, it could still cost schools nearly \$3 billion over the next five years.

Legislators in October, after their fourth special session, adopted a constitutional amendment proposal to alleviate high property taxes. But it will result in a \$200 million hit for schools next year and \$2.8 billion over the next five years.

House and Senate leaders have always promised to hold schools harmless in any tax reform scheme, but no proposal has yet surfaced that would replace public education revenue that would be lost if the Jan. 29 constitutional amendment garners 60% of the vote. And coupled with economic projections that show possible tax revenue declines over the next couple of years, the stage is set for that so-called “perfect storm.”

Here’s a brief look at what the Legislature did in Special Session D, which ended Oct. 29.

Its new property tax relief package would provide \$12.378 billion in tax relief over the next five years. Though the new package is significantly less from the program the Legislature passed in June, there are still negative impacts on school district tax revenues. And, as noted, the package does not identify or earmark funding to offset these school district revenue losses.

The centerpiece of the property tax reform package is a Joint Resolution to amend the Florida Constitution. If adopted, the new amendment would:

- Establish an exemption from tax on the first \$25,000 in value of tangible personal property used in business. This provision would apply to school tax levies, costing them \$77 million next year (2008-2009) and \$397 million over the next five years (2008-2013).

- Allow a homeowner to take up to \$500,000 in value of the Save Our Homes Benefit and apply it to reduce the taxable value of a new home. This provision also affects school taxes. The projected impact: school districts would lose \$126 million next year and \$2.359 billion over the next five years.

- Provide an additional Homestead Exemption of \$25,000 to be applied on homes valued over \$50,000. This would not apply to school taxes.

- Place a 10% cap on the increase in assessed value of non-homestead properties (businesses, second homes,

rental property, etc.) that is similar to the current 3% cap that Save Our Homes provides to homeowners. Again, school taxes are exempt.

The total impact on school property tax revenue would be a loss of \$204 million next year (2008-2009) and \$2.756 billion over the next five years (2008-2013).

With class size compliance and other mandates around the corner, schools are facing some lean budget years. On top of that, I don’t feel the state is equipped to hold schools harmless.

FSBA is not opposed to property tax reform. In fact, one item in our 2008 Legislative Priorities proposal, says this: FSBA urges the Legislature to “Support property tax reform initiatives that safeguard local control and flexibility, that improve fairness and equity among all classes of taxpayers, and that specifically hold school districts harmless from operating and capital revenue losses.”

It’s that last item that’s going to cause us the greatest angst if lawmakers don’t come up with some alternative funding to replace the \$2.8 billion we’re going to lose in the next five years.

Dr. Blanton is executive director of the Florida School Boards Association.

Upcoming Events

Dec. 4-7

FSBA/FADSS/FSBAA/FEN/FERMA/FELL/SUNSPRA/
FASA Annual Joint Conference
Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay

2008

Feb. 3-5

NSBA Federal Relations Network
Grand Hyatt, Washington, D.C.

March 28-April 2

NSBA Annual Conference, Orlando

April 9-10

FSBA Day in the Legislature
Doubletree Hotel, Tallahassee

June 11-13

FSBA/FADSS Spring Conference
Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay

