



## FADSS

Florida Association of  
District School Superintendents

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SUPERINTENDENT  
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# Florida Association of District School Superintendents

February 1, 2016

## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Florida House of Representatives  
The Florida Senate

FROM: Dr. Barbara Jenkins, President  
Florida Association of District School Superintendents

SUBJECT: Response to Capital Outlay Report

The House Education Appropriations Subcommittee released a report during their January 21, 2016 meeting that was critical of school districts and their capital outlay expenditures based on cost per student stations. Primarily, the report used the cost per student station as a measure to infer that school districts had not been good stewards of taxpayers' dollars.

This simply is not accurate, and the methodology used in the report to calculate the per student station costs is flawed thereby the resulting conclusions are not sound.

1. The per student station calculation in the report *includes* the costs of additions and renovations to existing structures, rather than calculated on new construction. It is important to note that many school construction projects took a fiscally conservative approach to wisely incorporate the addition of a single classroom – such as a health room/training facility or a music room – into a contract for major repair or renovation of an entire school. However, the report incorporated the total cost of the entire project into the per student station cost calculation, which inflated the cost per student station as provided in the report.
2. The report did not include any projects that were less than the student station costs prescribed by law, therefore presenting only a portion of the entire picture.
3. Many districts across the state have levied local referenda to meet the facilities needs of their communities, because of limited capital funding from the state. These locally generated funds are meant to benefit the local community from which the funds were raised.

Additionally, one of the issues discussed during the committee meeting was to include the cost of land – regardless of location – as part of the student station cost limits, thereby ignoring the significant discrepancies that occur when managing the costs of a new school which varies widely by location. For example, the cost of land in the Florida Keys, Pinellas County or Orange County will be markedly different from Santa Rosa County, Polk County or Alachua County.

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The reality is that Florida school districts have struggled to pay for capital costs for years, especially through the Great Recession. School buildings are a critical public asset – Florida school districts comprise over 425 million square feet of facilities. Schools represent a public asset of \$85 billion based on an average cost of construction of \$200 per square foot. As of June 30, 2013, the average age of Florida’s schools was 28 years old. Preventative maintenance, repairs, and the upkeep or replacement of building systems (i.e. HVAC, lighting, school safety) is critical to ensure these public schools are quality places for students to learn. Failure to do so will eventually lead to the premature replacement of failed buildings at an increased cost to taxpayers.

Florida superintendents have been good stewards of public tax dollars. Any information shared with the public should be complete and accurate.