

# **COLLEGE & CAREER FIRST**

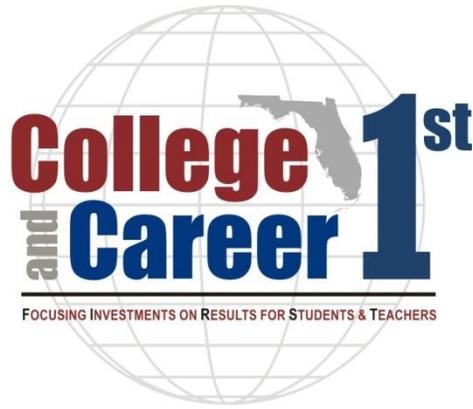
*Focusing Investments on Results for Students and Teachers*

**GOVERNOR RICK SCOTT**

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**STATE OF FLORIDA**

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**INTRODUCTION: COLLEGE & CAREER FIRST**

The fundamental goal of Florida’s K-12 education system is to prepare our students for future success in college and careers. This goal continues in Florida’s higher education system as many students progress through state colleges and universities on their way to a career. Prioritizing investments in education and achieving measurable results for students and teachers are both critical to the future of Florida.

Many of the initiatives that make up College & Career FIRST (Focusing Investments on Results for Students and Teachers) stem from conversations that Governor Scott had with teachers, parents, and students on his Education Listening Tour. Throughout the state one thing is very clear: Floridians care deeply about educating and training students to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. College & Careers FIRST brings together the best of those ideas to invest in education and better prepare students for their future.

**COLLEGE & CAREER FIRST**

*“We all agree that we want to invest in education and last year, we invested a billion dollars more in education funding. I am committed to protecting current education funding levels in this year’s budget, and also working to increase our investment in education as our economy grows to support further investments. Any ‘Investment’ we make in education must be focused on ‘Results for Students and Teachers.’ We need to be investing our resources and our energies in policies that work... and our agenda for the upcoming legislative session will do just that.”*

*--Governor Rick Scott*

**GOAL #1:** Maintain accountability while focusing on the successful transition to more rigorous Common Core State Standards and assessments, which better measure readiness for college and careers

EDUCATION SNAPSHOT: GOAL #1

*“Achieving real results in education means preparing students for college and careers. Our standards and testing system must be a true measurement of students’ future success and allow teachers and students a clear understanding of what is expected of them.”*

*-Governor Rick Scott*

- Common Core State Standards and assessments transition
- School accountability fairness and stability

**Common Core State Standards and assessments transition**

Florida is a leader in education accountability. As a part of our continued efforts to better prepare students for the future, Florida is undergoing a transition to Common Core State Standards, which will offer students and teachers a clear pathway to college and career readiness. These standards were developed by educators in states around the nation with input from business leaders and higher education experts to focus on the skills that students need for success in college and careers.

In order to maintain strong school accountability standards, Florida will also be moving to an assessment tool based on measuring readiness for college and careers in the 2014-15 school year. Forty-five states and the District of Columbia have begun the transition to new standards, and combined with new standards-based assessments, these common standards will allow us to see exactly how well our students are performing when compared to their peers around the nation and the world.

This transition is an important step to ensure the future success of Florida students. A student’s performance on the Common Core standards will be a practical, tangible measure of how they will perform in both higher education and the workforce. As we implement the new standards, the FCAT for math and English will be eliminated. However, there will be testing and assessment based on the Common Core State Standards that will help teachers evaluate student progress and change their instruction as needed to drive better outcomes. The shift to Common Core cannot just be a curveball thrown into the education system. We have to communicate the change, and we have to prepare students, teachers and parents.

**School accountability fairness and stability**

During the transition to Common Core, it is important that teachers, students and parents can focus on understanding what will be expected of them once the new, more rigorous standards and assessments are implemented. We heard from many teachers during our education listening tour that testing changes come down so often that they hardly have time to implement one year’s changes before they receive another round. We need to give teachers time to transition to Common Core State Standards and assessments because they offer much clearer measures for how students will succeed in college and career.

To support teachers, educators and students in transitioning to the Common Core State Standards, the state should not pursue any additional new testing changes or requirements that do not support the new Common Core State Standards until the new standards and assessments are fully implemented. These standards are the new measures that will drive accountability in the classroom, and the transition is underway now with the new standards on track to take full effect next year. Getting this transition right is critical, as it is the best mechanism we have to ensure that our kids are well prepared for college and careers.

**GOAL #2:** Support teachers and equip them with the tools they need to improve their practice as professionals and to help students realize better educational outcomes

EDUCATION SNAPSHOT: GOAL #2

*“Educators have embraced accountability in Florida, and as we continue moving toward holding teachers accountable for results we must also give them the resources they need for success in the classroom.”*

-Governor Rick Scott

- State funding for K-12 education
- Teacher Supply Award Program
- Tools for Teaching matching grant
- Results-based mentoring programs

**State funding for K-12 education**

Under Governor Scott’s leadership last year, Florida committed more than \$1 billion more into Florida classrooms. As the state continues to create jobs and opportunities, investments in education will continue to drive economic growth. This year, Governor Scott has committed to ensure that education funding at least stays steady for teachers, parents and students and to work to increase state funding for education again.

**Governor’s Teacher Supply Award Program**

Teachers work every day to ensure that Florida’s students are prepared for success in the future—and often that means using their own money to make sure their students have what they need. This year, Governor Scott proposes reallocating teacher lead funds to make sure that all teachers can get help in purchasing the supplies their students need. By working together with Florida companies, we can leverage our investment with community support for our teachers.

**Tools for Teaching matching grant**

Teachers have a great responsibility to get all of our students ready to be successful in a career or in college by the time they graduate high school. As we transition to Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts over the next two years, our students will have a clearer path to future success, but we first must make sure that our teachers are prepared to utilize those standards. Governor Scott has already announced a commitment to work with the Legislature to place an additional \$2 million into the school district education foundation matching grant program to support professional development. The Tools for Teaching grant will leverage state and local investment in the best professional development opportunities with the help of the private sector to get our teachers ready for Common Core. Further, this investment will make sure that as teachers and schools prepare to institute performance-based compensation, that teachers are given the tools they need to be successful.

**Results-based mentoring programs**

As Governor Scott traveled the state in September, many teachers, parents and students discussed the value of parent and community involvement to the success of our schools. This year, the Governor will propose funding for quality mentoring programs that can help Florida students prepare for college and a career. Programs that show success in achieving these goals should be highlighted and replicated so that all students know how much they are supported.

**GOAL #3:** Allow choices and flexibility in districts, schools and classrooms that recognize the unique needs of students and teachers and support efforts to achieve improved results

EDUCATION SNAPSHOT: GOAL #3

*“In business, choice and competition create excellence. Increasing options in our education system will similarly drive improved results for Florida students.”*

-Governor Rick Scott

- Deregulation for school districts
- Flexible instructional materials adoption
- Incentives for educational choice options
- District Charter Innovation Schools

**Deregulation for school districts**

School districts, superintendents, teachers and principals often ask the state for flexibility from regulations that do not add to student achievement. In September, Governor Scott formed a group of superintendents from all over Florida to review and recommend rules and regulations that could be eliminated without compromising Florida’s strong school accountability standards. Based on the recommendations of the panel, the Governor proposes working with the Legislature to ensure that state regulations are focused on student learning and outcomes.

**Flexible instructional materials adoption**

The adoption process for instructional materials for Florida classrooms is changing as districts begin to transition to digital materials. As materials and formats continue to evolve, districts should be held accountable to make sure that materials sufficiently cover educational standards, however the state should offer flexibility from the rules that direct districts how they must spend funds for materials.

**Incentives for educational choice options**

Choices in education are critical to ensuring that every student has access to high quality learning opportunities that will prepare them for college and careers. Florida has partnered with the Charter School Growth Fund to develop and support high quality operators that can open new charter schools and establish turnaround options for chronically failing schools in high need areas. To ensure all parents and students have the ability to choose what is right for them, Florida should also remove any enrollment caps on existing charter schools, so that results and capacity can determine enrollment. This flexibility also comes with a responsibility for Florida to work to make sure that all charter schools participate in the school grading system that has made Florida a leader in educational accountability. To further the state’s investment in choice, Governor Scott will be asking stakeholders to come together for a Choice and Competition Summit to discuss ways to remove barriers to choice options in low performing areas.

**District Charter Innovation Schools**

Like other public schools, charter schools are held to assessment and accountability standards to reinforce student achievement. Unlike traditional schools, however, charter schools have flexibility to determine their own curriculum, instructional strategies and educational focus. To increase and incentivize more competition and choice options for students and parents, districts that currently sponsor a charter school should be given the ability to open District Charter Innovation Schools that could be operated by the district with the same funding levels. This increased competition and choice for students and parents will drive continued success for our students.