

Florida: Major Education Initiatives (1999-2009) and Statistics

Prepared for the House Education Committee, Chairman Harry Brooks

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Florida's A+ Plan for Education has been the state's major education initiative for the past decade, and was originally initiated under the leadership of Governor Jeb Bush. The A+ Plan for Education, passed in 1999 by the Florida legislature, overhauled the state's K-12 system by implementing policy changes in several key areas, including standards, assessments, and accountability. Outlined below are the A+ plan's major components, most of which continue today:

Academic Standards and Testing

Florida raised its academic standards in 1996, prior to the A+ Plan. Florida's academic standards, called the Sunshine State Standards, spelled out the level of knowledge and skill for students to be considered competent at each grade level, in each subject. Administrators were free to design curricula for districts and schools based upon the competency levels set out in the new state standards.

The A+ Plan implemented a comprehensive measurement and diagnostic system called the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, or FCAT. The FCAT, launched in 1999, was designed to test student mastery of the higher standards. The plan required that students in grades 3 through 10 be tested annually in reading and math through the FCAT, and incorporated both norm-referenced (student performance compared to peers across the nation) and criterion-referenced (student performance compared to state standards) measures.

Accountability System, Grading Schools

The state created a new accountability system based on FCAT. Both schools and students were held accountable for their performance. Annual state report cards ranked public schools on a scale from A to F based on students' performance each year. Schools that earned high marks received funding bonuses and greater autonomy. The state required schools that received an F twice in a four-year period to implement state-sanctioned reforms. Students were also held accountable for their performance. The A+ Plan ended social promotion in the third grade by requiring that students pass the FCAT before moving on to fourth grade. Remedial instruction was provided to students who were denied promotion. On the secondary level, high school students (beginning with the class of 2003) had to pass the reading, writing and math portions of the FCAT to be eligible for a high school diploma.

Non-traditional School Options

A broad range of non-traditional school options were established or expanded during this time period:

Opportunity Scholarships: During their 1999 session, Florida lawmakers passed the first statewide voucher program in the nation. Under the enacted legislation, each public school receives a grade, from A to F. If a school receives an F in two out of four years, the students at such a school may receive an opportunity scholarship worth at least \$4,000, and use the scholarship to attend a higher-scoring public school, a private school or a parochial school. In January 2006, the Florida Supreme Court declared the private school option unconstitutional, and this option is no longer available. A total of 1,304 students used the public option of the Opportunity Scholarship Program to attend a higher performing public school in 2007-08.

McKay Scholarship Program: In 2001, Florida policymakers enacted a law to allow parents of special education students enrolled in public schools who are dissatisfied with the student's progress to use publicly funded vouchers to attend the private or parochial school of their choice. The amount of the voucher depends on a student's specific disability. During the 2007-2008 school year, 19,852 students received scholarships through the McKay program. The average scholarship amount was \$7,295.

Charter Schools: Florida's charter school law took effect July 1, 1996. The law specifically charged charter schools to improve educational opportunities for low-performing students, increase parental choice, influence the traditional public school system, and foster innovation. Five charter schools enrolling almost 350 students opened during the 1996-97 school year. Every

subsequent school year has shown an increase in the number of charter schools operating in the state, as well as in the number of students enrolled in charter schools. Currently, Florida ranks third in the nation in the number of operating charter schools and second in the number of students enrolled in charter schools. In the 2007-2008 academic year, 105,329 students were enrolled in the state's 358 public charter schools.

Virtual Education: Florida Virtual School (FLVS) was founded in 1997, and was the country's first state-wide Internet-based public high school. In 2000, the Florida Legislature established FLVS as an independent educational entity whose board members are appointed by the governor. The Florida Virtual School provides online and distance learning education for students in grades 6 through 12. Most students attending the Florida Virtual School are public school students, and these students typically enroll in one or two virtual school courses to supplement their regular education program. The state-funded Florida Virtual School offers courses ranging from GED to Advanced Placement. Middle and high school students anywhere in Florida can participate in these courses for free. In the 2007-08 school year, more than 71,000 Florida students, representing all 67 school districts, were enrolled in over 213,000 half-credit courses. The Florida legislature recently passed a law requiring school districts to make online and distance learning instruction available to full-time virtual students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade by 2009-10.

Curriculum and Instructional Reform

A major focus of Florida's curriculum reforms over the past decade has been on improving reading instruction. In 2002, the state implemented "Just Read, Florida," a statewide reading initiative. This effort included a program to create new reading academies to train teachers in reading instruction and hire 2,000 reading coaches in public schools across the state. Students in grades six through 12 who demonstrated insufficient reading skills received remedial instruction.

Effective Teachers

Over the past decade, Florida enacted new policies for attracting and rewarding high-quality teachers. First, Florida established policies to allow alternative paths to teacher certification to attract teachers to the classroom who, because of traditional teacher-certification requirements, would not otherwise consider teaching as a profession. The state opened "Educator Preparation Institutes" to facilitate the transition to teaching. In addition, Florida also offers performance pay for teachers. Through this program, schools are awarded funds to provide bonuses to personnel who contribute to measurable improvement in students' academic achievement. Bonuses can reach up to 10 percent of a teacher's pay.

Funding

In 1999, the Legislature created the supplemental instructional categorical fund to give districts flexibility in the use of categorical funds. Districts may use these monies for programs such as (but not limited to) intensive skill development in summer school, class size reduction, a modified curriculum, reading instruction, after school instruction, tutoring, mentoring, or an extended school year.

Considerations

Florida's A+ Plan for Education, passed in 1999, represents the state's most significant education reform effort over the last decade. Some parts of the plan were seen as controversial (e.g., ending social promotion in third grade, vouchers for students to attend private schools), and the overall effects of the plan, as well as its specific elements, are still being evaluated by education researchers. However, both the NAEP and the FCAT indicate that student achievement generally has improved since the late 1990s when the A+ Plan was instituted.

Information compiled from the Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), the Florida Department of Education, Education Commission of States (ECS), Center for Education Policy (CEP), and Education Next.

Florida: Vital Education Statistics

Overall

Education Enrollment and Attainment		FL	TN	US
Preschool Enrollment	Percent of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool (2007)	50.5%	37.4%	46.2%
Kindergarten Enrollment	Percent of eligible children enrolled in kindergarten programs (2007)	78.0%	75.4%	76.4%
High School Graduation	Percent of public high school students who graduate with a diploma (2005)	60.8%	65.4%	70.6%
Young Adult Education	Percent of young adults (18-24) enrolled in postsecondary education or with a degree (2007)	48.5%	45.7%	52.8%
Adult Educational Attainment	Percent of adults (25-64) with a 2- or 4-year postsecondary degree (2007)	37.2%	30.1%	37.7%

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, Chance for Success Index, <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2009/17sos.h28.chance.pdf>

Students

In the fall of 2007, student membership, from pre-kindergarten through the twelfth grade, totaled 2,653,377 for Florida's 67 school and special districts. Florida's PK-12 public schools membership has shown an annual decline for the past three years.

Florida's public school population is ethnically and culturally diverse. In recent years, the Hispanic student population has experienced the greatest proportional growth among racial/ethnic groups.

Student Demographics (07-08)	FL	TN
Total	2,653,377	929,543
% White	45.9	68.8
% Black / African American	23.1	24.6
% Hispanic	24.7	4.8
% Asian / Pacific Islander	2.4	1.6
% Indian / Native American / Alaskan	0.3	0.2
% Multiracial	3.6	n/a
% Disabled	14.4	14.7
% Gifted	4.9	n/a
% Eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch	45.9	54.5
% ELL	11.9	3.2
% Migrant	0.5	n/a
% Female	48.7	48.5
% Male	51.3	51.5

Sources: Florida Department of Education, Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida School Indicators Report, <http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/fsir.asp>; Tennessee Department of Education, 2008 Report Card, State Profile, <http://edu.reportcard.state.tn.us/pls/apex/f?p=200:1:3464209647625034>

There has also been an increase in the number of students with special needs. The fall 1998 and fall 2007 populations of English Language Learners (ELL), students eligible for free/reduced price lunch, and disabled students are shown in the chart below.

Special Needs Populations	Fall 1998	Fall 2007	% Growth
ELL	150,098	231,582	54.3
F/R Price Lunch	1,019,815	1,214,732	19.1
Disabled	341,126	381,561	11.9
Total Membership	2,335,124	2,652,684	13.6

Source: Florida Department of Education, Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida Education and Community Data Profiles, <http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/word/fecdp0708.doc>

From fall 1998 to fall 2007 the growth of the ELL students and students eligible for free/reduced price lunch has exceeded the growth in the total student membership, as shown in the following chart.

Teachers

K-12 Classroom Teachers (2007-08)	FL	TN	US
# of Teachers	172,417	62,282	3,184,994
Students Enrolled per Teacher	15.4	14.5	15.4
Average Salary	\$46,930	\$45,030	\$52,308

Source: National Education Association, *Rankings & Estimates: Rankings of the States 2008 and Estimates of School Statistics 2009*, Series C – Faculty, <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/09rankings.pdf>

Florida's teachers must meet both educational and professional qualifications prior to certification. Many of the state's teachers have received degrees beyond the bachelor's level.

Over the last five years, the average teacher salary has increased 15.6 percent. Factors that influence the average teacher salary figure include the number of new teachers hired at entry-level wages, the turnover rate among teachers, the number of years that current teachers have been in the workforce, the degree level of teachers, and wage scale adjustments.

The Teaching Profession (2008) – Condensed		FL	TN	US (# of states)
Grade	Grade	B	C	C
	Total Score	83.2	75.1	
ACCOUNTABILITY FOR QUALITY				
Initial Licensure Requirements for All Prospective Teachers (2007-08)				
State requires substantial formal coursework in subject area(s) taught			✓	27
Prospective teachers must pass written tests	Basic skills	✓	✓	39
	Subject-specific knowledge	✓	✓	42
	Subject-specific pedagogy	✓		6
State requires clinical experiences during teacher training	Student teaching (weeks)	10	15	39
	Other clinical experiences (hours)	--	--	13
Discouraging Out-of-Field Teaching for All Schools (2007-08)				
Parental notification of out-of-field teachers		✓		5

State has ban or cap on the number of out-of-field teachers	✓		4	
Evaluation of Teacher Performance (2007-08)				
Teacher evaluation occurs on an annual basis	✓		12	
Accountability for Effectiveness of Teacher Education Programs (2007-08)				
State publishes pass rates/rankings of teacher-preparation institutions	✓		30	
Programs accountable for graduates' performance in classroom setting	✓		18	
INCENTIVES & ALLOCATION				
Teacher Salaries				
Pay Parity - teacher earnings as a percentage of salaries in comparable occupations (2006)	85.3%	85.1%	10	
State requires all districts to report average teacher salaries at the school level (2007-08)	✓		12	
Incentives for Teacher Leadership and Performance (2007-08)				
State has pay-for-performance program or pilot rewarding teachers for raising student achievement	✓		7	
State provides incentives for teachers to earn National Board certification	✓		38	
Managing the Allocation of Talent (2007-08)				
State provides incentives to teachers who work in targeted assignments	Targeted schools	✓	20	
	Targeted teaching-assignment areas	✓	16	
State provides incentives to principals who work in targeted schools	✓		10	
BUILDING AND SUPPORTING CAPACITY				
Professional Development (2007-08)				
State requires districts/schools to set aside time for professional development		✓	16	
School Leadership (2006)				
State requirements for initial administrator licensure	Supervised internship		✓	28
	Participation in induction or mentoring program			14
School Working Conditions				
Median student-teacher ratio in primary-level schools (2005)	15.3	15.2	26 (median is 15:1 or less)	

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, The Teaching Profession (2008), http://www.edweek.org/apps/qc2009/state_compare.html

K-12 Structure

Florida has 67 school districts, with each county constituting a school district. As of 2007-08, Florida had approximately 3,945 traditional public schools, over 358 charter schools, and 7 university research schools and special school districts.

Florida's education system is overseen by seven citizens appointed to the Florida Board of Education by the Governor. The board's primary duties are to establish education goals, objectives, and in coordination with the Commissioner of Education, oversee the implementation and enforcement of education policies established by the Legislature. The Florida Board of Education appoints the Commissioner of Education, who serves as the chief executive officer of the Department of Education. The Commissioner of Education also provides education

policy and planning direction, program development, performance management, and funding allocation recommendations.

School boards. The school board in each school district is established in Article IX of the *Constitution of the State of Florida*. Each school board establishes policies, and operates, controls, and supervises all of the public schools in the district. Additionally, local school boards have authority to levy taxes.

Superintendents. District superintendents are either elected in a general election or appointed by the school board based on the decision of the local electorate. As of August 2008, 24 superintendents were appointed by the district school board and 43 superintendents were elected by county voters.

Source: Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, Florida Monitor, Department of Education, Public Schools (K-12 Education), <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/profiles/2002/>

K-12 Achievement

K-12 Achievement (2008)		FL	TN	US
STATE ACHIEVEMENT INDEX	Grade	C	D+	D+
	Total Score	75.2	67.0	69.4
ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL				
NAEP Mathematics 2007 Percent Proficient	4th Grade	40.3%	28.7%	38.6%
	8th Grade	27.4%	23.1%	31.0%
NAEP Reading 2007 Percent Proficient	4th Grade	34.0%	26.9%	31.7%
	8th Grade	28.0%	25.6%	29.2%
ACHIEVEMENT GAINS				
NAEP Math Scale Score Change 2003 to 2007	4th Grade	+8.3	+5.0	+5.1
	8th Grade	+6.0	+5.8	+4.1
NAEP Reading Scale Score Change 2003 to 2007	4th Grade	+5.5	+3.8	+3.2
	8th Grade	+2.5	+1.1	-0.3
POVERTY GAP				
National School Lunch Program Non-Eligible vs, Eligible 2007	Reading 4th Grade NAEP Scale Score	21.2	26.7	26.8
	Math 8th Grade NAEP Scale Score	22.7	22.2	26.0
Poverty-Gap Change 2003 to 2007 (negative value = narrowing gap)	Reading 4th Grade NAEP Scale Score	-5.1	+2.4	-1.1
	Math 8th Grade NAEP Scale Score	-5.6	-6.4	-2.4
ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE				
NAEP Math 2007 Percent Advanced	8th grade	5.4%	3.8%	6.6%
NAEP Math Percent Advanced Change 2003 to 2007	8th grade	+1.2%	+0.8%	+1.6%
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION				
Graduation Rates (All Students, Public Schools)	2004	60.5%	72.2%	69.9%
	Change 2000 to 2004	+10.6%	+14.7%	+3.1%
ADVANCED PLACEMENT				
High Test Scores (3 or Above) Per 100 Students in Grades 11 and 12 (Public Schools)	2007	21.5	8.7	16.9
	Change 2000 to 2007	+7.2	+2.9	+6.0

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, K-12 Achievement Index (2008), http://www.edweek.org/apps/qc2009/state_compare.html

Additional K-12 Achievement Indicators	FL	TN	US
Projection of Graduates and Nongraduates			
9th grade enrollment 2004-2005	248,943	80,890	4,176,954
Projected graduates 2007-2008	151,444	52,908	2,947,677
Projected nongraduates 2007-2008	97,499	27,982	1,229,277
Total students lost each school day	542	155	6,829
ACT			
2008 Results (Mean Score)	19.8	20.7	21.1
# of 2008 Test Takers	93,884	50,225	1,421,941
SAT			
2008 Results (Mean Score)	1474	1707	1511
# of 2008 Test Takers	98,578	6,272	1,518,859

Sources: Education Week, *Diploma Counts 2008*, U.S. Public High Schools Losing 6,829 Students Per Day, <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2008/40projections.h27.pdf>; American College Testing, ACT National and State Scores for 2008, <http://www.act.org/news/data/08/states.html>; College Board, SAT Data and Results, College Bound Seniors 2008, <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/sat/cb-seniors-2008>

Truth in Advertising about Student Proficiency = C

Florida gets an average grade on the credibility of its student proficiency scores. The grade is based on the difference between the percentage of students identified as proficient in reading and math on 2005 state exams and the percentage identified as proficient on the NAEP in 2005

Source U.S. Chamber of Commerce, *Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness*, <http://www.uschamber.com/icw/reportcard/default>

Accountability

Florida's A+ Plan grades public schools A through F primarily based on student performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The FCAT is a state student achievement test that specifically addresses a student's ability to perform on the Sunshine State Standards benchmarks. Public school performance is discussed in more detail in several FGAR program profiles including Educational Programs and School Improvement, Accountability, and Testing.

Source: Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, Florida Monitor, Department of Education, Public Schools (K-12 Education), <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/profiles/2002/>

Standards, Assessments, and Accountability (2008) – Condensed		FL	TN	US (# of states)
Grade	Grade	A-	A-	B
	Total Score	90.8	91.5	
STANDARDS				
State has adopted standards in the core subjects (2007-08)		✓	✓	50
State has standards that are clear, specific, and grounded in content (2007)	English/language arts	ES MS	ES MS HS	8
	Mathematics	ES MS HS	ES MS	24
	Science	MS	ES MS HS	22
	Social studies/history		MS	2
State has a regular timeline for revising standards (2007-08)		✓		38

ASSESSMENTS				
Types of test items state uses to measure student performance (2007-08)	Multiple-choice	ES MS HS	ES MS HS	50
	Short-answer	ES MS HS		29
	Extended-response in English/language arts	ES MS HS	ES MS HS	45
	Extended-response in other subjects	ES MS HS		24
	Portfolio			1
Subjects in which state uses assessments aligned to state standards (2007-08)	English/language arts	ES MS HS	ES MS HS	51
	Mathematics	ES MS HS	ES MS HS	50
	Science	ES MS HS	ES MS HS	46
	Social studies/history		ES MS HS	12
State provides educators with formative assessments or item banks linked to state standards (2007-08)				21

Grade spans: ES=elementary school, MS=middle school, and HS=high school.

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, Standards, Assessments, and Accountability (2008), http://www.edweek.org/apps/qc2009/state_compare.html

K-12 Funding

School Finance (2009)		FL	TN	National Average
Grade	Grade	C-	D+	C+
	Total Score	71.2	67.7	77.2
SPENDING				
Per-pupil expenditures (PPE), adjusted for regional cost differences (2006)		\$8,437	\$7,620	\$9,963
Percent of total taxable resources spent on education (2006)		3.1%	2.8%	3.7%

The "Percent of students in districts with PPE at or above U.S. average" and the "Spending Index" indicators in this section are adjusted to reflect regional cost differences and weighted for student needs. The national average for adjusted per-pupil expenditures is \$9,644.

Source: Education Week, *Quality Counts 2009*, School Finance (2009), <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2009/17sos.h28.finance.pdf>

Additional Funding Indicators	FL	TN	US
State & Local K-12 Education Spending (2006)			
Total state and local K-12 education spending (in millions)	\$26,609	\$7,364	\$526,649
State and local K-12 education spending per capita	\$1,474	\$1,212	\$1,763
State and local K-12 education spending as % of personal income	4.0%	3.8%	4.8%
Poverty Funding Gaps Over Time: 1999 – 2005			
Poverty gap change in dollars 1999-2005 (no adjustment for low income students)	-\$368	-\$275	-\$90

Minority Funding Gaps Over Time: 1999-2005			
Minority gap change in dollars 1999-2005 (no adjustment for low income students)	-\$46	\$51	\$73
Funding Gaps by State, 2005 (Adjusted for Low-Income Students)			
Gap between the highest- and lowest-poverty districts 2005 (40% adjustment for low-income students)	-\$199	\$155	-\$1,532
Gap between the highest- and lowest-minority districts 2005 (40% adjustment for low-income students)	-\$133	-\$81	-\$1,275

**A negative number indicates that fewer dollars were provided to high-poverty or high-minority districts.*

Sources: Governing, State and Local Sourcebook, State & Local K-12 Education Spending <http://sourcebook.governing.com/topicresults.jsp?sub=151>; The Education Trust, The Funding Gap 2008, http://www.closingtheachievementgap.org/cs/ctag/download/resources/75/FundingGap2007.pdf?x-r=pcfile_d

Other

Flexibility in Management and Policy = B

Florida receives a relatively high score on how much freedom and flexibility it gives its schools and principals. The state's charter school laws receive good marks, and 92% of principals report a major degree of influence over new teacher hiring.

Data Quality = A

Florida gets excellent marks for its efforts to collect and report high-quality education data. Unlike most other states, Florida collects student-level college readiness test scores and transcript information, and it has a teacher-identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students to gauge teacher effectiveness.

Source U.S. Chamber of Commerce, *Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness*, <http://www.uschamber.com/icw/reportcard/default>

Dual Enrollment

Dual Enrollment allows high school students to enroll in a course for which the student simultaneously receives high school and college credit. An eligible high school student must pass the College Placement Test, be recommended by a guidance counselor or principal, and be enrolled in a Florida public or non-public high school that is recognized by the Department of Education that offers a curriculum leading to a high school diploma.

Each of Florida's 11 public universities and 28 community colleges participate in dual enrollment. In 2007-08, more than 33,000 high school students were dually enrolled in community colleges and more than 2,200 were dually enrolled at state universities.

Early Admission, a form of dual enrollment, enables eligible high school students to enroll in a postsecondary institution on a full-time basis in courses that are creditable toward a high school diploma and an associate or baccalaureate degree. Program participation is limited to students who have completed a minimum of six semesters of full-time high school enrollment. Students enrolled in the program are exempt from college registration, enrollment, and laboratory fees. In the 2007-08 academic year, 76 students participated in early admission at a state university and 1,415 students participated in early admission at a community college.

Source: Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, Florida Monitor, Department of Education, Acceleration Programs, <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/profiles/2028/>.