



## ***A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education Solution: A Roadmap for Florida's Future***

### ***Executive Summary***

The success of Florida's children must be the core principle that drives all education decisions. Policies that my administration will put forward will begin by considering the needs of students and conclude with measuring the impacts to determine whether children actually progressed. Education is Floridians' pathway to a higher quality of life and key to achieving a diverse, vibrant economy. To create this future, I will take a systematic and strategic view of education in our state. Under reforms developed by Governor Jeb Bush, Florida has seen tremendous success in student achievement, but we need to take the next step and finish what we have started by moving Floridians through every stage of education with higher graduation rates. For Florida to take the next step, schools must focus on increasing graduation rates while also increasing standards and must improve our approach for college and work readiness. I will build upon current successes and translate them into higher quality graduates capable of contributing to Florida's 21st century economy. My education platform is based on a few core principles which apply to all levels of schooling, from pre-k through our state universities:

- 1) We must base policy decisions on measurable, quantitative results to judge progress.
- 2) We must have and expect high standards; our students deserve to achieve a year's worth of learning to progress each and every year.
- 3) We must reward improvement and achievement, for students, teachers, and schools alike.
- 4) We must empower students and parents through choice, and must create more competition in funding for both schools and scholarships.
- 5) We must support schools in adapting more science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) into their curriculums to expose students to the skills and tools necessary for our future economy.

The following proposals branch from these principles. As Governor, these will represent my focus and commitment.

For more than three decades, I have been honored to serve our nation and the people of Florida. As an officer in the United States Navy and Naval Reserve, a United States Congressman for twenty years, and most recently as Florida's Attorney General, I have dedicated my life to public service. These are tough times, and we need strong leadership to get our economy back on its feet. I am proud to stand on my record of service and humbly ask for your support as I work to continue serving the State of Florida.

Sincerely,

Bill McCollum

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➤ FRAMEWORK & MISSION

1. **Florida will finish what we've started:** Florida's education reforms have produced higher student achievement, but we need to take the next step and finish what we have started by moving Floridians through every stage of education and re-education with greater success and focus on graduation.
2. **Progress through measurement:** We must base policy decisions on measurable, quantitative results to judge progress.
3. **Highest learning standards in the United States:** We must have high standards; our students deserve to achieve a year's worth of learning to progress each and every year.
4. **Incentivize success and outcomes:** We must reward improvement and achievement, for students, teachers, and schools alike.
5. **Choice:** We must empower students and parents through choice, and must create more competition in funding for both schools and scholarships. In addition, we must encourage the teaching and learning of workforce skills and increase high school graduation choices.
6. **Florida's Education Foundation:** We must support schools in adapting higher literacy, science, technology, engineering and math standards into their curriculums to expose students to the skills and tools necessary for our future economy. In addition, we cannot lose sight of critical subjects such as history, government, language, physical education, and the arts.
7. **Better integrate private education alternatives:** Private education represents a significant portion of total education, but private education is largely left out the discussion. We must better integrate this resource into Florida education system.

➤ MEASURABLE GOALS

1. Revise Florida's school grading system to continually push schools toward higher achievement.
2. Create a merit based teacher compensation system.
3. Phase out the existing tenure system and reward teachers for student achievement and give incentives to excellent teachers to stay in the classroom.
4. Increase access to quality education choices for low-income families through changes to the Corporate Income Tax Credit Scholarship Program.
5. Eliminate bureaucratic obstacles for virtual education providers to lower the cost and increase the quality of virtual education.
6. Create a competitive grant program to match private business investment in universities in order to commercialize research.
7. Allow Bright Future funds to be used for graduate school for students who choose to accelerate their college graduation schedule.
8. Create the Florida "Back to Work Program" to offer competitive funding for programs that partner with local industries to create job training and certification.

## ➤ Pre-Kindergarten

*A child's first interaction with the education system must be positive and constructive for long term success. Florida deems this stage so vital that it provides funding to ensure all children have access to pre-kindergarten. If this stage is so critical, why don't we have standards and measurable criteria to ensure our tax dollars are translating into real results? As Governor, I will ensure that programs funded by Florida taxpayers are producing the maximum amount of achievement.*

- *Develop standards for pre-kindergarten curriculum*

Moving towards excellence requires measurable goals. Florida must require that pre-kindergarten programs institute literacy-based outcomes. Pre-kindergarten cannot be day care; it must provide a foundation of knowledge that is imparted over the course of a year.

- *Increase the quality of pre-kindergarten teachers*

Pre-kindergarten teachers must be focused on outcomes during this important period of a student's life. We must raise the level of quality necessary for teachers to have pre-kindergarten accreditation. At this time Florida cannot afford a heavy handed mandate requiring all teachers hold a single education qualification. Rather, I believe in mandating quality outcomes and holding schools accountable if they do not adequately prepare students to read. While I do not believe that every pre-kindergarten teacher must hold a post-secondary degree in early childhood education or development, I support guaranteeing parents that every pre-kindergarten program is supervised by an instructor with that level of training.

- *Collect data on pre-kindergarten use to improve the program*

Pre-kindergarten is a relatively new program and the state must begin to collect useful data in order to measure success and create student centered learning. Information such as the use of pre-kindergarten within communities, participants' demographics, and the level of kindergarten literacy readiness are valuable and necessary to guide future changes to the program and ensure better student outcomes.

## ➤ Kindergarten Through High School

*Florida's recent reforms have increased elementary reading and math achievement, but we must finish what we started and ensure our middle and high school students continue to receive a year's worth of education for a year spent in the classroom. As Governor, I will work with teachers and schools to provide the resources necessary to raise achievement and quality standards. In addition, my administration will give parents and students more access to school choice by lowering barriers to access to school choice, integrating technology into classrooms, and fully utilizing Career and Professional Education academies. This is the only stage of education that every Floridian is required to attend, and we must take advantage of this time in our children's lives to provide the tools necessary for success. Florida must finish what it started in early learning reform, and continue this culture of success into the middle and high schools.*

### - *Raise the standards for school grades*

Schools, like individuals, need to be continually challenged to grow. Currently, 86% of Florida schools are high-performing A or B schools. Despite high letter grades, many Florida students perform at below grade level and too many fail to graduate. As Governor, I will raise the standards needed to achieve A and B school status.

### - *Raise the bar on high school graduation*

As Governor, I will lead the charge to fully implement recent legislation that focuses on improving elementary and middle school curriculum requirements so that students are prepared for increased graduation standards when they get to high school. When implemented, this legislation will demand more rigorous courses for graduation, particularly in math and science. To ensure that all students are prepared for these challenges, I support better preparation for elementary and middle school students in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) areas. This will include a review of how Florida rewards students for performance in these areas.

### - *Reform Florida's approach to teacher quality, compensation and removal*

Teacher quality is paramount to an effective education system. Research shows that the most effective teachers produce student gains of almost four times greater than the least effective teachers. Florida must take a critical look and make changes that incentivize better teacher and student performance. I will recommend the following:

#### (A) Provide teacher support structures

The state must take responsibility for supporting our teachers and ensure they meet escalating achievement standards by providing professional development, job-training, and one-on-one support structures. Teachers must know that they have access to career development and support structures that enable them to grow and cope with escalating student performance requirements.

#### (B) Require specific subject area proficiency

Teachers must be proficient to teach the subjects for which they are responsible. Florida must have high standards for teacher competency in discrete subject areas. If a teacher is responsible for instruction in a particular subject area but doesn't have a background in the area, the state must ensure they are sufficiently prepared to teach the subject.

#### (C) Create a merit based compensation system

I believe some portion of teacher compensation must be merit based. My administration will work with teachers to devise a system that rewards teachers for student achievement and advancement. We must move away from a seniority based compensation system that only looks at time on the job and doesn't incentivize achievement. The new system must also ensure that good teachers stay in the classroom. Florida's current system rewards teachers for

leaving the classroom and becoming administrators. Hillsborough County has implemented a merit pay system that has been recognized by the leading edge Gates Gant Foundation as one of five model programs in the United States. The \$100 million dollar grant will implement a 432 measure merit pay system that calculates performance pay for every teacher in each discipline. For their leadership and successfully integrating merit incentives into teacher pay, I applaud Hillsborough County and believe Florida can learn their example.

(D) Phase out tenure

I believe we must phase out the existing tenure system and begin rewarding teachers for student achievement and incentivize excellent teachers to stay in the classroom. Any tenure modifications will only apply to newly hired teachers, or teachers who elect to be rewarded for achievement. Currently, Florida teachers qualify for tenure after three years on the job, with no other considerations. Few professions shield their professionals from risk and guarantee rights after three years of service. Our system should reward achievement and ensure that good teachers don't leave Florida, not automatic indefinite employment.

(E) Empower superintendents and principals to remove non-performing instructional staff

We must stop the practice of simply moving non-performing instructional staff from school to school. This does not help instructional staff improve skills and hurts students who have under-performing or unmotivated teachers.

(F) Institute the High Performing Teacher Exchange Program

Teachers who receive high marks and demonstrate excellence in the classroom should be eligible for incentives that would help them share best practices with low-performing schools. As Governor, I will join with school districts to design exchange programs that reward good teachers and lead to on-the-ground performance improvements.

- *Expand school choice and increase access to quality education for low-income families*

Florida should expand school choice by empowering low-income parents to find the right learning option for their children. The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program has enabled the most economically disadvantaged families in our state to choose the school that best meets their child's needs, and it has done so while producing a net savings to the state. In 2008, the Legislature's independent research arm estimated that taxpayers saved \$1.49 for every dollar in corporate income tax revenue redirected to a scholarship for a disadvantaged child. I advocate eliminating the requirement that low-income children must spend one year in public school before entering the program. I also advocate increasing the maximum scholarship amount faster than statutorily allowed while still preserving savings for taxpayers. In addition, I will ask the Legislature to approve a constitutional amendment to allow parents to have ample choices in the best educational setting for their children, including public, private, virtual or charter schools. School choice must be an option for all Floridians.

- *Leverage Career and Professional Education (CAPE) academies to increase student choice by providing professional certifications*

Florida can increase graduation rates in part by creating more graduation choices for students. Students and their parents must be able to choose an education that leads to higher education or professional certification. Florida has a great tool in the Career and Professional Education (CAPE) academies. CAPE academies provide a statewide planning partnership between the business and education communities in order to attract, expand, and retain targeted, high-value industries and to sustain a strong, knowledge-based economy. My administration will fully deploy CAPE academies and strengthen the link between local business communities and school districts. In addition, I will encourage dual enrollment with high schools and the Florida College System to ensure graduates have skills that are demanded by out state employers.

(a) Connect local industries with school districts

My administration will work with school districts to better communicate with local employers and determine workforce needs. Once a long term need is established, school districts should partner with industry to design programs that accomplish education and certificate needs.

(b) Corporate partnership tax credit program

I will make a corporate tax credit available to private businesses who partner with school districts and purchase equipment for training purposes. I will work with the Legislature to create this program and would suggest a \$100,000 per business maximum.

(c) Fully deploy CAPE academies

I will work with the Florida Department of Education to deploy CAPE academies at every school. Education must inspire students, and CAPE academies make learning real by demonstrating how concepts are applied to the world.

(d) CAPE counseling for students failing high school

I will require school districts to provide a counselor to any student who fails the 10<sup>th</sup> grade FCAT which is required to graduate from a Florida public high school. In Pinellas County, only 16% of students who require alternative paths to graduation actually finish with a high school diploma, a GED, or a special certificate. The system must be more flexible and students at risk of dropping out or failing to achieve a high school diploma must be aware of alternative paths to graduation and success.

- *Support Amendment 8 to “right size the class size”*

I support revising the class size amendment because it will give education communities the flexibility to make small compromises on common sense problems that will save taxpayers millions of dollars and help avoid the imminent funding cliff. Under this proposal, drafted by the Legislature for the November 2010 ballot, class size restrictions will still exist but will be more applicable to real life issues than a one-size fits all cap. The current caps cause unnecessary organizational and financial difficulties. The changes proposed under Amendment 8 will not undermine student achievement and will enhance Florida’s ability to focus on my top priority: student performance.

- *Extend full certification in Florida for Troops-to-Teachers and Teach-for-America teachers*

I support and admire the missions of Troops-to-Teachers and Teach-for-America. I endorse the full licensure of these instructors to teach in Florida upon earning their respective program certification. Further, I will work with local communities to bring in more instructors from these programs.

- *Better integrate technology into the classroom*

Through technology, students can overcome the biggest obstacle to student achievement – access to quality education. Virtual education provides students with access to courses not offered at traditional schools. A child in Escambia County should be able to take an AP physics class taught in Miami without each school district hiring extra faculty. Florida’s system is built around the agrarian economy of the 1800s and we must move into the global economy of the 21st century. I will recommend the following to move Florida towards virtual learning:

(A) Allow instant access to virtual education

Current law prohibits students from participating in certain virtual education programs if that student has not been participating in the public school for an entire year. This unnecessary standard unfairly bars public, home school and private school transfer students from accessing quality online programs.

(B) Open Florida market to allow competition between service providers

Florida should open its market to virtual education providers to will create competition thus increasing quality and lowering prices. Antiquated rules, such as Florida-specific certification requirements and barriers to out-of-state providers, should be removed as they effectively bar high-quality programs from across the country or the world from educating in virtual classrooms and should be removed. In addition, as Florida designs its platform for digital learning material, it must remain accessible to school districts.

(C) Require Florida high school students to take at least one internet based class

I will propose that, wherever possible, Florida require every high school student to complete at least one online course before graduating. A recent study revealed that more than 20% of all U.S. college students were taking at least one online course in the fall of 2007, and that figure will only increase. In fact, between the Fall of 2006 and 2007, the number of students enrolled in one or more online course increased by 12%, totaling the total to nearly 4 million students.

## ➤ Colleges and Universities

*The future of Florida's innovation economy resides in the ability to educate and prepare Floridians for a competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Florida has been very successful providing low cost access to the College and University Systems, but we must take the next step to ensure students finish what they start and graduate with degrees. As Governor, I will better tailor achievement and need based scholarships to those most deserving, strengthen the link between higher education and the business community, and foster an environment that produces and commercializes more intellectual property.*

### - *Incentivize greater STEM degree production*

Florida has a growing need for students skilled in science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) and other related fields. In 2008-09, STEM represented only 18% of degrees awarded by our public universities. However, State University System representatives indicate there is sufficient capacity to accommodate more of students in existing programs, particularly at the graduate level. As Governor, I will leverage the available capacity and encourage higher education institutions to grow opportunities to produce more STEM graduates. I will do this by applying the Succeed Florida grant model. Grants through this program were awarded for several years to increase of the number of nursing and teaching degrees awarded in our public and private colleges and universities. I believe this model can lower costs for students and the state, target increased degree production in STEM and high demand fields, and in turn provide better employment for Floridians. Further, I support discounted tuition for Florida economy's targeted degrees, and would consider loan forgiveness programs for graduates with these degrees who take a job and work in Florida after college or graduate school. An emphasis on these fields will build a workforce that will attract companies and grow Florida's economy.

### - *Link education funding to graduation rates*

As Governor, I will have a plan for colleges and universities to help students finish what they start. One way to do this is to focus funding on completion outcomes. Florida must reform because our universities currently graduate less than 60% of their students. Even more troubling, almost 50% of undergraduates attending Florida's 11 public universities receive Bright Futures scholarships. Therefore, half of the student body is going to college for free and only about half of our students graduate. I will urge the Legislature to create a Success Fund that rewards completion so that colleges and universities will be invested in helping students successfully complete their degree or certificate programs. I recommend that each school have tailored graduation goals based on their student populations, and I will work with higher education stakeholders to define "completion" and set reasonable expectations.

### - *Produce more professional certificates, undergraduate and graduate degrees*

To further prioritize degree production I will ask the Legislature to increase support for the Florida Community College System (FCCS) to allow these institutions to continue their recent double digit growth in student enrollment. Community Colleges serve almost a million Floridians today in numerous certificates and degree programs at an affordable cost to students as well as to the state. The FCCS also serves as a primary access point to higher education, as many students begin there and then transfer to a state university or private college. This "2+2" program has been a national model for several decades and has enabled millions of Floridians to earn a college degree. To increase degree production, Florida should also engage not-for-profit independent colleges and universities by supporting the Florida Resident Access Grant (FRAG) and the Access to Better Learning and Education Grant (ABLE). While more than 25% of Florida undergraduate degrees are from private institutions, the state only spends 1.3% of higher education funding on these students. This tool helps leverage private investment and assists more than 400,000 Florida Students.

- *Refocus Florida's financial aid programs to accomplish concrete goals*

As Governor, I will make certain that our financial programs achieve two discrete goals: preventing “brain drain” of students out of Florida, and tailoring financial assistance programs to those most in need.

(A) Build performance incentives into Bright Futures

Bright Futures is Florida's largest financial aid program and must be maintained but refined to ensure it is accomplishing its core mission. I propose that Bright Futures be allowed to reward excellence, promote STEM graduates, and limit the retaking of failed or dropped classes.

(B) Encourage students to apply for federal student aid before state funds are awarded

I believe that whenever possible, state funds should be geared toward those students with the greatest need. It should be encouraged that before a student can receive state funds, he or she should apply for federal student aid using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

(C) Provide greater flexibility for students to pursue graduate degrees

I believe that in certain circumstances, Bright Futures funds should be used for graduate coursework. Many students enter college with AP or IB credits. We should reward students who accelerate their graduation schedule and allow them use Bright Futures funding where it will derive the most benefit.

(D) Integrated financial aid solutions

I support the Legislature's recent changes to tuition, Bright Futures, and Florida Prepaid. As Governor, I will take a holistic view of how we fund education and won't recommend changes without considering the impact on the system. I understand the interconnectedness of funding education and will work with the Legislature to ensure our economy has the tools necessary to grow.

- *Develop stronger public/private partnerships for higher education in Florida*

I will promote private sector partnerships to focus on commercializing technologies coming out of Florida universities, and as Governor, I will create a competitive grant program to match a private seed investment in universities. This program would offer a 1:1 match with the award amounts dependent upon the total program funding. The benefits will include focused research that is likely to result in commercialized products, better relationships between high-tech employers and students, and real world research projects for students and introductions for future jobs. Florida has similar grant models, such as the State Matching Grant Program, which historically are very successful. When the state returns to financial health, I will prioritize programs that leverage state funds and increase the productivity and workforce emerging from our state universities. These programs will increase the amount of research being conducted in our universities and lead to direct job growth.

## ➤ Workforce Education

*A 21<sup>st</sup> century economy requires a versatile workforce. The days of Floridians beginning a job after high school or college and staying with that company for 30 years are over. Many Floridians lost jobs in construction and on the Space Coast due to the economy, while Panhandle jobs are in jeopardy because of the recent Gulf oil spill. As Governor, I will grow new industries in Florida and provide resources to help transition our workforce into the new economy. It is imperative that we have a rapid response plan in place for preparing Floridians for new job opportunities that our future will bring. A vibrant economy must be able to constantly train and re-train our workforce to succeed in a variety of industries. Jobs are my number one priority and continuing education is the tool that will help Floridians transition into new industries.*

- *Prioritize targeted workforce training program funding*

The recruitment and expansion of businesses in Florida is reliant upon our ability to provide a qualified workforce in a short amount of time. Florida's talent matters because we compete with other states to lure and retain high-skill, high wage businesses. As Governor, I will lead Florida's effort to recruit companies that are important to Florida's economic development and ensure rapid response educational programs are in place to meet targeted business and industry workforce needs. Re-training workers allows upward mobility for the current workforce. According to site selection professionals, who advise businesses on where they should relocate, Florida's targeted training programs are "chronically underfunded" especially for large projects. Last year, Florida spent \$7 million on these programs, while Texas spent \$40 million and Georgia spent \$50 million on workforce redevelopment and training to suit industry needs. This is especially significant because private business matches the state's investment. Florida must prioritize funding for workforce programs, or else we will continue to lose opportunities to create jobs for Floridians.

- *Develop the Florida "Back to Work Program" through competitive funding for programs that target local industry needs*

Florida must actively seek business partners to initiate, develop, and implement training programs that award industry-recognized certificates. This is a win-win partnership. Our school districts, community colleges, and private colleges can offer programs that produce graduates that have the knowledge, skills and ability that that our industry partners need. Florida needs to harness all of its post-secondary resources to put Florida back to work. This competitive grant program would offer educational institutions the chance to compete to offer new programs that produce graduates that earn industry-recognized certificates. Industry partnerships would be a primary requirement in order to compete for program start up funds.

- *Update the Community College funding formula*

Currently, Florida funds each community college based on the previous year's enrollment. We need a funding formula that projects enrollment instead of reacting to the previous year's needs. The Community Colleges represent a unique asset to Florida, and especially in difficult economic times, the state should encourage enrollment growth by using updated information.