



FADSS

Florida Association of
District School Superintendents

**SUPERINTENDENT
DEVELOPMENT**

**GOVERNMENTAL
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Florida Association of District School Superintendents

April 13, 2010

The Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor of Florida
Plaza Level 5, The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Veto of CS/CS/SB 6

Dear Governor Crist:

The Florida Association of District School Superintendents endorse and embrace the goals and major concepts contained in CS/CS/SB 6. We support the payment of teachers based on performance. This legislation is a complete overhaul of the teacher compensation and appraisal system that has been in place for decades. We recognize the need for change. However, successful implementation is dependent upon, even conditioned upon, the stakeholders working together to ensure that teachers who are highly effective are well compensated. Unfortunately, this bill has eroded the morale of our teachers on whom we depend to teach Florida's students. This bill has so divided teachers, principals, administrators, and superintendents that it is impossible to implement collaboratively. Consequently, we urge you to veto this legislation.

Our specific concerns with the bill:

End-of-Course (EOCs) exams - The bill requires districts to develop end-of-course exams to determining learning gains. This is a massive undertaking and will require school districts to develop EOCs for every grade level (K-12) and every course. For our largest districts this could mean in excess of 500 EOCs. The cost is prohibitive in a time of severe economic constraint. Hillsborough and Duval Counties have developed EOC's for over half of their courses and have cost estimates based on the actual cost for development. These costs could be well over hundreds of millions of dollars for the entire state if each district is required to develop their own tests. Use of consortia or the purchase of assessments from districts having valid and reliable tests, which is required by law for the purpose of withstanding legal scrutiny, should reduce the cost considerably. DOE is developing statewide EOC's for only three courses over the next three years at an estimated annual cost of \$1.5 million.

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Performance Fund - The bill requires a set-aside of our total FEFP beginning in the 2011/12 fiscal year for the purpose of developing EOC's, performance pay systems, and assessment systems, as well as providing adjustments to teacher salary base pay. Please keep in mind that for the 2010/11 fiscal year, we will be reducing our budgets again and it will be next to impossible to provide any increase for anyone. Many districts did not provide increases last year – next year it will not be likely anyone will be able to do this. We are also facing the loss of federal stimulus dollars. How will we be able to reduce our budgets again in the 2011/12 fiscal year to create this 5% set-aside without reducing salaries – let alone create new appraisal systems and provide salary adjustments?

Contracts With Teachers - Under the bill, new teachers beginning on July 1, 2010, will be provided an at-will contract subject to termination on any day for 196 days. After that, the teacher will be provided 4 annual contracts. The 6th contract after the probationary period will be an annual contract – every year until retirement. This contract is renewable at the discretion of the administration and school board.

Will Teachers want to come to teach in Florida? An annual contract subject to annual renewal does not provide any stability to a teacher. This calls into question whether Florida values the teaching profession enough to provide some degree of job stability. An annual contract subject to renewal each year for the rest of a teacher's career could have the effect of stifling creativity and innovation. Teachers may lack the motivation to teach a new area or grade when his or her appraisal is based upon student performance. Teachers may seek out the "safe" positions that will ensure an appraisal rating of effective or highly effective. A process that provides a multiyear contract with renewal dependent on assessment and with the ability to dismiss unsatisfactory teachers through an expedited process would be a better approach.

Certificate Renewal - The bill would permit certificates (teaching licensure) to be non renewed based on performance appraisal. A teacher must have highly effective or effective ratings for 4 out of the last 5 years in order to be eligible for certificate renewal. Teachers (any teacher) may not have a needs improvement rating for more than one year without losing their license to practice their profession. This is very restrictive and punitive. This nonrenewal will not only end the teaching career for the teacher in a particular district but the teacher will be forced to practice their profession in another state.

Use of Experience or Degree in Setting the Schedule - The bill does NOT permit the district to set the schedule using experience or degrees held. As educational stakeholders, it is incumbent on us to reward training and educational achievement. Earning a higher degree in a teacher's area of teaching produces higher student achievement. What message are we sending to our students that, while we ask them to value education, we, ourselves, do not reward it within our own institution?

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This legislation was passed at a time when school superintendents are facing the final implementation of the Class Size Reduction provision. Moreover, this next fiscal year is the final year of federal stimulus funding. During these times of severe budget restraint is not the time to overhaul the teacher appraisal and compensation system.

Finally, reform is sustainable and long-lasting when it is developed collaboratively. It has been speculated that one of the reasons Florida was not awarded the Race to the Top grant was due to the lack of support by all of the education stakeholders. Under your leadership, you can bring all of the stakeholders together to champion true education reform in Florida. Please veto CS/CS/SB 6.

Sincerely,



Margaret A. Smith
President



William J. Montford, III
Chief Executive Officer