



Florida's Latest Strategy for Improving Schools Promises More of the Same – and Uncertain Results

Introduction

Florida is embarking on a new phase in a long series of education changes designed to improve student achievement and ultimately to enhance economic growth in the state. After years of previous “reforms” of the K-12 system, many of uncertain benefit, the state is committing itself to another ambitious set of goals and actions it hopes will improve public schools.

New initiatives to improve public schools occur frequently throughout the nation and in Florida. Policymakers understand the well-established benefits of increased educational attainment both for individuals, who can expect to earn higher salaries with higher levels of education, and for states, whose economic activity increases with a more highly trained and educated workforce. (See the FCFEP [Issue Brief](#), *Florida's State University System: An Investment that Creates Jobs*.¹)

Florida leaders have sought for decades to improve education as a way to broaden the state's economic base beyond tourism, agriculture, and services. Florida historically has recorded poor or mediocre rankings in many measures of education achievement. The result is a citizenry that is not particularly well-educated compared to other states. Today Florida ranks 33rd in the nation in the percentage of its residents with a high school education, 30th in the percentage with a bachelor's degree or more, and 28th in the percentage with an advanced degree.² Major business organizations suggest that “the future of Florida's economy hangs in the balance” because of a “talent gap” – “a vast and growing unmet need for a highly skilled and educated workforce.”³

Building a more effective education system is a complex task both nationally and in Florida, where 190,000 teachers and administrators educate 2.6 million students of diverse backgrounds, with more than 300 home languages,⁴ in 4,400 schools.

To address persistent problems, Florida policymakers are intensifying the particular education reform strategy that began taking root 15 years ago. The strategy is based on higher standards for students,

more testing, accountability measures designed to hold schools and teachers responsible for results, and “school choice,” including charter schools and vouchers.

Intensifying the existing strategy will lead to new standards, new tests, more charter schools, and new pay plans linking teachers’ salaries and their continued employment to student achievement. These changes are likely to be controversial.

Questions exist not only about the success of the strategy, but also about whether schools are funded well enough to make the kind of performance gains being sought. The fact is that the State of Florida spends less than the national average to educate each student. Furthermore, the state has shifted more of the costs to local school boards in the last decade. Today the state provides less money per student than it did three years ago.

The Florida Department of Education’s (DOE) goals and activities to improve schools are laid out in detail in its application for \$700 million, provided over four years, in the federal Race to the Top (RTTT) education reform grant competition. If Florida is awarded these additional funds, half will go to DOE and half to local school districts. Most of the money would be spent to develop standards, curricula, tests, and professional development programs – not directly in the classroom. The amount pales in comparison to the \$18 billion spent by the state and local school districts on public schools in Florida this year.

This report examines Florida’s latest strategy to improve student achievement, lays out potential pitfalls the state may face in achieving success, and outlines the state’s past efforts to reform public schools. Finally, the report discusses other strategies that should be considered for improved academic achievement.

Views Differ on How to Improve Education

The education reform strategy incorporated in Race to the Top (standards, assessment, accountability, school choice) is hotly debated both nationally and in Florida. One side believes that current results from public schools are unacceptable, that a major shakeup is needed, and that more accountability and school choice are necessary to get satisfactory results. They advocate making it easier to dismiss ineffective teachers and to place more effective teachers in low-achieving schools. Others contend that the testing and accountability movement is “at best a waste of time and at worst dangerously counter-productive” and that “schools cannot be expected to remedy educational deficits which have social or economic roots.”⁵ They argue that insufficient resources and an overemphasis on testing make the challenging job of educating children even harder.

The debate flared into a battle in Florida during the 2010 legislative session, when Senate Bill 6, which would have changed the way teachers are paid, generated strong opposition and eventually a gubernatorial veto. That opposition was an extension of long-standing objections to Florida’s testing

and accountability mandates, which many believe lead to mere “teaching to the test” and crowd out other subjects important to educating students.⁶ Skeptics of the accountability path contend that education funding has not kept pace with the requirements of educating a diverse, often disadvantaged student population. And they object that there’s little evidence from reputable studies that many so-called “reforms” actually increase student learning.

In fact, education research provides little clear direction about how to improve schools. For example, there’s no consensus about whether students in charter schools or those receiving vouchers for private schools learn more than students in traditional public schools. But a few conclusions are shared by most researchers. It’s generally accepted that quality early childhood programs are beneficial and that smaller schools and smaller classes (particularly in the early grades) are associated with learning gains.

It’s also known that test scores are strongly correlated with income,⁷ disabilities, and English-language proficiency,⁸ and a growing body of research indicates that “Classroom teachers have a far bigger impact on student achievement than any other factor in education, an impact that literally can make or break a student’s chances for success.”⁹

In essence, the current education reform debate boils down to a discussion about to what extent “demography is destiny” – how much the circumstances of students’ lives determine their success in school. One side says more than tests and accountability measures are needed to help disadvantaged students succeed. Reformers who advocate more accountability measures argue that all children can succeed if they attend schools with highly qualified teachers and principals.

Demographic Changes Bring Major Challenges

Regardless of viewpoints on education reform strategies, no one disputes the challenges involved. Despite decades of trying, some education reformers admit,

We don’t know how to provide effective schools for all....[Schools] are preparing the majority of white, Asian, and minority middle class students for higher education, though some slip through the cracks. The school performance problem is severe for low-income minority students (especially African Americans in big cities and Hispanic immigrants) who generally do not learn what they need.¹⁰

School dropout statistics illustrate the divide. Three in 10 students nationally will drop out before earning a high school diploma – but of disadvantaged minority students five in 10 will leave without graduating. “[T]wo very different worlds exist within American public schooling. In one, earning a diploma is the norm, something expected of every student; in the other, it is not.”¹¹

The dropout problem has reached a crisis stage in part because, “Over time, the public school population has come to consist of proportionally fewer traditionally higher-performing white students and more members of historically underserved groups, most notably Latinos.”¹²

That demographic pattern is pronounced in Florida. In 1979, 69% of Florida public school students were white and 31% minority. Thirty years later, 44% are white and 56% minority. In those three decades, Hispanic students increased by 588,556, black students by 260,037, whites by 125,293, and Asian students by 57,397.¹³ White and Asian students – who have grown by smaller numbers – graduate at higher rates than blacks and Hispanics.¹⁴

The accountability reformers acknowledge demographic changes but believe they can be overcome with the right reforms. For example, they urge changes in teacher-assignment policies. Schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students are often staffed with the least experienced and sometimes least-effective teachers because many teachers with seniority obtain assignments in schools with higher-performing students.

We disproportionately assign our most vulnerable students to the least able teachers. This pattern repeats in state after state and school district after school district throughout this country. If we are to give low-income students and students of color a fair shot at academic success, we must ensure that these students get their fair share of well-equipped and effective teachers.¹⁵

Florida has made efforts in recent years to decrease the numbers of teachers in high-poverty schools who are in their first-year, temporarily certified, or teaching a subject for which they are not certified. Nevertheless, those teachers remain disproportionately in high-poverty schools.¹⁶

School Achievement Results Reflect Florida’s Demographic Challenges

High school graduation rates

- ✓ White = 81%
- ✓ Black Non-Hispanic = 59%
- ✓ Hispanic = 66%
- ✓ All = 72%

3rd Grade FCAT Reading Scores (% Achieving Proficient or higher)

- ✓ White = 83%
- ✓ Black = 56%
- ✓ Hispanic = 64%
- ✓ All = 71%

NAEP Math 4th Grade Proficiency

- ✓ White = 53%
- ✓ Black = 20%
- ✓ Hispanic = 33%
- ✓ All = 40%

(Source: Florida Department of Education)

Race to the Top Shows Florida's Next School-Improvement Strategy

In the midst of the debate over strategies for school reform comes Florida's application for \$700 million of \$4.4 billion set aside by the Obama Administration for education incentive funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Florida's application reveals its strategy for improving schools over the next few years. It echoes the department's existing strategic plan¹⁷ and its programs will be pursued, although more slowly, even if Florida does not receive the new federal money, state Commissioner of Education Eric Smith says.¹⁸

Most local school districts, many legislators, and education and business groups,¹⁹ including the state's teacher union, the Florida Education Association (FEA), have signed onto the state's application.²⁰ The state hopes to be among the chosen when the winners are announced by September 1.

Florida's application sets three bold goals:²¹

- For the high-school graduating class of 2015, double the percentage of students who earn at least a year's worth of college credits (from 22% to 44%), by increasing the high-school graduation rate (from 59% in 2005 to 85%) and raising the percentage of students who enter college (from 34% to 63%);
- By 2015, cut in half the test-score achievement gap between wealthier, non-minority students and low-income, minority students and the gap in the rates of high-school graduation, college-going, and college credit-earning. (The current test-score gap is a more than 20% difference between low-poverty and high-poverty students in 4th- and 8th-grade reading and math.)
- By 2015, equal or surpass every other state in the percentage of students scoring "proficient" or better on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math and reading tests administered to a sample of the nation's students.

To achieve those goals, Florida's Department of Education says it will rely on a belief that "highly effective teachers and leaders make the difference."²² Although the state will also increase the number of charter schools and direct more resources to schools with low student test scores, Florida's efforts will focus on the state's teachers and principals – including "merit pay" or "pay-for-performance," programs that tie teacher pay to some standard of performance in the classroom.

Florida plans to adopt a system that measures test-score improvement by each student and ties the student's performance to the teacher. This student-growth measure would be the primary factor in evaluating teachers and principals and determining any future salary increases. Furthermore, school districts would base decisions on employment contracts – "tenure," or permanent job security – on those evaluations.

The merit-pay concept has been controversial for decades. Advocates of merit pay contend that there's no evidence that the components of the current system – years of service and the degree(s) earned by the teacher – correlate with student learning. They say merit pay will reward the best teachers and weed out others.

Opponents object to tying salaries to the achievement level of students of widely varying abilities, family background and support, and previous educational experiences. Moreover, a study of the most prominent merit-pay plans across the nation “found no conclusive evidence to link the new merit pay system with higher student achievement.”²³

Nevertheless, the Race to the Top competition brings new energy to merit pay, which now has become an important goal in federal education strategy.

New Standards and Assessments Are on the Way

Whether Florida receives Race to the Top funds or not, big changes are on the way in the Sunshine State Standards and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) – major elements of Florida's education policy for more than a decade.

Beginning this fall, the Florida Department of Education will begin making the transition from the existing FCAT to a new generation of tests: FCAT 2.0 and Florida End-of-Course Assessments.²⁴

In addition, Florida will soon adopt new standards²⁵ that will eventually replace the Sunshine State Standards (subject-level expectations of what students should know, originally adopted in 1996). The state is one of 48 states voluntarily participating in the development of Common Core State Standards, a national effort led by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Adopting these new standards in English/language arts and mathematics will necessitate years of work.²⁶ The new standards must be incorporated into schools, curricula designed to teach the standards, new tests developed to measure how well students learn what is expected, and data systems revamped to tie student learning outcomes to teacher pay.

Potential Pitfalls in Florida's Latest Strategy

Ambitious education aspirations don't necessarily translate into achievable results. For example, consider the goal articulated in the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act – that *all* children will be proficient in reading and math by 2014. The law allows states to set their own levels of proficiency, allowing many to claim great progress on their states' versions of the FCAT with high percentages of students now proficient in reading and math. On the NAEP test, however – the best assessment of rigorous student learning – only about a third of 4th- and 8th-grade students were actually proficient in reading and math in 2007,²⁷ only a slight improvement over 2002.²⁸

Similarly, questions arise about the ultimate success of Florida's ambitious high-school graduation and college-attendance goals. **Four factors indicate the difficulties ahead:**

(1) Florida has a history of education initiatives with little to show for it.

Education policy initiatives in the U.S. in recent decades are littered with failed efforts that commanded energy and money before fading away due to lack of results.²⁹ The same applies to Florida. An expert on Florida education policy, Dr. Carolyn Herrington, director of the Center on Education Policy at Florida State University, has characterized the state's history this way: "Efforts to improve have been long-lasting, sustained, persistent and largely ineffective."³⁰

The state "has remained with one strategy for over 30 years: accountability," Herrington wrote in 2004. As early as 1971, the state legislature passed an "educational accountability act," followed by new versions in 1973, 1976, and 1991. In those and other laws, Florida established minimum standards for basic subjects, increased the number of courses required for high-school graduation, tried (and failed with) merit pay, mandated school improvement plans, and made a host of other changes, she wrote. More changes and heightened controversy came in 1999 with the adoption of the A+ Plan and subsequent revisions, setting Florida on its current FCAT-based course.

The merit pay issue illustrates the way some "reforms" are implemented, revised, and retained with little effect in Florida.

Implementing performance-based or merit pay plans has proven difficult throughout the nation for a variety of reasons, in part because they have been considered "top-down" efforts imposed on teachers without enough input from them. In addition, making teacher evaluation methods valid, reliable, and fair is difficult. Questions arise about how best to measure teacher performance, how to link pay to various levels of performance, how to safeguard against preferential treatment, and how to measure the performance of teachers when they perform team tasks involving other teachers.³¹

Florida moved forward on merit pay with a plan adopted by the legislature in 2001 and revised in 2007 -- creating what Florida DOE calls "the most recent rendition of the statewide performance pay program."³²

But in its RTTT application, Florida DOE admitted practical difficulties with the merit pay system. Linking data on teacher performance with student growth is currently used "only cautiously," DOE wrote, "based on the knowledge that a more sophisticated measure of student growth is needed to further examine individual teacher performance."³³

Furthermore, DOE said, the current system lacks "comparable student learning measures for courses and grades outside the state assessment system."³⁴ So if a teacher is not among the 35% of Florida teachers assigned reading or math courses in grades 4 through 10 -- where FCAT results are available -- there is no testing data available to judge the teacher's performance.

Without a lot of additional and expensive work, in other words, Florida is not ready to implement a meaningful merit pay system, despite previous requirements.

In addition to teacher pay issues, a variety of other changes have been made to Florida K-12 education. They include a 2002 law requiring that third-grade students be retained unless they reach a minimum level on the FCAT reading test; establishing alternative routes for teacher certification for those without an education degree; establishing new middle school promotion requirements; and mandating additional math and science courses for high school graduation.

But all that policy activity has yielded at best minor improvements in student achievement, as measured by comparisons with other states. On the plus side, Florida students have made gains in recent years on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test, although it is unknown whether the results are due to standards and the FCAT or other factors, such as smaller class sizes.³⁵

On other measures, however, Florida's rankings among the states remain about the same as they were two decades ago – in the bottom half or worse.

- The percentage of adult Floridians with a high-school diploma rose from 37th in the nation in 1990 to 33rd in 2006, but the percentage with a bachelor's degree or more slipped from 29th to 30th.³⁶
- Florida students scored 43rd in the nation in reading on the SAT in 1987-88 and 39th in 2008-09, but fell from 42nd in math in 1987-88 to 46th in the nation in 2008-09.³⁷
- Only six states recorded a lower high-school graduation rate in 2007-08.³⁸

(2) Florida already has a hard time making the current testing and accountability system work.

Even if the testing/accountability strategy is an appropriate course of action, implementing the complex changes required for new standards, tests, and pay plans may be difficult. Even Florida's existing testing and accountability system has been beset by problems and questions this year.

FCAT results were weeks late despite the requirements of the \$254 million contract between the state Department of Education and the test-score contractor. When the results were released, 46 of the 67 school districts questioned them, prompting two audits by DOE and a further delay in determining each school's A-to-F grade.³⁹ Those grades determine which schools receive additional "School Recognition Funds" and what kind of changes might be required at each school – possibly including teacher and principal reassignments.

The questions raised by the school districts concerned “learning gains” of students – how much they progressed from one year to the next. Measurement of such gains lies at the foundation of merit pay plans.

Because of funding limitations, the state Department of Education had already changed grading of each student’s FCAT writing work by cutting the number of reviewers from two to one. Experts say that the demand for more standardized tests throughout the nation has overwhelmed the few testing companies available for the work and lowers the quality of their work.⁴⁰

The state’s education data systems also need work. DOE admits in its RTTT application that the system has limitations. A reviewer of the state’s initial application noted that “Florida also indicates that they lack a relevant and reliable evaluation system to assess student performance.”⁴¹ In other words, the processes and data systems to implement merit pay aren’t yet ready for prime time.

(3) State policies conflict with each other.

Reaching Florida’s goals – to graduate more students from high school and increase the number entering college – will be made more difficult by other education policies that may work against high-school graduation and entry into college.

For example, tuition has been rising 15% a year, with more increases in sight, because of inadequate state revenue and legislators’ belief that Florida state universities are priced too low in comparison to other states. College affordability took another hit when the legislature cut the Bright Futures scholarship program this year, at a time when unemployment reached a 30-year high and large numbers of Floridians are already in debt.

Similarly, the legislature raised high-school graduation requirements in its 2010 session. More math and science courses will be necessary and new end-of-course tests in algebra, geometry, and biology will be phased in over the next few years. These higher standards are designed to make high-school graduates better prepared for college, although they may also make it tougher for some students to earn a high-school diploma.

(4) Florida historically funds schools at a low level, and there’s no indication that significant additional money for education is on the horizon.

During reform efforts over recent years, one factor has remained constant: a low level of state spending on public schools compared to the rest of the nation.

In the 1997-98 school year, according to the U.S. Department of Education, Florida ranked 34th in the nation on expenditures per student. In 2007-08, Florida's ranking was 36th. In the last decade, Florida always ranked in the bottom third of states.⁴²

Similarly, despite the stated interest in teacher quality, Florida has consistently ranked in the bottom of the states in investment in teacher salaries – about 11% lower than the national average. Florida ranked 27th among the states in 1989-90; 29th in 2006-07; and 32nd in 2008-09.⁴³

In the last decade, the legislature has shifted more of the responsibility for funding public schools to local school boards. A decade ago, the state provided 52% of all funding for public schools in Florida, but by 2007-08 the state share fell to 40% (federal funding providing the remainder.) Local school districts' share of school funding rose from 41% to 51% in the same period.⁴⁴

For the new fiscal year that began July 1, the Florida Legislature did provide an education budget that requires more state funds than local funds. But the total will be about \$300 less per student than it was three years ago⁴⁵ -- and would be even lower without federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The More Things Change, the More They've Stayed the Same

Improving public schools is essential to creating opportunities for Florida students and providing a well-educated workforce for employers. More than 2.6 million students receive their basic education from Florida public schools, and in many cases the education they receive propels them to college or to satisfying, productive careers. But too many students fall through the cracks, struggling early, dropping out, and failing to obtain the learning and skills necessary to prosper.

Students, their parents, policymakers, employers, and all Floridians should expect more, even though the task of educating all students to a high level may be impossible. The expectations for improvement rest not only on teachers, principals, and other school staff, but also on the system put in place to carry out what the Florida Constitution calls "a paramount duty of the state."

Florida's public school system has been changed many times over the last three decades – mostly in a series of accountability "reforms" that has paid few dividends in many measures of student achievement. In most cases, these initiatives have not been accompanied by significant increases in funding. Instead, when the legislature finishes funding public schools each year, Florida remains in the bottom third in funding compared to other states. Some reformers insist that money matters much less than accountability in improving schools, although it might be said that Florida has yet to try the former but instead has focused on the latter.

The state's new reform path will require much more work to put new standards, tests, pay plans, and data systems into place. Those processes will eat up most of the money Florida seeks in the RTTT application. New money for teacher salaries, lower class sizes, or any other enhancements will have to come from existing revenue sources, when the state is already strapped for funds. Even worse, after the 2010-11 school year, the state will need to replace almost \$900 million in expiring federal stimulus funds plugged into the education budget.

Florida's pursuit of higher student achievement is necessary and essential to the economic future of the state and schoolchildren. But the next stage of reforms should be entered into with a clear understanding of the difficulties, of the mediocre results of past accountability reforms, of other student-assistance programs not funded, and of the need for policymakers themselves to be accountable for their part in achieving success.

What Else Might Be Done to Improve Florida Schools?

The movement to raise standards, require more tests, and implement more accountability measures represents only one strain of possible school-improvement strategies. Another set of improvements focuses on providing more individualized supports for students, especially those at-risk of failure or dropping out.

Florida DOE acknowledges in its RTTT application that "low-performing schools are often mired in problems such as poverty, limited resources, and unsafe learning environments, which often lead to frustration, disillusionment, and low levels of academic achievement."⁴⁶ Research shows that many dropouts suffer from the same ills. Some need a job to care for family members; some become a parent; some leave because of failure or other academic challenges linked to poor education in earlier grades. Few have involved parents: In a survey of 500 dropouts, only 21% reported that their parents were "very involved" in their schooling.⁴⁷

In addition to better classroom instruction throughout the school years, those who study dropouts recommend "a wide range of supplemental services or intensive assistance strategies for struggling students in schools – attendance monitoring, school and peer counseling, mentoring, tutoring, double class periods, internships, service-learning, summer school programs, and more," including smaller class sizes.⁴⁸ Raising the compulsory school age from 16 in Florida to 17 or 18 is another recommended anti-dropout strategy⁴⁹ and is already in place in 24 states.

But Florida's RTTT application addresses student-assistance strategies in only minor ways. For example, DOE proposes to work with one school district to establish one pilot "community compact" to provide supports for at-risk children. Local school districts – not the state – would be responsible for the additional interventions mentioned in the application. Those include adding 300 hours a year in extended learning time at some low-achieving schools, offering one additional full-time prekindergarten

program per school district with “persistently lowest-achieving” schools, and implementing targeted dropout prevention programs.⁵⁰

DOE recognizes the value of such programs, but the state does not fund them.

If the state DOE believes these unfunded intervention strategies can help achieve Florida’s educational goals, as is reflected in its RTTT application, then they should be pursued aggressively. DOE should ask the legislature to provide the resources to reach students whose future lies in the balance.

According to the latest U.S. DOE data, Florida ranks 36th among the states and the District of Columbia in per-student public school funding. To reach the midpoint of the state rankings (a rank occupied today by No. 25 Kansas), Florida would be spending about \$800 more per student each year. The legislature would be appropriating about \$2.1 billion more per year to K-12 education that it does today.⁵¹

If funded at that level, Florida schools could provide more supports like extended learning time for struggling students, estimated by DOE to cost about \$1,000 per student.⁵² The state could implement more dropout prevention, mentoring, tutoring, afterschool, and parental involvement programs, keep class sizes lower, and provide other improvements to classroom instruction.

The legislature could raise significant new revenue by eliminating unfair tax breaks that cost billions of dollars each year and modernizing Florida’s tax structure. (See FCFEP’s “A Balanced Approach to Building a Budget That Meets Floridians’ Needs in a Crisis” [here](#).)

With more funding, Florida could pursue a more well-rounded multiyear school improvement strategy, not one focused primarily on intensified accountability.

This is the second of three reports examining Florida’s public education systems – universities, K-12 schools, and prekindergarten. They are designed to show how the state can achieve a better-educated workforce to benefit students, the state’s residents and businesses, and the overall Florida economy.

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Endnotes

¹ Florida's State University System: An Investment that Creates Jobs.

<http://www.fcsep.org/attachments/20100505--State%20Universities%20Are%20Proven%20Job%20Creators.pdf>

² U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007 American Community Survey, Tables R1501, R1502, and R1503.

³ Closing the Talent Gap, A Business Perspective. Florida Council of 100 with Florida Chamber of Commerce.

<http://www.onevoiceforflorida.com/media/46b50cc2-7501-4da8-80b7-64fe551b65fc.pdf>

The business organizations said each student requiring remedial training costs Florida businesses an estimated \$459 per worker; that each high school dropout costs taxpayers as much as \$288,000 in government payments and healthcare, public safety and other costs; and that “to reach the education level of the 10 most productive states within the next two decades, Florida will need 4.5 million adults with baccalaureate degrees (1.3 million more than expected at current attainment rates) and, within five years, will need at least 100,000 more science and technology professionals than we are on track to produce.”

⁴ Florida Department of Education Race to the Top Phase II application, (RTTT), June 1, 2010, Page 9.

<http://www.fldoe.org/arra/pdf/topapp.pdf>

⁵ Rick Hess blog, *Education Week*, June 18, 2010.

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rick_hess_straight_up/2010/06/divided_democrats_the_two_narratives_of_school_reform.html

⁶ “A Study of the Effects of High-Stakes Testing and School Grading in Florida,” Florida Forum for Progressive Policy, 2006.

⁷ Economix blog, New York Times, August 27, 2009. <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/27/sat-scores-and-family-income/>

⁸ “Beating the Odds,” Council of Great City Schools, March 2010. <http://www.cgcs.org/Pubs/BT9.pdf>

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¹⁰ “Spending Money When It is Not Clear What Works,” Paul T. Hill, September 2007.

¹¹ “Closing the Graduation Gap,” Christopher P. Swanson, Ph.D., Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, April 2009. http://www.edweek.org/media/cities_in_crisis_2009.pdf

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “Growth of Minority Student Population in Florida Public Schools, 2009-10,” Florida Department of Education Data Report, May 2010.

¹⁴ RTTT, Page 70.

¹⁵ “Fighting for Quality and Equality, Too,” The Education Trust.

http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/publications/files/QualityEquity_4.pdf

¹⁶ RTTT, Page 165.

¹⁷ Florida’s Next Generation PreK-20 Education Strategic Plan.

http://www.fldoe.org/Strategic_Plan/pdfs/StrategicPlanApproved.pdf

¹⁸ “Race to the Top and Common Core Taking Florida Where It Wants to Go With Education, Commissioner Smith Says,” St. Petersburg Times. <http://blogs.tampabay.com/schools/2010/06/race-to-the-top-and-common-core-taking-florida-where-it-wants-to-go-with-education-commissioner-smit.html>

¹⁹ Florida’s application touts support from Florida’s legislative leaders (members of the Florida Congressional Delegation from both parties, president of the Florida Senate, speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, and the chairs of the state legislative committees primarily responsible for education), Associated Industries of Florida, Florida Association of District School Superintendents, Florida School Boards Association, Florida Association of School Administrators, Florida Chamber of Commerce, Florida Council of 100, Florida Education Association, Florida Education Foundation, Florida Philanthropic Network, Space Florida, and Workforce Florida, Inc., the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations, Florida After School Network, Florida PTA, Southern Poverty Law Center, and the Florida State Conference NAACP Branches. RTTT, Page 53-54.

²⁰ The FEA opposed the original application but signed on after Governor Charlie Crist appointed a working group, including FEA representation, to work out differences over the state’s approach. The Phase II application agreed to has been endorsed by almost all local school districts and three-fourths of local teachers’ unions.

²¹ RTTT, Page 24.

²² RTTT, Page 11.

²³ “Teacher Merit Pay: What Do We Know?” Education Commission of the States, June 2010.

<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/86/40/8640.pdf>

²⁴ Bureau of K-12 Assessment, Florida Department of Education. Accessed June 30, 2010. <http://fcats.fldoe.org/>

²⁵ RTTT, Page 74.

²⁶ “Common Standards and Assessments,” Florida Department of Education presentation, Florida Organization of Instructional Leaders, May 13, 2010. <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/pdf/CommonFOILMay.pdf>

²⁷ “Mapping America’s Education Progress 2008,” U.S. Department of Education.

<http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/progress/nation.html>

²⁸ “The Nation’s Report Card, Reading 2002,” NCES, U.S. Department of Education.

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²⁹ For example: “[T]he truth is that for decades public education in this country has undergone abrupt swings from one extreme to the other.... Most programs to improve education over the years have failed....” “Stop the Education Reform Pendulum,” Walt Gardner, *Education Week*, June 7, 2010.

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/walt_gardners_reality_check/2010/06/stop_the_education_reform_pendulum.html

³⁰ “School Reform in Florida: Is Accountability Working?” Dr. Carolyn Herrington, Powerpoint presentation, Askew Institute, Gainesville, Florida, September 2004.

³¹ “Merit Pay for Florida Teachers, Working Paper,” Rand Education, for the Florida Education Association, August 2007. http://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/2007/RAND_WR508.pdf

³² RTTT, Page 154.

³³ RTTT, Page 138.

³⁴ RTTT, Page 139.

³⁵ “Florida Students’ Test Scores Are Up, But Why?” St. Petersburg Times, September 26, 2007.

http://www.sptimes.com/2007/09/26/State/Florida_students_tes.shtml

³⁶ U.S. Census Bureau.

³⁷ Digest of Education Statistics, 2009 Tables and Figures, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_146.asp

³⁸ NCES, Public high school number of graduates, Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate, 2007-08.

³⁹ “46 school districts see FCAT problems,” Orlando Sentinel, July 16, 2010.

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/education/os-fcat-results-counties-07-15-10-20100715,0,7806554.story>

⁴⁰ The Gradebook, St. Petersburg Times education blog, interview with Thomas Toch, founder of Education Sector, June 26, 2010. “...[N]one of them in my view are adequately prepared to respond to the logistical demands of all this additional testing.” <http://blogs.tampabay.com/schools/2010/06/a-weekend-interview-about-testing-with-education-sector-founder-thomas-toch.html>

⁴¹ Race to the Top Phase I Technical Reviews, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/comments/florida.pdf>

⁴² National Center for Education Statistics, Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education series. http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/expenditures/tables/table_03.asp

⁴³ NCES, Digest of Education Statistics, 2009 Tables and Figures, Table 79, Estimated average annual salary of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_079.asp

⁴⁴ “Legislature to Schools: Do More With Less State Money,” FCFEP Florida Policy Matters blog. http://www.fcsep.org/index.php?option=com_jaggyblog&task=viewpost&id=169&Itemid=227

⁴⁵ Florida Education Finance Program, categorical and School Recognition funds only, Florida School Boards Association calculations.

⁴⁶ RTTT, Page 343.

⁴⁷ “The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts,” Civic Enterprises, March 2006. <http://www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/thesilentepidemic3-06.pdf>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ RTTT, Page 224.

⁵¹ National Center for Education Statistics, Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education, School Year 2007-08. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010326.pdf>

⁵² RTTT Appendix, Page 416. <http://www.fldoe.org/arra/pdf/topappendix.pdf>