

2005 Legislative Priorities
Tampa Bay Area Coalition of School Administrators

Florida is in the midst of a critical shortage of public educators. Current data indicate that Florida's colleges and universities produce less than 1/3 of the teachers necessary to staff its public school classrooms. The effect of this underproduction worsens as school districts add class sections to meet class size reduction requirements. The problem is further compounded as Florida attempts to recruit, and subsequently retain, educators in a national marketplace, competing with other states that provide higher salaries and better benefits.

In order to be successful, Florida school districts must be able to offer current and prospective public school educators competitive salaries, benefits and long-term retirement opportunities sufficient to enable Florida's recruitment and retention of the best possible educators.

1. Increase the annual retirement accrual rate for school district personnel from 1.6% to 2%.
 - ☐ Retirement for school district employees has not been reevaluated since its inception in 1970. Florida's current accrual rate lags behind eight other southern states.
 - ☐ Funding for the increased retirement contribution could first be derived from the Florida Retirement System surplus, with the balance implemented over four years.

2. Increase the health insurance subsidy for school district retirees from \$5 to \$7 and provide an annual cost-of-living adjustment to the subsidy.
 - ☐ The subsidy was last increased in 1998. Since then, health insurance costs have skyrocketed.
 - ☐ The increased cost to school districts could be phased in over a two-year period.

3. Make DROP provision uniform between teachers and other public education employees.
 - ☐ Current statute allows teachers to participate in the Deferred Option Retirement Program (DROP) for a maximum of 8 years; all other school district employees are limited to 5 years.
 - ☐ Teachers may enter DROP, after vesting, at age 62 or upon the completion of 30 years of service. Other education personnel who complete 30 years by age 57 must enter DROP in that year to retain full eligibility.

The Tampa Bay Area Coalition of School Administrators represents district and school-based administrators from Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota Counties. For additional information, please contact John Miliziano at 813-265-0001.