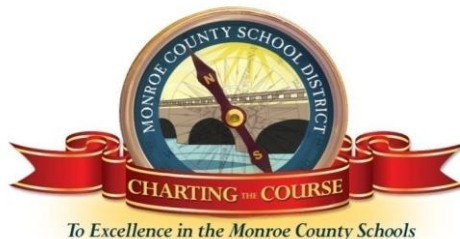


MARK T. PORTER
Superintendent of Schools



District # 1
BOBBY HIGHSMITH
Chairman

District # 2
ANDY GRIFFITHS

District # 3
MINDY CONN
Vice-Chairman

District # 4
JOHN R. DICK

District # 5
SUE WOLTANSKI

Monroe County School Board

Legislative Priorities for the 2019 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature

The Monroe County School Board participates in and are supportive of the Florida School Boards Association, the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, the Greater Consortium of School Boards, and the Small School District Council Consortium, and support the Legislative Proposals of the these organizations on issues of statewide significance.

In addition, the Monroe County School Board has identified the following specific legislative priorities for the 2019 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature:

Local Control of Locally Generated Revenue: During the 2017 Legislative Session, House Bill 7069 revised Florida Statutes 1013.64 pertaining to limitations on the cost of new construction for educational facilities (aka “cost per student station”). This revision was supported by the Monroe County Schools and successfully excluded three major school replacement projects from this “one size fits all” cap on the cost per student station in new school construction. However, this legislation is unfair and inappropriate when applied to the Monroe County Schools and requires a more enduring fix in light future projects.

- Locally generated revenue sources should not be subject to legislatively imposed cost constraints for the following reasons;
 - The Monroe County Schools receive less than \$300,000 annually in state provided PECO funds. All other revenue for capital improvements is raised through a local voter approved ½ cent sales tax, approximately \$17 million per year.
 - Construction costs in Monroe County are higher than other geographic locations in Florida due to isolation and engineering costs associated with wind load requirements.
 - In light of the increased engineering requirements (wind loads) Monroe County School facilities are used as shelters and refuges of last resort under the Monroe County Emergency Plan.
 - At a minimum there must be an appeal and/or exception process for relief from legislatively imposed cost constraints.
- Distribution of locally generated revenue, millage and sales tax, should be determined by the local school board not the legislature.

Eliminate the Best and Brightest Scholarship Program: The Best and Brightest Scholarship Program is a misguided reward/incentive program for teachers and should be discontinued. The resources allocated to the program should be re-allocated to support education initiatives with a proven outcome of improved student achievement (e.g. increased incentives for high performing teachers to work in low performing schools.)

Critical Teacher/Employee Shortage

- Provide for hiring of instructional personnel as substitute teachers and hiring of retired bus drivers on a part-time basis after one month after termination without penalty to their state retirement pension.

- Expand options for individuals to obtain temporary teacher certification and, subsequently, full professional certification who demonstrated their work to be highly effective.

Funding Challenges: Recent funding increases in operating dollars have helped the Monroe County Schools through a financial recovery, however, significant financial challenges remain. The following recommendations are made with regard to operating revenue for the Monroe County Schools;

- Eliminate the wealth adjustment. Currently the wealth adjustment results in a 100% loss of the sparsity supplement for the Monroe County Schools.
- Establish a separate funding source for programs taken by students beyond the 1.0 FTE cap of 25 hours a week.
- Increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA) to accurately reflect student growth and inflation.

Charter Schools: The Monroe County School Board is supportive of parental choice and currently supports six (6) operating charter schools with. Part of the statutory intent of introducing charter schools was to create opportunities for “best practices” in student learning, and to demonstrate the effectiveness of autonomy and local control. In accordance with these intentions, the following should be implemented;

- Require that all charter schools identify a specific, identifiable unmet student need, supported by current data as part of the approval process. This condition must be met for the approval of a charter school application.
- Require that all publicly funded schools have the same, laws, rules and regulations.
- Require all charter schools to include transportation services, thereby making school choice an option for all students.
- Grant final authority to approve or reject charter school applications to the local school board.
- Maintain local school board’s authority over locally generated capital outlay funds.

Hurricane/Disaster Recovery: The Monroe County School District was impacted significantly by Hurricane Irma in September, 2017, in addition several Panhandle counties were impacted by Hurricane Michael this past September with many students, families and staff encountering significant housing and other financial obstacles. The full impact of these disaster events will not be felt for several months, possibly years. In the short term, the following simple statutory changes will greatly assist impacted school districts in maintaining financial and academic stability during the recovery period;

- Set the declining enrollment supplement factor (Section 1011.62(8), F.S.) at 50% or greater, currently at 25% as specified in the General Appropriations Act. Potential supplement increase for Monroe County Schools in 2018 of \$100,000.00, a rather small offset of the approximately \$1.0 million in lost revenue incurred.
- Increase to \$200 per FTE (currently \$100 per FTE) the limitation on the use of capital millage to pay premiums for property and casualty insurance (Section 1011.71(5), F.S.). Without this adjustment the Monroe County Schools and other impacted school districts may be required to use general operating revenue to pay anticipated insurance premium increases.
- Pre-determine excuse and/or accommodations to be implemented in the Florida Accountability System for school districts impacted by a hurricane/disaster event. This should not be left to the individual school districts to negotiate with the Florida Department of Education.

Class Size – School Level Calculation: The Florida Constitution limits the maximum number of students that may be assigned to each teacher per classroom in core curricula courses. Florida law requires the FDOE to reduce categorical funding for school districts and charter schools that are out of compliance with class size requirements. Currently, compliance is measured at the classroom level for traditional public schools and at the school level for charter schools.

- Class size compliance should be calculated the same for both traditional public schools and charter schools, and should be calculated at the school-wide level.