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COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH & IMPROVEMENT

Florida Teachers and the Teaching Profession *Florida Master Plan for K-20 Education*

2004 Progress Report

2003 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

2003-2004 ACTION

<u>Teacher Preparation</u>	
<p>1. University and community college teacher education programs are critical to the mission and success of Florida's education system. Colleges and departments of education, as well as other providers of teacher training, must become a peak priority of the Legislature, the State Board of Education and each institution's board of trustees and administration in order to strengthen the status, quality, resources provided to and effectiveness of their programs.</p>	<p>The State Board of Education's first Strategic Imperative within its Goal of <i>Highest Student Achievement</i> is "Increasing the Supply of Highly Qualified K-12 Instructors."</p> <p>The Board of Governors Strategic Planning Committee continues to meet to develop system goals and objectives for its Strategic Plan. Early drafts identify as a Goal: "Meeting Statewide Professional and Workforce Needs" in targeted areas which focuses on Education degrees as a critical need. The Plan is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2004.</p> <p>State Universities are in various stages of developing their individual Plans. Certain university plans have identified their role in advancing a strong, effective public school system, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <u>University of Central Florida</u> – <i>Expand Partnerships with Schools. UCF will increase its university-wide involvement in K-12 education to become Florida's leading K-12 partnership university.</i>- <u>University of North Florida</u> – <i>Special emphasis will be placed on the University's relationship with the PK-12 system and the education of future teachers and school administrators.</i>

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- Florida Gulf Coast University – *FGCU will participate in the System’s outreach initiative to preK-12 schools to improve the academic preparedness of graduating high school students, and to provide quality teacher graduates for employment.*
- University of Florida – *Developing undergraduate programs to meet critical state shortages in teaching, nursing and information technology.*

As a part of the 2005-06 legislative budget request for the State University System, a number of universities have identified “priorities” to address the public school teacher workforce:

- University of Florida – to enlarge the pipeline of students into secondary education.
- Florida State University – to increase master’s level programs to address the critical teacher and administrator shortage.
- Florida A & M University – to infuse key components of state mandates on ESOL and the general education core for all teacher education programs.
- University of South Florida – to strengthen pre-service and in-service education programs to recruit, prepare, support and retain greater numbers of educators (Tampa Campus); to create a model program for preparing school principals (St. Pete Campus).
- Florida Atlantic University – to address the critical shortage of teachers.
- University of Central Florida – to increase undergraduate and graduate programs to increase the number of reading, math, science and special ed. teachers.
- University of North Florida – to support four initiatives that address the critical shortage of teachers.
- Florida Gulf Coast University – to offer courses to provide the reading endorsement for secondary teachers.

The 1998-2003 Strategic Plan of the Florida Community College System stated that the System will work with the SUS “to ensure that the colleges’ component of teacher preparation is appropriate and content rigorous.”

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2. Florida Education statutes, rules, policies and procedures that impede innovation and flexibility in the preparation, certification and employment of high quality teachers must be amended or repealed.

Preparation – The 2003 Legislature amended the state-approved teacher preparation program statute regarding a uniform core curricula to require that the core curricula must include a State Board of Education-identified foundation in scientifically-researched, knowledge-based reading literacy and computational skills acquisition, classroom management, school safety, professional ethics, education law, human development and learning, and understanding of the Sunshine State Standards content measured by state achievement tests, reading and interpreting data, and using data to improve student achievement. The uniform core curricula must not require additional time-to-degree, but may be phased in to enable teacher preparation programs to supplant courses not required by law or rule.

The 2004 Legislature authorized community colleges to create educator preparation institutes with the approval of the Department of Education. These institutes may be offered by public and private colleges and universities, as well as community colleges, and will provide certification requirement options, offer alternative certification for individuals who already possess a bachelor's degree, provide paraprofessional training and offer newly required substitute teacher training. The Legislature authorized teacher preparation programs and community colleges, in collaboration with school districts, to develop and implement new programs that will provide short-term field experiences as teacher assistants to individuals with a baccalaureate degree who are interested in teaching. The Legislature also amended admission prerequisites to include passing the General Knowledge Test of the Florida Teacher Certification examination as an additional alternative for a student to demonstrate mastery of general knowledge.

Certification - The 2003 Legislature amended several provisions in teacher certification law as follows: A statement of status of eligibility for certification is now valid for three (instead of two) years and the provision for the reissue

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was eliminated. Criteria for demonstrating of mastery of general knowledge, mastery of subject area knowledge and mastery of professional preparation were amended to allow broader acceptance of out-of-state certification and post-secondary teaching experience. Requirements for certification of adjunct teachers were also eased and school districts were authorized to process, via the DOE website, teaching certificates for additional coverage or endorsement areas and other minor requests.

The 2004 Legislature directed all state-approved teacher preparation programs to provide a certification ombudsman to facilitate the process and procedures required for graduates to obtain educator professional or temporary certification.

State Board of Education agreed to accept a valid certificate issued by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) as an approved option for issuance of a Temporary Certificate in a comparable subject area.

School districts continue to seek greater responsiveness from state teacher preparation programs to produce teachers that can become fully certified for core courses under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and to promptly deliver needed/required programs (such as English as a Second Language) for teachers.

Employment – The 2003 Legislature broadened classroom teacher’s authority and responsibility for the control of students via established disciplinary procedures. The Legislature also authorized district school boards to pay student teachers during their internships.

The 2004 Legislature provided additional flexibility for some experienced teachers to meet the highly qualified requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) via the HOUSSE option. The Legislature substantially added to the

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	<p>statutory requirements for employing substitute teachers, including a high school diploma, an initial orientation and training program and ongoing training. Directed school districts to establish minimum requirements for substitute teachers.</p> <p><u>Implementation</u> - In response to the enactment of Education law in 2003 and 2004, the establishment of State Board of Education Rules for the implementation of these laws is in various stages of development at the department level.</p>
<p>3. All educational programs in Florida that prepare individuals to teach should require candidates to demonstrate the effective teaching of Florida's subject matter content standards and the professional competencies and skills identified in Florida's educator accomplished practices.</p>	<p>The 2003 Legislature directed that each teacher preparation program must guarantee that its graduates demonstrate core skills and must provide additional training, at no cost, to any educator who fails to demonstrate those skills.</p> <p>Florida's educator accomplished practices and subject area competencies are well integrated with course syllabi in the state-approved teacher preparation programs and students are current required to achieve the content described in the state requirements for program approval.</p> <p>A significant majority of graduates of state-approved teacher preparation programs employed in Florida schools continue to receive extremely high evaluations by principals.</p>

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The Recruitment of High Quality Teachers	
4. The Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program, which supports national board certification for Florida teachers, should be expanded by the Legislature.	<p>The Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program has existed for seven years, continues to promote excellent and extensive teacher training and is viewed by teachers as significant professional recognition. The 2003 Legislature established the Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program Trust Fund. The 2004 Legislature amended components of the Dale Hickam program including application eligibility, salary and mentoring bonus eligibility and withdrawal repayment. The Legislature appropriated \$67,748,904 for this program, slightly less than the previous year.</p> <p>The Department of Education received over 3,200 applications during the 2003-04 year and anticipates that over 2,500 participants will complete the program.</p> <p>The following concerns have been identified by educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- A Legislative appropriation is needed annually to sustain the program; i.e. if the program is not funded, it will most likely end.- At the school level perspective, NBCT teachers are the only teachers who are guaranteed an annual salary increase.- Since NBCT teachers must remain in teaching to qualify for these funds, it becomes a financial disincentive for these teachers to pursue school leadership/administrative positions.
5. A comprehensive, statewide plan for the recruitment of teachers must be established by the Department of Education and the school districts to attract individuals, particularly secondary school students, to the teaching profession.	<p>The 2003 Legislature directed the Department of Education to develop a First Response Center for teacher candidates to provide one-stop shopping for information on teacher careers in Florida.</p> <p>The DOE maintains a comprehensive and user-friendly webpage on the teaching careers in Florida http://www.teachinflorida.com that serves job seekers, employers, educators and students.</p>

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	<p>The 2004 Legislature also directed the DOE to establish an Educator Appreciation Week.</p> <p>The Department of Education's annual Great Florida Teach-In continues to be an effective recruitment/employment activity for school districts.</p> <p>Individual school districts have successfully reduced their vacancy rates through local coordinated recruiting and hiring events, including interview days, district alternate certification programs and aggressive marketing activities.</p>
<p>6. A strategic plan that provides financial assistance programs that will most effectively attract and retain high quality teachers must be enacted by the Legislature.</p>	<p>No new financial assistance programs have been created by the Legislature for the support of teachers. The budget of the DOE Office of Student Financial Assistance for the Critical Teacher Shortage Tuition Reimbursement and Loan Forgiveness programs has remained at the same level for several years and continues to pay 20-25 percent of the maximum award to teachers who qualify.</p> <p>The Legislature appropriated \$1,739,566 for the Critical Teacher Shortage program in each of the past three years. Funding for the Minority Teacher Scholarship program has similarly remained constant at \$2,109,600.</p>

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<u>The Retention of High Quality Teachers</u>	
7. A minimum salary level for all Florida teachers should be established by the Legislature.	<p>No action by the Legislature. The Legislature provides funds to school districts for teacher salaries, primarily under the provisions of the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). There is little enthusiasm among policy makers for minimum wage legislation for teachers as it is viewed as inconsistent with market place variabilities, specifically with the extreme diversity of school districts in the State.</p> <p>Teacher compensation levels are set at the local school district level through a series of negotiations between the districts and their local unions. Historically, salary levels vary considerably by school district and local negotiations have resulted in district compensation packages heavily based on the number of years that a teacher has been teaching and a teacher's educational attainment. Most districts utilize an entry-level, floor salary for beginning teachers. Each district's relative cost of living remains a key variable in teacher compensation levels.</p> <p>Many district and school personnel believe that a state-level salary minimum must be accompanied by adequate state funding of all teacher salaries.</p>
8. Florida's system of teacher compensation must be redesigned so meritorious teachers are rewarded for demonstrated competence, outstanding performance and student achievement and so a career advancement structure is in place for all teachers.	<p>The 2003 Legislature established a Better Educated Students and Teachers (BEST) program to develop a teacher compensation model based on prescribed performance criteria and not length of service. This legislation required that all school boards establish career ladders and compensation plans for four categories of classroom teachers (associate, professional, lead and mentor). The legislation also directed the districts to implement a salary career ladder for teachers beginning with the 2005-06 school year and to implement a five-percent performance pay policy that provides for evaluation of teachers within each level of the salary career ladder.</p>

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	<p>The 2003 Legislature appropriated \$25,000,000 to fund four early innovator school districts that will establish best practices developmental models for implementation of the Florida BEST Teaching Program.</p> <p>The 2004 Legislature delayed the implementation of the salary career ladder (BEST) for classroom teachers until the 2005-06 academic year and appropriated no funds for this program.</p> <p>At the school district level, a number of districts, with the support of their unions, have successfully incorporated initiatives designed to enhance the responsibility of teachers to support and manage their peers. Many teachers remain concerned with the selection process and with the program reality that the majority of available funds will go to a relatively few number of teachers. There is an increasing view around the State, in light of current political realities, that there are not sufficient funds in school district budgets or teacher salary plans to support this type of across-the-board salary enhancement.</p>
<p>9. A comprehensive plan must be established by the Department of Education and funded by the Legislature to ensure that school districts and schools have the resources needed to employ and retain high quality, experienced teachers in low performing or hard-to-staff schools.</p>	<p>The 2003 Legislature authorized a pilot teacher preparation program at state-approved teacher education programs and required priority consideration to students obtaining academic degrees in math, science, engineering, and reading or identified critical shortage areas. Each student in a pilot program is required to teach for at least 3 years after receiving a degree. Each pilot program includes a year-long teaching assignment at a low-performing school.</p> <p>District school boards that are successfully addressing this challenge emphasize two key components: a total commitment by the superintendent and the employment of superior, high quality principals as instructional leaders of these schools. Certain districts have developed new pay schedules for principals and teachers at these schools. The Dale Hickam program</p>

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	<p>provides another mechanism by which a district can identify and seek to place high performing teachers in challenging schools.</p> <p>Most state-approved colleges of education are working with school districts in their region to provide outreach training programs for teachers and administrators in low performing schools. These programs typically focus on strategies to improve classroom instruction and leadership development programs that target principals as instructional leaders.</p> <p>As a part of its commitment to assist low performing schools, the State Board of Education is considering additional methods to help chronically struggling schools and is now working on a proposal/policy to direct school districts to place high quality teachers at failing schools.</p>
<p>10. A formal teacher induction program should be implemented in every school and should be supported by the Legislature through a targeted incentive funding program.</p>	<p>The 2003 Legislature directed the Department of Education to establish a Teacher Lifeline Network to provide on-line support to beginning teachers and those needing assistance.</p> <p>The 2004 Legislature directed the DOE to create guidelines and identify best practices for the mentors of first-time teachers and for new teacher-support programs. Each school board must adopt policies relating to mentors and support of first-time teachers.</p> <p>The Legislature also directed the DOE to develop and implement an online Teacher Toolkit that contains a menu of resources to enhance classroom instruction and increase teacher effectiveness.</p> <p>Despite specific budget mandates/constraints for training funds, school district induction programs remain strong, well attended by new teacher hires and highly evaluated.</p>

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11. Florida Retirement System policies, particularly the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP), should be reviewed by the Department of Management Services and the Department of Education in order to establish and/or modify policies to increase the retention of high quality teachers.

In its 2003 Quality Education Act, the Legislature extended the Deferred Retirement Option Program from five to eight years for K-12 instructional personnel, including instructional personnel from the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind. This Legislature also passed a bill that authorized a district school board to re-employ retired FRS members as full-time instructional personnel on an annual contractual basis after he or she has been retired for one calendar month. In addition, the legislation permits instructional personnel to participate in DROP for an additional three years subject to approval by the district school superintendent.

The 2004 Legislature authorized the inclusion of instructional personnel employed by state university laboratory schools and the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind in the three-year extended participation in the DROP.

Many school personnel have identified the need for the same DROP policies for school administrators as classroom teachers and support the inclusion of non-instructional school and district personnel in the program.