

FRIDAY UPDATE

MARCH 24, 2017

Budget Update: No committee budget work has been presented during the first three weeks of the session. However, we can make assumptions based on public statements that there will be few dollars available for the K-12 public school system. The Governor's recommended budget provided a 3% increase per student. **For Pinellas County Schools that means an increase of \$19,171,400.** Many of those dollars were generated by applying the same required local effort millage to an increasing tax roll. It appears that both the House and Senate will use the "rolled back" in its required local effort (RLE) millage. That means that the millage rate adopted will generate only the same dollars as was generated by last year's RLE. **This takes \$474 million off the table** and the budget committees will be looking elsewhere for any increase in public school funding. Budget work may begin next week in both the House and Senate.

Testing and Accountability: Both House and Senate are looking at reforming the current student testing system.

House: The House has passed HB 773 through one committee. It provides the following:

- Moves testing later in the year;
- It requires a study of the potential of using the SAT and/or the ACT as an option to the FSA.
- It does not eliminate any state tests.

Senate: The Senate has held two workshops on student testing issues, one in the Education Committee and one in the Education Appropriations Committee. There may be a committee bill that incorporates many ideas discussed in those workshops. Senate Bill 964 by Senator Montford is the most comprehensive bill and was widely praised in public testimony in this week's Education Committee. As of now only SB 926 is on the Senate Education agenda for Monday along with 18 other bills.

- It does eliminate many of the state end of course exams.

- It would allow for the SAT or ACT to be used instead of the FSA
- It requires the Commissioner to provide for pencil/paper test options for certain statewide assessments.
- Requires the FSA to be administered no earlier than the last four weeks of school.
- Returns much of the teacher evaluation process to the districts.
- Provides relief from the Value-Added Model(VAM) for teacher assessments.

Other Bills:

- No education bills have yet passed through the entire House or Senate.
 - The “recess” bill has been through three committees in the Senate, but has not yet been heard in the House.
 - Religious freedom bills have been heard in committees on both sides but are not identical.
 - Next week, the House is going to reveal its High Impact Schools bill that may require more school takeovers by private operators for consistently failing schools. The House has had several private entities present in committee that take over or contract to run public schools.
 - The Senate and House have proposed changes in the Best and Brightest initiative but there is no consensus on the reform of that program.
- The Florida School Boards Association has its annual Day in the Legislature next week and the Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards also has its annual meeting in Tallahassee. Thursday is the day when school board members will visit legislators.
 - Pinellas is one of only three districts to apply for the Principal Autonomy Program. Last week, the State Board of Education approved applications for Pinellas, Broward and Palm Beach School Districts. State Board members praised the districts for trying something new and bold.