

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR THE GREATER FLORIDA CONSORTIUM OF SCHOOL BOARDS

LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

PURPOSE

The purpose of this communications plan is to outline a course of action to be undertaken by the member school districts of the Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards to inform their many publics about the inadequacy of state funding for public education in Florida. The fact that Florida ranks in the bottom ten percent in the nation in per pupil funding for education is important for the public to realize and fully understand in terms of how this ranking among the nation's fifty states negatively impacts not only education, but also the present and future well-being of the economic state of Florida.

KEY MESSAGES

- The Florida State Constitution, Article IX, Section 1, states: "The education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida. It is therefore, a paramount duty of the state to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders."
- The State of Florida currently ranks in the bottom ten percent in the nation in per pupil expenditures for education.
- Florida students are being shortchanged by this inequity and their present and future well-being is negatively impacted by this reality.
- The children of Florida deserve better from those who are charged with upholding the constitution of the state.
- An adequately funded educational system is an essential element for Florida's future economic well-being.

CAMPAIGN SLOGAN

Florida students deserve better.

THEME STATEMENT

Florida students deserve better than the bottom ten percent in the nation in state funding for education.

PLAN

It has come to the point where all stops must be pulled out to inform our various publics about the substantial under-funding of public education in Florida. Messages, slogans, talking points and articles associated with this informational campaign must be disseminated through all available communications vehicles to press home the need for adequate funding for education in Florida.

Simultaneous launch events in member district locations throughout the state that include local business, education, faith-based leaders, parents and children should be planned and implemented. During this series of simultaneous press events, these stakeholders should speak as one about the importance of adequately funding education in Florida. The message is simple – Our children deserve better than the bottom ten percent in the nation! We are shortchanging our children's present and future well-being with this obviously inadequate level of state funding for education. While the education community should certainly be represented at these launch events, third party stakeholders should take the lead at these assemblies in pressing the case for adequate funding for education.

The follow-up to the simultaneous launch events will include information about the education funding issue posted on all Greater Florida Consortium of School Boards' district Web sites. The information should include the dates when the state legislature is convening and provide details about how interested parties can make their voices heard on this issue, including by not limited to letters written to state legislators, letters to the editor (newspaper) supporting an increase in education funding and phone calls to legislators' local offices pressing for an adequate level of funding for education.

School district employees will be part of this information campaign through the use of the regular communications vehicles available for this purpose, including but not limited to electronic and published school district periodicals, hotlines, newsletters, radio and television programs; automatic telephone messages from Superintendents to parents; and public service announcements; and email databases of volunteers, business partners, opinion leaders, District Advisory Committee members and other stakeholders.

Members of school district speakers' bureau and all stakeholders will be provided talking points on the funding issue for their proactive use during speaking engagements and written communications.

Superintendents and school board members will be provided similar talking points for use in informing the public about the funding.

Like last year, district superintendents will visit the editorial boards of their local newspapers and press for editorial support for adequate funding for education in Florida.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A mutually agreeable theme/slogan must be developed as the “rallying cry” for the campaign.
- Clear, concise talking/message points on the funding issue must be developed and disseminated.
- Sample letters to state legislators and letters to the editor (newspaper) must be drafted and made available to the public.
- House and Senate members’ telephone numbers, local office addresses, Tallahassee office addresses, email addresses and fax numbers by District and Zip Code.
- Flyers and position papers must be developed for use at press events and to handout to members of the public.
- Scripts and databases for Superintendents to send automated telephone messages to parents and others.

TIMELINE

February 1, 2006 – Communications Plan developed.

February 15, 2006 – Related communications materials developed.

March 1, 2006 – Launch campaign the week prior to the start of the legislative session.

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