

**From:** Smith, Kevin  
**Sent time:** Monday, November 07, 2011 3:31:10 PM  
**To:** Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org) <Cari@excelined.org>; elefsky@cfl.rr.com; Lee, Laurie; Colle, Hope; Tart, Suzanne; Walt Griffin <walt\_griffin@scps.k12.fl.us>  
**Subject:** FW: 11/5/11 through 11/7/11 Education Round-Up

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FYI – have a great afternoon!

Sincerely,

Kevin Smith,  
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**From:** Higgins, Deborah  
**Sent:** Monday, November 07, 2011 10:05 AM  
**Subject:** 11/5/11 through 11/7/11 Education Round-Up



[Journalism Next | Braden River students embrace Chinese calligraphy](#)  
(Bradenton Herald © 11/07/2011)

Special to the Herald EAST MANATEE – Nǐ hǎo! We are very proud to introduce our newest faculty member, Ms. Linfei Yi, who teaches Chinese to students on campus. “I am from Guilin, China,” Yi said. “It is located in the south part of China. It’s very beautiful there for its beautiful, natural landscapes.” Guilin has a population of 1.3 million...

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[Bayshore's sign language class attracts students countywide](#)  
(Bradenton Herald © 11/07/2011)

By ANGELINE TAYLOR ataylor@bradenton.com BRADENTON – No words need to be spoken in Christine Poyner’s foreign language class at Bayshore High School. Poyner, chairwoman of the school’s foreign language department, teaches levels I, II and III of American Sign Language. Students throughout the county have eyed the class since Bayshore is the only school that offers the course. “There’s a...

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### [What Spurs Students to Stay in College and Learn? Good Teaching Practices and Diversity](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education © 11/07/2011)

By Dan Berrett St. Petersburg Beach, Fla. Good teaching and exposure to students from diverse backgrounds are some of the strongest predictors of whether freshmen return for a second year of college and improve their critical thinking skills, say two prominent researchers. Patrick T. Terenzini, distinguished professor of higher education at Pennsylvania State University, and Ernest T. Pascarella...

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### [Academic Gains Vary Widely for Charter Networks](#)

(Education Week © 11/07/2011)

new national study on the effectiveness of networks that operate charter schools finds overall that their middle school students' test scores in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies aren't significantly better than those of students in regular public schools. The average results varied widely: Students in some charter networks managed three years of growth in two years; in others,...

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### [Letters from Readers: Link pay to performance for minority education](#)

(FL Times-Union © 11/07/2011)

A REFORM PLAN Link pay to results I believe I have a radical solution to the educational funding shortages at the local level as well as a solution to the shortage of academically qualified, in-state, designated-by-race minority college freshmen. - Each public college within the state determines how many in-state minorities it would like to have as entering freshmen. The following paym...

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### [Building critical mass for education](#)

(FL Times-Union © 11/07/2011)

The most impressive feature of Teach for America is not the fact that thousands of the best college students have been convinced to teach in America's neediest communities. It's the sheer scope of the effort. This nonprofit is a case study in moving from a small startup to a national organization that is beginning to approach the critical mass envisioned by founder Wendy Kopp. And Jacks...

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### [Matt Reed: School bidding scandal proves need for corruption laws](#)

(Florida Today © 11/07/2011)

The recent ouster of three school officials in a bidding and contracting scandal may go down as just another case of Brevard good ol' boys taking care of business. But it was bigger and worse than that — a seven-year pattern of bid splitting and alleged favoritism that steered millions of dollars worth of painting and electrical work to companies staffed by pals and family, district audit recor...

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### [High school student struggles with new Bright Futures requirements](#)

(Independent Florida Alligator © 11/07/2011)

Carey Jester, Alligator Bright Future Marisol Diaz, 17, a student at South Dade Senior High School, studies and does homework for her International Baccalaureate program classes. Erin Jester, Alligator Writer The Independent Florida Alligator | 0 comments Marisol Diaz is hungry to succeed.Â The 17-year-old high school senior is pulling a 5.3 weighted GPA at South Dade Senior High School in Homes...

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(Inside Higher Education © 11/07/2011)

The American Public University System wants to get more bang for its buck with e-textbooks, so the for-profit college system is enlisting its professors to write and edit digital course materials. Faculty members are submitting proposals for e-textbooks to be used in about half of the institution's general education courses by the end of 2012. And university leaders hope the recently launc...

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#### [Teacher challenges plan in Miami-Dade](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/07/2011)

By LAURA ISENSEE [lisensee@MiamiHerald.com](mailto:lisensee@MiamiHerald.com) While the state teachers union is waging a legal battle against new teacher evaluations that tie student scores to teacher pay and tenure, another challenge is brewing in Miami-Dade. Shawn Beightol, a chemistry teacher at John A. Ferguson Senior High, has filed a formal complaint with the state's Public Employees Relations Commission over the ratifi...

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#### [New Jersey looks to waive requirements of 'No Child Left Behind,' proposes new school accountability system](#)

(New Jersey.com © 11/07/2011)

New Jersey's bid to waive the requirements of a federal education law includes proposals to reward high-performing schools and force low-performing ones to remove ineffective teachers, according to a draft of the state's application. The "No Child Left Behind" law requires all public school students to demonstrate proficiency in math and reading by 2014, but it would be nearly impossible for Ne...

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#### [Video: Editorial Board interview with FL's Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/07/2011)

November 04, 2011 Editorial Board interview with Florida's Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson. Video: Gerard Robinson on teacher merit pay Video: Gerard Robinson on holding charter schools accountable (Full interview coming Monday)...

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#### [Latino district a key demand in Orange schools' hearing](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/07/2011)

With a majority of the state's growth during the past decade coming from Hispanics, it's time for a Latino School Board member in Orange County, a vocal group of advocates says. To many of them, that means at least one of the seven School Board districts should have a Hispanic majority. The Orange County School Board will be asked to grapple with that issue Monday as it considers four maps...

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#### [In 'Walking School Bus' program, groups of students travel on foot to class](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 11/07/2011)

The six kids walking from the Turtle Cove Apartments to Berkshire Elementary School lined up in neat rows, side by side. Like ... a school bus. The students were the first in Palm Beach County to participate in the "Walking School Bus" program. Programs are set to start at nine more schools in the county. "It's a bus without wheels," said Pamela Santucci of the Florida Department of Health,...

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#### [Avoiding the Student Loan Money Pit in FL](#)

(Public News Service (FL) © 11/07/2011)

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - One-third of Florida families list "increase savings" as a top New Year's resolution, according to numbers crunched by financial advisory firm Edward Jones. One way to make good on that resolution is to save for college. The Florida Pre-Paid College Plan has helped more than 200,000 students pay for higher education over the years. Plan Director Dr. Will Holcombe says thi...

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### [Nurses are flexing their muscles](#)

(Sarasota Herald-Tribune © 11/07/2011)

It has been an arresting sight outside some Florida hospitals in the last few months: clusters of nurses in bright red scrubs, holding banners and speaking out about patient safety. In a right-to-work state where labor organizing is rare, and in a staggering economy where most workers opt to suffer silently, the nurses' public challenge to their e...

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### [Endeavor Academy's sweeping changes show signs of success](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/07/2011)

BROOKSVILLE — Matt Plotner gave his mouse one more click and called to his teacher. "Check this out," said Plotner, 17, as he motioned to the monitor. He had just aced an American history quiz on the growth of cities in the early 1900s. "That's what taking good notes will do for you," teacher Daniel Rushton said, looking over Plotner's shoulder. "Good for you." This is the Endeavor Ac...

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### [Critics says Lake Wales Sen. J.D. Alexander is a bully hurting USF, students and taxpayers](#)

(St. Petersburg: WTSP (Ch. 10) © 11/07/2011)

POLK COUNTY, Florida - Despite consensus from students, professors, and many elected leaders that the fledgling USF-Polytechnic campus should remain in the USF system, one local legislator is leading the charge to break it off into an independent university, and his critics blame his ego. State Sen. J.D. Alexander, R-Lake Wales, has been leaning on local leaders to support his bid for USF-Po...

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### [Lawsuit aims to give in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants' children](#)

(The Oracle USF Paper © 11/07/2011)

For some students, the process of proving residency to the Office of the Registrar may become a lot more paper-free. A class action lawsuit filed by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) last month could allow children of undocumented immigrants who are U.S. citizens the right to pay in-state tuition at universities. Now, they wait for a response from the defendants, Florida Board of Govern...

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### [Blocker: Achievement Gap Due to Poverty, Socio-Economic Status](#)

(West Orlando News © 11/07/2011)

The achievement gap between white students on the one hand and African-Americans and Hispanics on the other, persists because of poverty and socio-economic status, and begins in kindergarten, Orange County Public Schools Superintendent Ronald Blocker declared. Blocker was responding to a question regarding the persistence of an educational achievement gap between white students and African-America...

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### [Value-added teacher evaluations a work in progress](#)

(Bradenton Herald © 11/06/2011)

Miami Herald and The Hechinger Report The formula – in what is called a "value-added model" – tries to determine a teacher's effect on a student's FCAT performance by predicting what the student should score in a given year, and then rating the teacher on whether the student hits or surpasses the mark. For thousands of other Florida teachers who don't ev...

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### [Occupy Orlando marches again](#)

(Bradenton Herald © 11/06/2011)

The Orlando Sentinel ORLANDO – Different march. Different Saturday. Same message: Stop corporate greed, end government corruption and fix social inequalities. Hundreds of Occupy Orlando supporters took to the streets again Saturday for a march through downtown – the group’s second large-scale demonstration in less than a month. Holding placards that read: “End Corporate Wel...

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### [Software Catches \(and Also Helps\) Young Plagiarists](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education © 11/06/2011)

By Marc Parry The spread of technology designed to combat academic cheating has created a set of tricky challenges, and sometimes unexpected fallout, for faculty members determined to weed out plagiarism in their classrooms. In the latest development, the company that sells colleges access to Turnitin, a popular plagiarism-detection program that checks uploaded papers against various databases t...

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### [7 Community Colleges Open an Online Doorway to Better Grades and Graduation Rates](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education © 11/06/2011)

By Josh Fischman There are two things Clint McElroy knows about community-college students: A huge number of them don't stay in school. And many of them—who are often the first in their families to go to college, and who must juggle work and parenting—don't understand how to balance all those demands while studying at the college level. "These are students who just don't have the tools to put th...

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### [Online Programs Face New Demands From Accreditors](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education © 11/06/2011)

By Eric Kelderman In some circles, online education has a bad reputation. Accusations that some for-profit companies prey on unsuspecting students to rake in federal financial aid have led to image problems for the sector. Critics see online education, offered in particular by for-profit colleges, as the dark underbelly of higher education, with the quality of Internet courses second to the greed...

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### [How Technology Can Improve Online Learning—and Learning in General](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education © 11/06/2011)

By Robert W. Mendenhall As president of a nonprofit, online university I am often asked about the quality of online learning. The answer is that the quality of education is largely independent of the mode of delivery. Other variables are far more important. There is high-quality online learning, and there is high-quality classroom learning, just as there is low-quality learning in both settings. ...

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### [Why Do Teacher-Education Programs Fear a New Rating System?](#)

(Chronicle of Higher Education © 11/06/2011)

By Thomas J. Lasley II In a welcome change, the focus on education reform is now beginning to shift from evaluating teachers to evaluating teacher-preparation programs. But, unfortunately, institutions that educate teachers are resisting this scrutiny and slowing down necessary reforms. This fall, the U.S. Department of Education announced it would rate teacher-preparation programs based in part...

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### [School district, Valparaiso still at odds over elementary school](#)

(Destin Log © 11/06/2011)

VALPARAISO — The city of Valparaiso and the Okaloosa County School District are working to resolve a conflict over the old Valparaiso Elementary School. After receiving

a letter from the district to initiate conflict resolution, a divided City Commission designated City Manager Carl Scott, Commissioner Neal Shermer and City Attorney Doug Wyckoff to represent the city in negotiations with th...

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#### [Building Critical Mass for Education](#)

(FL Times-Union © 11/06/2011)

The most impressive feature of Teach for America is not the fact that thousands of the best college students have been convinced to teach in America's neediest communities. It's the sheer scope of the effort. This nonprofit is a case study in moving from a small startup to a national organization that is beginning to approach the critical mass envisioned by founder Wendy Kopp. And Jacks...

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#### [Mayor Alvin Brown's supporters are waiting for some action](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 11/06/2011)

Four months into his term as Jacksonville's mayor, Alvin Brown has submitted a budget to the City Council that contained no tax increases and slashed government jobs. But even as he's applauded for such cost-saving measures, some supporters wonder when Brown will tackle the big-picture issues that led to his election and are unclear as to who is advising him as he prepares to do so. Concern ha...

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#### [Raines Vs Ribault: The Duality of athletics and academics](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 11/06/2011)

Raines vs. RibaultRaines Vs Ribault; The Duality of athletics and academicsThe Vikings of Raines High School take on the Trojans of Ribault High School.The atmosphere is building to an electrified level at Raines and Ribault, the stands will be overflowing to capacity. Alumni will remember clashes of past football glory days. The smell of hotdogs, hamburgers, chili, popcorn and even crabs will per...

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#### [Upset parents vow to fight for their schools](#)

(Florida Today © 11/06/2011)

Some worry about disrupting their children's education and friendships if school boundaries are changed. Others are fearful of exposing middle school students to high school pressures if two Cocoa schools are combined. And, still others are agonizing about a long bus ride to a different city if a neighborhood school they know and love is closed. Across the Space Coast, many parents are upset ? ...

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#### [A new order in place at Edison State](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 11/06/2011)

The Edison State College Board of Trustees enabled President Kenneth Walker for 20 years. Trustees should have stopped after 19. Walker, whose reputation has taken a beating since February, is no longer a leader to enable. This year has been a bummer for the proud academic institution. The trustees had blind faith in Walker, yet should have opened their eyes to problems swirling around the sch...

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### [Ed H. Moore: Florida needs STEM field graduates](#)

(Gainesville Sun © 11/06/2011)

Gov. Rick Scott's 2012 Job Creation and Economic Growth agenda includes an encouraging focus on Florida's STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects. Florida's higher education graduates have a huge effect on the state's business community and these programs are important to bolster a workforce that attracts new businesses to the state. We are always pleased to see a governor...

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### [Scott, GOP to Push Agenda Despite Series of Unfavorable Court Rulings](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/06/2011)

TALLAHASSEE | Gov. Rick Scott and top Republican lawmakers say a series of unfavorable court rulings on legislation they pushed last spring will not deter them from again pursuing a strong conservative agenda in 2012. Facts "I'm going to continue the things that I believe are in the best interest of Floridians." GOV. RICK SCOTT, Addressing the annual Asso...

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### [Polytechnic University: Apply Independent Thinking](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/06/2011)

Wednesday, the State University System's Board of Governors is scheduled to decide the future of the University of South Florida Polytechnic in northeast Lakeland. The question is, shall it be Florida Polytechnic or USF Polytechnic? Over the long term, an independent Florida Polytechnic that reports to its own board of trustees would be more effici...

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### [Edison State College's future on the line](#)

(Lehigh News Star © 11/06/2011)

Edison State College has been a hub of higher education in Southwest Florida since 1962. Now its future could rest in the hands of a Georgia organization. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, headquartered near Atlanta, grants accreditation to institutions that comply with a set of mutually agreed-upon standards. Edison is up for reaccreditation in 2012, and an evaluation team from S...

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### [Tip for teachers: Don't mess up when boss is observing](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/06/2011)

At an annual training over the summer, Hialeah Senior High School writing teacher Kathy Pham and her colleagues heard what seemed like basic advice from the United Teachers of Dade: Make sure your principal observes you in the classroom this year. The stakes for teacher evaluations in Miami-Dade are rising, with questions about how evaluations can impact teachers' pay and decisions about wh...

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### [Holding students to high academic standards](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/06/2011)

The Oct. 30 article, Miami-Dade school district makes midterms, finals optional for students, prompted me to clarify the intent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools in reaching the decision. One needs only to review the 2011-12 Testing Calendar to begin to understand the rationale for this decision, which in no way diminishes the district's focus on promoting academic achievement or assessi...

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### [Editorial: The governor and higher ed](#)

(Ocala Star Banner © 11/06/2011)

Gov. Rick Scott is demanding extensive information about how Florida's universities operate and spend their money. And that's a good thing, because there can be little doubt that our higher education system is in need of some attention from Tallahassee, and what better place for it to come than from the governor's office. Yet, from some of Scott's r...

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### [Learning Community helps students advance in school](#)

(Ocala Star Banner © 11/06/2011)

In about 20 years, if a doctor or police officer responds to your emergency, you could be meeting a member of a special present-day class at Shady Hill Elementary School. In Cynthia Deen's second-grade Learning Community class, Asante' Ballet, 8, wants to be a doctor "to help people with colds" when she grows up. Martez Milton, 7, hopes to become ...

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### [Do education colleges prepare teachers well?](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/06/2011)

Teachers have been under a hot spotlight in recent years, blamed for public education's shortcomings. Now the colleges that train them are feeling the heat. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is calling for reforms in the nation's education schools, arguing too many are "mediocre" and send out graduates who aren't ready to teach. In a speech last month, Duncan noted 62 percent of new teache...

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### [Latino district a key demand in Orange schools' hearing](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/06/2011)

With a majority of the state's growth during the past decade coming from Hispanics, it's time for a Latino School Board member in Orange County, a vocal group of advocates says. To many of them, that means at least one of the seven School Board districts should have a Hispanic majority. The Orange County School Board will be asked to grapple with that issue Monday as it considers four maps p...

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### [Raising the bar is the only way Florida students will soar](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/06/2011)

The results of the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the Nation's Report Card, are a wake up call for Florida's leaders and lawmakers. For the first time in a decade, Florida's students failed to make gains on the biennial assessment of fourth and eighth-graders in math and reading. Even more troubling is the drop in performance by poor and minority students &ndash...

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### [District considering all-boys schools in Broward](#)

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel © 11/06/2011)

Long a staple of parochial and private education, all-boys schools could become another option for the Broward School District in the future. The idea, still in its infancy, will be discussed by the Broward School Board on Tuesday. Superintendent Robert Runcie said single-sex schools and classes have been tried nationwide, in some cases with remarkable success. He points to Chicago's Urban Prep ...

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### [Put a stop to USF Poly boondoggle](#)

(St. Pete Times © 11/06/2011)

Based on the overwhelming evidence, the Board of Governors that oversees the state university system has an easy decision to make when it meets Wednesday to consider allowing the University of South Florida's Lakeland campus to become an independent public university. Anything other than a firm rejection of this poorly designed proposal



will be caving in to the power politics behind this expensiv...

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### [Redraw lines and bring clarity to school zones](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/06/2011)

After decades of busing for desegregation followed by years of school choice, the Pinellas County School Board has in recent times settled on zoned schools as the best system to give families some certainty about education. The concept is simple: Live in a zone, attend the school in that zone. But that isn't the case right now for about 1,900 elementary students who are frozen out of their zoned s...

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### [Endeavor Academy's sweeping changes show signs of success](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/06/2011)

BROOKSVILLE — Matt Plotner gave his mouse one more click and called to his teacher. "Check this out," said Plotner, 17, as he motioned to the monitor. He had just aced an American history quiz on the growth of cities in the early 1900s. "That's what taking good notes will do for you," teacher Daniel Rushton said, looking over Plotner's shoulder. "Good for you." This is the Endeavor Acad...

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### [Pinellas' elementary schoolchildren face rezoning; School Board takes first vote Nov. 8](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/06/2011)

CLEARWATER — Cristina Camarillo idled in the pickup line at McMullen-Booth Elementary School Friday, the seventh car back in a bumper-to-bumper line of parents waiting to fetch their children. Camarillo shows up early so she can be near the front of the line when her 7- and 10-year-olds emerge. Waiting is something parents at the school have to get used to. The school has created three car-...

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### [AMERICAS: Academics must not be cowed in class](#)

(University World News © 11/06/2011)

In March 2003, anthropologist Nicholas de Genova spoke out in the United States in protest against the Iraq War. His comments sparked massive criticism and calls for his resignation. In 2009, Columbia University denied his promotion. Shortly after the 9/11 attacks Ward Churchill, a tenured professor at the University of Colorado, wrote an op ed inviting serious reflection on their origins In 2005...

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### [Broward School Receives Oprah Inspired Makeover](#)

(CBS 4 Miami © 11/05/2011)

FT. LAUDERDALE (CBSMiami) — A deserving Ft. Lauderdale elementary school got a much needed makeover to its library in honor of Oprah Winfrey. Earlier this year, The Heart of American Foundation teamed up with Target and told school officials at Lauderdale Manors Elementary School that they would be making over 42 elementary school libraries in honor of Oprah's 25 years of service and insp...

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### [Edison State College president says retirement may come earlier](#)

(Collier Citizen © 11/05/2011)

Facing constant criticism from faculty and students, and fearing it may be too late to repair those strained relations, Edison State College President a.inline\_topic: hover { background-color: #EAEAEA; } Kenneth Walker has decided to "take the high road" and propose an earlier end to his 20-year career at the school. Walker said Friday he has given thought to the controversy that in recent mont...

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### [A Duval school paper, virtually](#)

(FL Times-Union © 11/05/2011)

A new Internet publication is giving some Duval County Public Schools students a voice and making their virtual school feel a little less virtual. The Virtual Voice, the official newspaper for Duval Virtual Instruction Academy's high school, launched in mid-October. Click here to read the school newspaper. The publication is student-run and gives the students, who only know each other as...

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### [Laid-off KSC workers' supplies eagerly accepted by educators](#)

(Florida Today © 11/05/2011)

A binder decorated with space shuttle mission stickers. A clock with numbers covered by employees' pictures. A nameplate labeled "New Guy." The office supplies once filled desks, filing cabinets and walls at Kennedy Space Center, but are now making their way into classrooms in four counties. As thousands of KSC contractors were let go due to the shuttle's retirement this year, their unneeded sup...

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### [Editorial: Walker makes tough, but right, move](#)

(Ft. Myers News Press © 11/05/2011)

Edison State College President Kenneth Walker made the hard decision to announce he is retiring earlier than planned. The college is at a crossroads and accreditation is on the line after a series of academic and administrative scandals tarnished the venerable institution's reputation. Walker made his intentions known publicly at the board of trustees special meeting Friday. Only seven months...

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### [Edison State's Walker will retire](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 11/05/2011)

In two weeks, Kenneth Walker will reveal when he plans to step down as president of Edison State College. The board of trustees, which includes four new members appointed this week, will now have to plan for a national candidate search months earlier than expected. Walker announced his decision to resign at Friday's board of trustees meeting. He declined to give the date of his resignation, sayi...

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### [Why Science Majors Change Their Minds \(It's Just So Darn Hard\)](#)

(Gainesville Sun © 11/05/2011)

LAST FALL, President Obama threw what was billed as the first White House Science Fair, a photo op in the gilt-mirrored State Dining Room. He tested a steering wheel designed by middle schoolers to detect distracted driving and peeked inside a robot that plays soccer. It was meant as an inspirational moment: children, science is fun; work harder. Politicians and educ...

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### [Santa Fe College facing executive brain drain with upcoming DROP departures](#)

(Gainesville Sun © 11/05/2011)

More than a half-dozen senior administrators at Santa Fe College are scheduled to retire in the next three years as part of the state's deferred retirement option program. With the senior-level departures, Santa Fe will free up more than \$708,000 in salaries but also lose hundreds of years of experience by 2015. The list of those retiring incl...

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#### [UF seeking placement data on grads for governor](#)

(Gainesville Sun © 11/05/2011)

If you've graduated from the University of Florida in the past three years, you might want to drop Gov. Rick Scott a line to let him know how you're doing. Scott earlier this month sent a letter to state university presidents asking for information related to whether universities are preparing graduates for job opportunities and meeting the needs of employers. The letter included 17 ...

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#### [Getting students to commit to science and math careers proves difficult](#)

(HT Politics (NY Times Herald Tribune) © 11/05/2011)

LAST FALL, President Obama threw what was billed as the first White House Science Fair, a photo op in the gilt-mirrored State Dining Room. He tested a steering wheel designed by middle schoolers to detect distracted driving and peeked inside a robot that plays soccer. It was meant as an inspirational moment: children, science is fun; work harder. Politicians and educators have been wringing the...

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#### [Treasure Coast high school students explore STEM careers at IRSC](#)

(Jupiter Courier © 11/05/2011)

FORT PIERCE — Jensen Beach High School senior Christine Pierre-Jerome was in her element Friday as she explored the different aspects of Indian River State College's nursing program at the Health Science Center in Fort Pierce. The 18-year-old's eyes lit up with excitement as she received hands-on experience with medical equipment, including a human patient simulator and intravenous drips. She said s...

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#### [Lawyer Fees Costly to Polk Charter Schools, District](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/05/2011)

BARTOW | The Polk County Charter Association has paid \$117,104 in lawyer fees for a dispute that has gone on for more than a year with the Polk County School District concerning services the district provides to the charter schools and the distribution of funding. That's \$76,074 more than the district has spent to defend itself. While both parties ...

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#### [Principals Pay Little Respect to Teachers](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/05/2011)

For many years, employee surveys have indicated that respect was the one issue teachers wanted more than anything. They want to be spoken to with the same dignity and respect that any administrator would speak to Superintendent Dr. Sherrie Nickell with. Teachers do not want to be talked about behind their backs. They feel they can accept honest, res...

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#### [Why the Rush to Push USF Polytechnic Separation Issue?](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/05/2011)

I was among the first to buy into the vision of a polytechnic campus in our community. While serving on the Lakeland City Commission, we proudly voted to invest \$5 million in public funds with the University of South Florida Foundation because we believed in the vision that USF President Judy Genshaft had articulated for USF's eastern most regional campus. In retrospect, one has to wonder if Lakel...

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[Florida's Higher Education: Scott Points Wrong Way](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 11/05/2011)

Published: Saturday, November 5, 2011 at 12:01 a.m. Gov. Rick Scott is demanding extensive information about how Florida's universities operate and spend money. And that's a good thing, because from some of his recent statements, one can only conclude that Scott has no idea about the worth and value of public higher education in Florida. Last month, for instance, in an interview with ra...

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[Edison State's Walker will retire](#)

(Lehigh News Star © 11/05/2011)

In two weeks, Kenneth Walker will reveal when he plans to step down as president of Edison State College. The board of trustees, which includes four new members appointed this week, will now have to plan for a national candidate search months earlier than expected. Walker announced his decision to resign at Friday's board of trustees meeting. He declined to give the date of his resignation, sayi...

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[The net cost of college](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/05/2011)

I haven't met anyone who looks forward to the process of figuring out what's a fair price to pay for a car and then negotiating with a dealership. That same anxiety is also true for students and families trying to figure out the cost of college. But finally the federal government has taken steps to push schools to give families more price information. My hope is people will use it wh...

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[Miami-Dade school district to restore funds to charter school](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/05/2011)

Nearly three weeks after withholding funding from a troubled charter school, the Miami-Dade school district agreed to give the Academy of Arts & Minds in Coconut Grove a portion of its monthly check. But in agreeing to release the \$146,943, district officials issued a stern warning: If Arts & Minds doesn't provide all required services to special-education students by Wednesday, the School B...

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[Students born here should pay same price](#)

(Miami Herald © 11/05/2011)

One ludicrous law stands in Wendy Ruiz's way of paying an affordable price for college tuition. A child of two undocumented parents, Wendy was born in Miami, which — in spite of birthers' rants and the lack of legal status of her parents — unquestionably makes her an American citizen. Florida law, on the contrary, seeks to have Wendy pay for the trespasses of her parents...

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[Teacher flees with 16-year-old boy, is arrested](#)

(Northwest Florida Daily News © 11/05/2011)

A 25-year-old Okaloosa Academy teacher who fled the area with a 16-year-old boy was arrested Friday at an Ohio motel. Amanda Leigh Cooney, who has an outstanding warrant from the Crestview Police Department for several charges, was located after an officer with the Riverside Police Department in Montgomery County, Ohio, noticed her lime green vehicle in a parking lot and ran her tags, said Shalim...

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### [National mentoring service to aid struggling Orange schools](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 11/05/2011)

Orange County is about to get some national help for two of its chronically struggling high schools. City Year, the education service branch of AmeriCorps, is making plans to send teams of full-time mentors into Orange County schools next year. The corps, which operates in 21 major urban centers including New York, Los Angeles, Miami and Washington, D.C., would start at both Evans and Oa...

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### [District earns Energy Star award](#)

(Osceola News-Gazette © 11/05/2011)

Photo/Osceola County School District The Osceola County School Board on behalf of the School District at the Nov. 1 board meeting was presented the EPA Energy Star Leader Award by Gary Clark, Energy Education Regional president. From left are: Brian Richard, and Jeffrey, Energy Education specialists at the School District; Clyde Wells, district chief facilities officer; Cindy Hartig, School Board c...

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### [College Is Cheaper Than You Think](#)

(Sarasota Herald-Tribune © 11/05/2011)

The College Board released its annual report on the cost of college last week, and guess what? It's going up. Again. Cue the headlines: "College Costs Reach New Highs"; "Public College Costs Surge 8.3 Percent"; "College Tuition Is Out of Control." What has been buried in much of the resulting coverage is that while colleges' published tuition and fe...

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### [Put a stop to USF Poly boondoggle](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 11/05/2011)

Based on the overwhelming evidence, the Board of Governors that oversees the state university system has an easy decision to make when it meets Wednesday to consider allowing the University of South Florida's Lakeland campus to become an independent public university. Anything other than a firm rejection of this poorly designed proposal will be caving in to the power politics behind this expensive...

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### [Treasure Coast high school students explore STEM careers at IRSC](#)

(Stuart News © 11/05/2011)

FORT PIERCE — Jensen Beach High School senior Christine Pierre-Jerome was in her element Friday as she explored the different aspects of Indian River State College's nursing program at the Health Science Center in Fort Pierce. The 18-year-old's eyes lit up with excitement as she received hands-on experience with medical equipment, including a human patient simulator and intravenous drips. She said s...

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### [Belinda Keiser: Keiser University's new programs. transition show bright future](#)

(Stuart News © 11/05/2011)

Florida-based Keiser University was founded by Dr. Arthur Keiser and his mother, Evelyn, in 1977. The two were in separate graduate school programs and envisioned starting their own school; it would be student-driven with workforce-relevant programs. Art, studying Latin American history, and Evelyn, studying health care administration, took a calculated risk and opened the Keiser School with just o...

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### [School Surreal](#)

(Tampa Bay Online © 11/05/2011)

The vast majority of parents in Pasco County, given the choice, would send their children to public schools. On the other hand, parents who want something different should have options. What we've never quite understood is the charter school concept and we're still puzzled after the Pasco School Board rejected two charter school applications this week. A charter school operates independently – i...

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#### [Black males face tougher odds in school](#)

(Tampa Bay Online © 11/05/2011)

TAMPA – At 14, Shawn Turner-McGee is a convicted felon, arrested last spring for pushing his teacher and grabbing her arms. He said it was a misunderstanding, one that he wrote a written apology for and served probation. Last month, Greco Middle School officials suspended the seventh-grader twice for shoving and provoking another boy in the hall. On Thursday, during his first w...

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#### [We cant write a kid off](#)

(Tampa Bay Online © 11/05/2011)

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#### [Education's 'new normal'](#)

(Walton Sun © 11/05/2011)

Good times are not just around the corner. Rather, at least for the next half-decade, educators are facing what Secretary of Educaiont Arne Duncan has termed the “new normal.” After three generations in which national, nominal per pupil spending went up every single year, learning to operate in an environment of flat or declining spending is a new challenge for most educators. It...

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#### [Evans HS Math Teacher, Cecilio Fowler, Receives Prestigious Award](#)

(West Orlando News © 11/05/2011)

A seemingly routine schoolwide assembly turned into the surprise of a lifetime when the Milken Family Foundation (MFF) honored—and stunned—Cecilio Fowler, a math teacher at Maynard Evans High School in Orlando, with a Milken Educator Award. Presented by Dr. Jane Foley, Senior Vice President of Milken Educator Awards, and Gerard Robinson, Florida Commissioner of Education, the Award comes with a no...

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#### [Charter and district can't agree on funding](#)

(Winter Haven News Chief © 11/05/2011)

BARTOW – The Polk County Charter Association has paid \$117,104 in lawyer fees for a dispute that has gone on for more than a year with the Polk County School District concerning services the district provides to the charter schools and the distribution of funding. That's \$76,074 more than the district has spent to defend itself. While both parties...

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[USF faculty against separation](#)

(Winter Haven News Chief © 11/05/2011)

LAKELAND -- Two more strikes against a campaign to turn the University of South Florida Polytechnic into the state's 12th independent university have been hurled to the governing board scheduled to make the much-debated decision about the fate of the campus. With less than a week to go before the State University System of Florida Board of Governors...

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[Edison State College president says retirement may come earlier](#)

(Naples Daily News © 11/04/2011)

Kenneth Walker may be leaving Edison State College earlier than anticipated. The embattled president announced Friday that he will discuss changes to his retirement plan due to the recent turmoil at the college and the toll its taking on his family and the school. In April, Edison had announced Walker's succession plan and his end date on his contract would be June 30, 2014. He was going to...

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[Edison's president offers to retire earlier](#)

(WBBH © 11/04/2011)

planned. During the last Board of Trustees meeting, board members attempted to oust the president – twice, but failed to do so. The last Board of Trustees meeting was held October 25th and during the meeting Dr. Steven Atkins was fired. The board delayed a decision on the fate of a second professor, Dr. Robert Beeson. Just this week, Governor Rick Scott appointed four new people to the board...

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[New board members at Edison could bring drastic changes](#)

(WINK © 11/04/2011)

FORT MYERS, Fla. - Governor Rick Scott has appointed four new members of the Board of Trustees at Edison State College. The move completely changes the makeup of the board. For instance, Board Chairwoman Mary Lee Mann, a supporter of School President Kenneth Walker, has been replaced. The appointments come only days before the board holds an emergency meeting to, among other things, make a deci...

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[Evaluations will need test](#)

(Winter Haven News Chief © 11/04/2011)

Whether the new teacher evaluation system the Polk County School District works as planned will require the test of time. Like any new system, it will probably have to be tweaked as problems, anticipated and unanticipated, arise. One problem administrators already are aware of is the heavy new work load being put on principals and assistant principals. They will now have to formally evaluate...

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Have a wonderful day! Please see the three articles below.

*Deborah*



FL Times-Union

## Duval School Board eyes link between struggling schools, inexperienced teachers

November 7, 2011 - 7:02am

By Teresa Stepzinski

Duval School Board eyes link between struggling schools, inexperienced teachers

The Duval County School Board will discuss whether too many inexperienced teachers are working at the district's worst-performing schools and what can be done to recruit and retain seasoned educators for those classrooms.

The issue is among a half-dozen items on the board's agenda for a 10 a.m. Tuesday workshop.

Board Vice Chairwoman Betty Burney said these poor-performing schools have "a constant turnover" of teachers, some of whom are replaced with novices, including those right out of college. Although they might be talented, new teachers don't have the knowledge or experience to help academically struggling students succeed, she said.

"Research shows that a child could lose one to two years of academic skills because of an ineffective teacher," Burney said.

District staff is expected to update the board at the workshop about the breakdown of new and experienced teachers at county schools.

"I want the district to find a way to get the balance between new and seasoned teachers in the schools," Burney said. "Our successful schools have a steady progression of teachers, and they don't seem to have the turnover that our challenged schools do."

The district offers salary incentives to attract and retain experienced teachers at the poor-performing schools, but Burney said that might not be enough.

Teachers can receive a \$5,000 signing bonus at schools receiving federal School Improvement Grants.

Some seasoned teachers, Burney said, might be "gun shy" about working in a poor-performing school because of negative public perception propagated by the news media.

"And it's more work to teach in a challenged school," Burney said.

But that hard work can have big benefits, she said.

"I think the No. 1 thing we need to do is to provide teachers with the notion that they have the opportunity to truly show how well they really can teach by working at a challenged school," Burney said.

In February, an Education Resource Strategies report showed that, district-wide, Duval County's percentage of novice teachers in elementary schools is comparable to other school districts. Duval's novice elementary teachers, however, are more concentrated in "high-poverty schools" than the other school systems studied, according to the report. Less effective teachers are clustered in the highest-needs elementary schools in Duval County, the report showed.

Last week, the board — in a 5-2 vote, with Burney and board member Paula Wright dissenting — approved a contract partnering with Teach for America to hire at least 296 "high-quality teachers" over a three-year period.

Teach for America is a program that puts people with college degrees in fields other than education through a teaching crash course. Once through the program, they are asked to work for two years in schools that serve predominantly low-income students.

Since 2008, the program has partnered with the district to bring in about 50 new teachers annually to teach in low-income schools in Jacksonville.



Before the vote, representatives of Friends of Northwest Jacksonville Schools repeated concerns that too many new teachers are being sent to low-performing schools, where students need more experienced educators. The group is composed of parents, students, community members and alumni of that area's schools

On Friday, group member Earl Kitchings Jr. said it "makes no sense to continue to put first- and second-year teachers in the more challenged schools."

"If your child was gravely ill, would you want a first-year medical student diagnosing and treating him, or would you want an experienced doctor taking care of your child?" Kitchings said.

Kitchings also said it's likely a new teacher will leave a low-performing school within a few months, which disrupts the continuity of the learning process and can be costly to the school system to find a replacement.

The district, he said, should work on recruiting seasoned teachers who can relate to children from diverse cultures and economically challenged backgrounds, which would reduce such turnover.

## **Tallahassee Democrat**

### **Bill Cotterell: State workers have two weeks to sort out insurance plans**

**7:14 PM, Nov. 4, 2011**

#### **Bill Cotterell Notebook**

Among the usual run of department store advertisements and credit-card offers that clutter mailboxes, state employees recently received an envelope from the Department of Management Services.

It's not junk mail.

It's the annual open-enrollment packet for state group insurance, and there are some important changes being made this year.

The first big difference is that you've got less time to do it. Open enrollment usually runs about a month but, because of bid challenges among health-maintenance organizations, the sign-up period was postponed and shortened a bit for the "plan year" starting Jan. 1.

So employees now have from today through 6 p.m. (EST) on Nov. 18 to sign up, or to make changes in their coverage choices. DMS has come up with a catchy sort of slogan, "take time" and "take action," for the less than two weeks employees now have for enrolling.

"It's imperative that our members take time and take action regarding their insurance choices," DMS Secretary Jack Miles said in announcing the event. "I strongly encourage all employees to take an active role in the health care decisions for themselves and their families by studying the options available and making informed choices." After their take-home pay, health insurance probably ranks second among job concerns of most state employees. They notice it mostly when it gets messed up, as when the state switched claims administrators from Blue Cross to Unisys about 15 years ago or the years it took to work the computer kinks out of the big Convergys crossover.

The Division of State Group Insurance annually handles a massive enrollment chore that must be challenging, even with the full month to operate. There are about 140,000 active employees and 35,000 retirees affected, along with about 15,000 active employees who have no coverage now — but can sign up if they want to start.

There were "benefits fairs" around the state, for HMOs and optional coverage plans (dental, vision, catastrophic care) to pitch their products.

Miles said about 14,000 employees checked out those fairs, an increase of about 2,000 this year, showing a high level of interest.

Another big change this year was a DMS deal that means one HMO per county in most of the state. Negotiations to settle HMO bid protests added a few in some big counties, but the seven-county Big Bend region — Jefferson to Franklin County — will have Capital Health Plan as the only HMO for state enrollees.

Employees who belong to one of the other HMOs can switch to CHP or to the state group insurance "preferred provider organization." If they do nothing by Nov. 18, those who are now in United Healthcare or another HMO in the area will default to CHP — as the state assumes they like the HMO model.

Employees in the few counties with more than one HMO choice will default to the PPO, if they do nothing during open enrollment, since DMS doesn't want to choose for them. Those who live in one county and work in another can choose which they want to enroll in, if that offers more HMO options.

One other difference in 2012 will be no more Walgreens, for the most part. Along with that HMO re-negotiation — a total package projected to save taxpayers \$400 million over two years — DMS contracted with Medco as its pharmacy benefits manager.

Walgreens is not in the state service network with Medco. Only a few Medicare Advantage members will still be able to refill prescriptions there after Jan. 1.

And one more difference this year is in the Health Savings Account program. The new limits for those, including the state's contribution of \$500 for single coverage and \$1,000 a year for families, will be \$3,100 for individuals and \$6,250 for family coverage.

Health insurance gets most of the attention, naturally, but open enrollment also covers the "tax-favored accounts" for dependent care and medical reimbursements. There is also life insurance and supplemental lines like dental, vision and disability coverage to be considered.

Choices are pretty much locked in after Nov. 18, except for the common-sense "qualifying status changes" allowed by law. Naturally, if you get divorced, add a new dependent, or your spouse loses a job and you have to sign up, that can be done whenever necessary.

Even if you're not making any changes — you like what you've got, no family changes — it's a good idea to go through the mailed packet and check out [myflorida.com/mybenefits](http://myflorida.com/mybenefits).

You never know what you might find.

— Contact Senior Political Writer Bill Cotterell at (850) 671-6545 or at [bcotterell@tallahassee.com](mailto:bcotterell@tallahassee.com).

## Tallahassee Democrat

### Scott, legislative leaders pushing consumer-driven health care for state workers

1:29 AM, Nov. 6, 2011 | [28Comments](#)

By Bill Cotterell

Retirees feel pain of health care cost cuts

State forestry worker: 'We just don't have the money' for higher insurance premiums

Trial lawyer: Comparing state agencies to jobs in private sector is inaccurate

"How are we doin' so far?" Department of Management Services Secretary Jack Miles said sympathetically, with a rueful chuckle.

A state job used to mean you wouldn't get rich but could count on three things — job security, a paid-up pension and pretty good insurance.

"How are we doin' so far?" Department of Management Services Secretary Jack Miles said sympathetically, with a rueful chuckle.

State government shed about 6,900 jobs in Gov. Rick Scott's first nine months in office and extracted 3-percent contributions from paychecks for the Florida Retirement System. Now, faced with spiraling health care costs, Scott and legislative leaders want state employees to have more "skin in the game" for their insurance.

That will mean money, probably in the form of higher insurance premiums and new coverage limits written into the budget adopted during the 2012 legislative session. But it also means giving employees some "carrot and stick" incentives to take control of their own insurance choices.

"It seems like every time we make a change in government, it's massive. We don't make incremental change," Miles said. But, like the private sector, state government's health care costs have become "unsustainable" — the word used by Scott, Miles and legislative leaders in separate interviews — and the revenue shortfall of the 2012 session will force budget writers to catch up in big bites of money and policy changes.

"We're behind and there's not enough money to continue to do what we want to do, so we're forced into making changes quickly," Miles added. "Almost anyone you talk to has been moving more toward consumer-driven health care and having to make choices, getting involved in their health care."

'Consumerism'

Scott, a hospital executive who got his political start battling President Obama's national health care plan, and Miles, a former Cigna Insurance manager, speak of "consumerism" like insurance was a house or car. They figure that you take care of what you've got, shop around and maybe trim a few frills — unless somebody else is paying most of the cost.

"Health care is really driven by what provider costs are, what hospital costs are, what physicians charge, all those things, and utilization," Scott said in an interview aboard his plane last week. "The big focus has to be on how do you make sure you're not wasting money."

One consumer-based option has been around since Gov. Jeb Bush's second term, but only about 1 percent of employees are using it. That's the low-premium, high-deductible plan, with an attached health-savings [account](#), in which the state will annually deposit \$500 for single coverage or \$1,000 for families, and employees can let it pile up over their healthy years.

But when they have claims, they're on the hook for \$1,250 or \$2,500 in deductibles, depending on single or family coverage limits. The theory is that they save when they're healthy and shop for cheaper care when they need it.

Currently, only 1,409 employees — out of 135,900 with state-provided health insurance — opt for the health-investor plan.

## Big changes

The math is stark and simple in a detailed report by Buck Consultants that was presented to the Legislature last month. The cost of the state health insurance plan, including the preferred-provider plan and HMOs, was \$1.9 billion last fiscal year and will rise to \$3.1 billion in fiscal 2014-15, if nothing is done.

A month after taking office, Scott proposed capping the state's share of costs at \$5,000 per year. That would have meant 60,101 Career Service employees with family coverage — now costing them \$180 a month — would pay about \$7,100 more per year. More than 47,000 employees with single coverage, costing \$50 a month, would have seen their costs rise by \$1,000 annually.

And the senior managers and elected officials who used to get free coverage, and now pay \$360 for family insurance or \$100 for single coverage, would have had increases of \$9,500 and \$1,500, respectively.

Recoiling from such a shock to the system, in a year with no general pay raises and the 3-percent retirement contribution, the Legislature ordered up the Buck study. The consultants called the current system "paternalistic" — saying it allows "employees to be passive and perhaps even entitled, with little concern about costs" for their health care.

Compared to workers in the private sector, state employees get a bargain on health insurance. A Kaiser Family Foundation study said the average American with employer-provided insurance pays \$900 for single coverage and \$3,996 for family insurance. That compares to \$600 and \$2,160 paid by Florida Career Service employees for single and family coverage.

The employer share — paid by taxpayers — is \$5,998 for individuals and \$12,760 a year for family coverage in Career Service. In Selected Exempt and Senior Management, as well as elected officials coverage, the state pays \$6,498 for singles and \$14,560 a year for family insurance.

Buck didn't make recommendations for 140,000 active employees and thousands more retirees and dependents. But they costed out a Goldilocks list of three options in each category so Scott and lawmakers can decide what's too hard, too soft and just right.

### For instance:

- Instead of having two tiers of insurance, single and family coverage, the state could add some layers, like raising premiums for single, married, married-with-one or married with multiple children.
- Copayments and deductibles could rise.
- Prescription drug fees could be adjusted.
- Smokers could pay more and, as some states and private employers are trying, obesity and even alcohol use could be factored into premiums. Buck calculated that the state could save \$28 million if just 35 percent of smoking employees kicked the habit.
- Enrollment in high-deductible, low-premium health-investor plans could be encouraged.
- "Wellness" incentives could be offered, like weight-loss and smoking-cessation programs, with premium reductions.

### 'Skin in the game'

The whole idea is to save money, but to do it by shifting costs to employees, with some escape hatches. Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, likened the concept to bronze, silver and gold medals in the Olympics, saying employees might shop for an HMO or health-savings plan that would be entirely covered by the state, or pay for more.

"It gives the state employees some skin in the game," Haridopolos said. He said most employers in his Brevard County district — if they offer insurance at all — provide employees a choice between an HMO or a tax-exempt medical savings account.

"We don't want to kill the state worker but let's put it on par with what's happening in the private sector," Haridopolos said. "Their benefits should not be superior to what we're going through in the private sector."

Even without the cost spiral projected in state group insurance, legislators start the session Jan. 10 with revenue shortages approaching \$2 billion.

Scott, Miles and legislative leaders have not made any dollar decisions on raising premiums or cutting benefits. But they are committed to the "consumerism" concept in patient choices.

One quirk of the insurance system that's sure to go away is the ultra-low rate for elected officers, Senior Management and Selected Exempt employees. They used to get free coverage but the 2012 Legislature decided to charge them one-sixth of what Career Service employees pay — \$30 a month for families and \$8.34 for single employees.

"I think everybody ought to have the same plan," said Scott. "Whatever plan we end up with, everybody ought to be on the same plan."

### Taxwatch weighs in

State Rep. Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda, D-Tallahassee, met with Scott late last week. Among other issues, she said, they discussed the administration's interest in getting employees into the health-savings accounts.

"State employees have been hit again and again and again to balance the state budget. Frankly, this same pattern is going on in the private sector.

"If you want folks to have more skin in the game, to take more responsibility for the state of their health, that's a laudable goal," she said. "But the questions then become, are state employees over-using the health care system? Are they unhealthy as a group?"

Florida TaxWatch, a business-funded policy study group, makes annual recommendations to governors and legislators on cutting costs and enhancing revenue collections. This year's TaxWatch study recommended switching employee health insurance from the defined-benefit model to a defined-contribution system — just as the state is trying to get employees to switch from traditional pensions to 401(k)-style retirement investment accounts.

TaxWatch estimates such a move would save \$344 million to \$440 million a year. Its study also called for more "wellness" programs, with incentives and disincentives, estimating that every 1 percent of health care costs saved through smoking cessation or weight loss works out to \$12 million for the taxpayers each year.

While the Buck consultants didn't make recommendations for bringing in more revenue or cutting costs, TaxWatch did. It said bringing the state employee premium share up to the national average — \$900 a year for single coverage, rather than \$600, for instance — the state would reap \$206 million.

It also seconded Scott's belief that all classes of employees should pay the same, whatever the new rate may become.

"The Legislature should modify current health insurance subsidies and employee annual health insurance premium payments to align with national averages and reflect equality across all employee classifications," TaxWatch said.