

From: Smith, Kevin
Sent time: Monday, December 19, 2011 5:07:33 PM
To: cari@excelined.org; walt_griffin@scps.k12.fl.us; elefsky@cfl.rr.com; Lee, Laurie; Colle, Hope
Subject: FW: 12-17-11 through 12-19-11 Education Round Up

FYI – have a great evening...

Sincerely,

Kevin Smith,
Deputy Director,
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From: Higgins, Deborah
Sent: Monday, December 19, 2011 9:10 AM
Subject: 12-17-11 through 12-19-11 Education Round Up

Florida Department of Education



[Scott's schools boost welcome, but falls short | State funding for education still remains low](#)
(Bradenton Herald © 12/19/2011)

While Gov. Rick Scott became a convert to education this year, his proposal to spend an additional \$1 billion on public schools falls short of a meaningful boost. Some \$220 million of that amount offsets the decline in property values and resultant taxes. And an expected enrollment increase of 30,000 students will cost another \$190 million. Under the governor's \$66.4 billion state budget, pe...

[Phys-ed pays long-term dividends](#)
(Citrus County Chronicle © 12/19/2011)

By Chronicle editorial board THE?ISSUE: Middle school physical education requirement. OUR?OPINION: Misguided legislative proposal. Thanks to a junk-food culture and sedentary lifestyle, one third of all Americans are obese, with the current trajectory on track for half of the U.S. population to be obese by 2030. The alarming rise in obesity among Americans is far more serious tha...

[Food program helps feed kids away from school](#)

(Daytona Beach News-Journal © 12/19/2011)

Hosseini Students Without Homes Homeless students in school districts in Florida, ranked by the top 10 (and including where Flagler County ranks): 1. Miami-Dade 4,406 2. Orange 3,887 3. Hillsborough 3,659 4. Lake 2,992 5. Pinellas 2,915 6. Polk 2,446 7. Pasco 2,230 8. Broward 2,101 9. Volusia 2,016 10. Osceola 1,923 37. Flagle...

[States Creating New Districts to Steer 'Turnarounds'](#)

(Education Week © 12/19/2011)

If the job of a traditional superintendent is hard, imagine the complexities involved in building a school system from scratch—especially one composed of schools with some of the most intractable educational challenges. That's the task facing education leaders in Michigan and Tennessee, which are building special districts to take over low-performing schools this year and next. And it may b...

[Proposed FCAT standards to have profound impact on schools, officials warn](#)

(Florida Today © 12/19/2011)

As the state Board of Education meets today to set new passing scores for the FCAT 2.0, local education leaders are warning about the possible consequences of raising the requirements as high as Florida Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson recommends. This is going to have a profound impact on our schools, in terms of failure rates, remediation, in how we do business,? Brevard School Board c...

[Gov. Scott repeats call for FAMU president's leave](#)

(Florida Today © 12/19/2011)

TALLAHASSEE ? Florida A&M University?s Board of Trustees meets today to consider Gov. Rick Scott?s request that President James Ammons be suspended while authorities continue investigating the hazing death of drum major Robert Champion.The meeting comes three days after the state medical examiner ruled Champion?s death a homicide. Officials say he was beaten so severely that he bled internally and...

[Florida A&M alumni president says school has been singled out](#)

(Florida Today © 12/19/2011)

TALLAHASSEE, FLA. — The president of the Florida A&M University Alumni Association said Sunday that the death of university drum major Robert Champion could have happened at hundreds of other campuses across the nation ? and that he has no fears about seeing his family members enroll at the nation?s largest historically black university. ?Two of my grandchildren graduated, I have a granddau...

[Football Coach Released on Bail](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 12/19/2011)

The George Jenkins High School football coach accused of having sex with a student posted bond and was released from jail Friday, according to jail records. Matt A. Thompson, 30, of Lakeland, was arrested Wednesday and faces two counts of sexual battery. Deputies said Thompson had sex with a 17-year-old female student. A judge set his bail at \$50,00...

[Former Edison executive expects college to face sanctions in reaccreditation](#)

(Naples Daily News © 12/19/2011)

FORT MYERS — As Edison State College officials work to address concerns raised by its accrediting body with the goal of being reaffirmed, the administrator who formerly

led the school in the process warns achieving that goal might not be as clear-cut as it seems. Steve Atkins, who was fired in October from his position as vice president of academic affairs, said he is confident Edison won't lo...

[New FCAT scoring will mean 'blood on the table'](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 12/19/2011)

Florida is poised to ratchet up its standardized-testing system, making it tougher for students to pass key math and reading exams. It's a move designed to push students, and schools, to achieve more academically. But the immediate and dramatic impact likely will be that many more students fail FCAT. More failing test scores will mean thousands more students face being held back, assigne...

[For third-graders, learning to read means learning to spell](#)

(Pensacola News Journal © 12/19/2011)

The students in Ingrid Corbett's third-grade class at Bellview Elementary School take out notebook paper and begin numbering it 1 through 17 with their pencils, skipping lines. "Number one," Corbett said. "Cowboy." The students bend over their papers and carefully spell out the word, making sure to keep their answers covered up. "Number two ? moist," she said. "The cake was moist and delicious...."

[Stepping in where FAMU has failed](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/19/2011)

Stepping in where FAMU has failed In Print: Monday, December 19, 2011 Stars Shine As VH1 Celebrates Soul AP Top Stories Raw Video: North Koreans Mourn for Kim Jong Il Former IMF Boss Strauss-Kahn Speaks in Beijing Chiefs Hand Packers Their First Loss Raw Video: Israel Completes Prisoner Swap Raw Video: Anti-US Rallies in Pakistan Police: FBI Join Search for Missing Baby Girl AP Top S...

[New FCAT cut scores unanimously adopted](#)

(St. Petersburg Times/The Grade Book Blog © 12/19/2011)

The Florida Board of Education has unanimously adopted new higher FCAT cut scores at every grade level, including a score of 245 for tenth-grade reading. That score is higher than superintendents supported. "I must insist on the record that we are all, as board members, continuing to raise the bar for all students ... including all the minorities," board member A.K. Desai said. "We are not goin..."

[Why Florida educators must keep fighting](#)

(Tampa Tribune © 12/19/2011)

To all of my fellow K-12 educators in the Sunshine State, as we close out another calendar year, my message to you for 2012 is simple: "Don't give up. Don't ever give up." Although Jimmy Valvano, the legendary basketball coach, punctuated those statements in a 1993 ESPY awards speech before he died weeks later of cancer, those statements are especially germane to educators. As a high school E...

[Charter schools, virtual education bad for children](#)

(Bradenton Herald © 12/18/2011)

In the Dec. 2 Herald there was an article, "School choice hot topic" and Verdya Bradley made the comment, "Choice is about quality." I am presuming that Ms. Bradley was referring to charter schools. Recent studies have indicated that the majority of charter schools are not doing as well as regular public schools. Many are failing and, in the process, taking away fundin...

[Scott's schools boost welcome, but falls short | State funding for education still remains low](#)

(Bradenton Herald © 12/18/2011)

While Gov. Rick Scott became a convert to education this year, his proposal to spend an additional \$1 billion on public schools falls short of a meaningful boost. Some \$220 million of that amount offsets the decline in property values and resultant taxes. And an expected enrollment increase of 30,000 students will cost another \$190 million. Under the governor's \$66.4 billion state budget,...

[FLORIDA LOTTERY BREAKS SCRATCH-OFF RECORD FOR THREE STRAIGHT MONTHS](#)

(Florida Lottery © 12/18/2011)

CONTACT: FLORIDA LOTTERY COMMUNICATIONS (850) 487-7727 TALLAHASSEE - The Florida Lottery today announced Scratch-Off ticket sales for November broke an all-time sales record. In fact, this is the third straight month Florida Lottery Scratch-Off sales have broken historic records. The combined sales for September, October and November total \$575 million. With higher sales, come higher prize payouts...

[An exception is overused](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 12/18/2011)

In the old days, there used to be something called the "gentleman's C." It was awarded to students who tried hard, couldn't quite do the work, but were passed anyhow. In more recent years, they were called "love grades" for students who don't cause the teacher any trouble. They received a good grade in return. Now the Duval County school system has a new, modern, computerized versio...

[Florida's school rules become cumbersome](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 12/18/2011)

When educators say there are too many regulations governing what they can and cannot do, Florida's massive education code might explain their frustration. It contains 528,854 words, and the official printed version grew so immense that last year the state shrunk the type size. It's down to a lean 573 pages, single-spaced. And that's just Florida's education laws; it doesn't include federal or loc...

[Florida's New Election Law a Target](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 12/18/2011)

TALLAHASSEE – Florida's new election law remains a large political target as U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder last week cited the measure as one of the national examples of potential discriminatory practices. In a speech at the LBJ presidential library in Texas, Holder said the Justice Department was "examining a number of changes..."

[Hazing at FAMU exposes culture of silence](#)

(Miami Herald © 12/18/2011)

Next year was supposed to be a big year for Florida A&M University. The nation's largest historically black university is scheduled to celebrate 125 years since its founding in 1887. Unfortunately, instead of talking about the many contributions its faculty and alumae have made to this country, the FAMU community will be consumed by the H and I words. Not high academic scores, not healthcare...

[Editorial: School chiefs prove refreshingly candid](#)

(Naples Daily News © 12/18/2011)

We hope this keeps up. We refer to early signs from the new superintendents of schools in Collier and Lee counties, a.inline_topic:hover { background-color: #EAEAEA; } Kamela Patton and Joseph Burke, respectively, to speak plainly about school system performance. When graduation rates came out the other day showing Lee down from last year, Burke declared: "Unacceptable." Patton, whose distri...

[Orange charter high schools defend reputation against pending F grades](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 12/18/2011)

When state grades came out for elementary and middle schools in July, charter schools were responsible for an outsized share of the F's. And when high-school grades are released in coming days, three Orange County charters, all run by the same company, are poised to continue that trend. Aloma, Chancery and Sheeler high schools, which work with students who are years behind in school or have d...

[FCAT: Go higher but slower on cut scores](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 12/18/2011)

Now more than four months into office, state Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson wants to leave an indelible first impression on Florida's scholastic future. His footprint. Three advisory panels recommended tougher minimum scores, or "cut scores," for the revised standardized tests known as the FCAT in math and reading. Only to be bigfooted by Robinson, who wants even higher scores. ...

[More area students get free and reduced-cost meals](#)

(Orlando-WFTV (ABC) © 12/18/2011)

FARGO, N.D. — One in three children in the Fargo and West Fargo public schools receives free or reduced-cost breakfasts or lunches this school year. In Moorhead, nearly four out of 10 students got free or reduced-cost meals last year as part of the federally subsidized program that helps poor children receive proper nutrition. Participation in the National School Lunch Program is up 10 p...

[For undercover officer in high school, bad grades were good](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 12/18/2011)

He'd been at the high school maybe a month when he started hearing the rumors about himself - that maybe this new, fresh-faced classmate of theirs was in fact an undercover police officer. He wasn't quite sure what gave him away. His looks? His behavior? His car? It didn't matter. The rumors seemed to remain relegated to a small group at the school. And they certainly weren't enough to stop the u...

[Deeds needed to restore BTU trust](#)

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel © 12/18/2011)

This one's a cautionary tale about rock-throwing and glass houses. Two years ago, we took issue with the Broward Teachers Union after it sent 6,000 holiday greeting cards to Broward School Board members with messages like "Federal Corruption Probe, who will be next?" and black cards with an FBI logo and the greeting, "FBI Holiday Tip Line." All references to to the financial investigations and cl...

[Perspective: At What Cost Academic Parity?](#)

(St. Augustine Record © 12/18/2011)

By MICHAEL J. PETRILLI and FREDERICK M. HESS staugustine.com Copyright 2011 St. Augustine Record. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed. December 18, 2011 - 12:46am Perspective: At What Cost Academic Parity? Special to The Washington Post President Obama's

remarks on inequality, stoking populist anger at "the rich," suggest that the them...

[Stepping in where FAMU has failed](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/18/2011)

Nearly a month after the alleged hazing death of band drum major Robert Champion, Florida A&M University remains in turmoil. Just last week separate from an investigation into Champion's death by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Tallahassee police arrested three band members in another alleged hazing incident that left a female freshman with a broken leg. FDLE alerted school officia...

[EDUCATION'S COCONUT CAKE PROBLEM](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/18/2011)

Harvard professor Roland Fryer has made a discovery with the potential to transform public education. To understand it, though, it helps to first hear a story about the conundrum of the coconut cake. Fryer's grandmother makes an astounding coconut cake, a magical confection of sweetness and air he's loved since he was a kid growing up in Florida. Fryer wanted to learn to make the cake himself, bu...

[Silent at first, teachers unhappy with the Gates initiative are beginning to speak out](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/18/2011)

TAMPA — Renee Kelly retired at 55 from her job teaching law at Riverview High School. Leaving early lowered her pension, she said. But she couldn't stomach changes under the new Gates-funded system of teacher evaluations. "We've been made out to be good guys against the bad guys," she said. Kelly is posting her views on websites and Facebook pages, and she isn't alone. In recent weeks, que...

[School gets a zone of its own](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/18/2011)

BROOKSVILLE — Students who live within several of miles Nature Coast Technical High School should check a map. The magnet school might soon be your neighborhood high school. Since its doors opened in 2003, Nature Coast has accepted students from throughout Hernando County through an application process. Starting next year, though, the school will have its own attendance zone, meaning studen...

[Pasco County's high school graduation rates rise](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/18/2011)

WESLEY CHAPEL — Kareem Bennett struggled with his teacher's instructional style in his world history course. "He set us on our own," said Bennett, an 18-year-old senior at Wesley Chapel High School. "I'm not one of those types of learners who just reads something and understands it." He failed, and just like that fell off-track for graduation. The school's new student tracking system caught...

[Pinellas School Board leans toward leasing Rio Vista land to city for park](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/18/2011)

Two years after Pinellas County School Board members closed Rio Vista Elementary, they appeared poised to lease it to the city of St. Petersburg for use as a neighborhood park. Board members met last week with Mayor Bill Foster and City Council chairman Jim Kennedy to discuss the potential deal. The terms are still being hammered out. The land lies in Kennedy's district and would become the area...

[**Larry O. Rivers: FAMU doesn't need a peacemaker**](#)

(Tallahassee Democrat © 12/18/2011)

The tendency to view African-Americans as a largely undifferentiated group that shares a single set of ethics, habits and politics remains one of the foremost obstacles to fact-based dialogues about race. Black civil society — the body of voluntary organizations and institutions created in response to social challenges faced by Americans of African descent — is not and never has been...

[**Ammons should focus on communication, healing**](#)

(Tallahassee Democrat © 12/18/2011)

Until a month ago, Florida A&M President James H. Ammons, who was hired to lead his alma mater with great fanfare in 2007, was best known for fixing deep-seated financial problems that threatened the future of the 124-year-old institution. Then drum major Robert Champion died in what the State Medical Examiner's Office in Orlando is calling a homicide. Now Ammons finds himself at the center of a...

[**Board of trustees responsible for hiring, firing university presidents**](#)

(Tallahassee Democrat © 12/18/2011)

Whose decision is it to hire and fire public-university presidents? Florida voters decided nearly a decade ago that those decisions should be left to the boards of trustees at each university. In 2002, more than 60 percent of voters approved a constitutional amendment creating the Board of Governors and board of trustees structure of governance for the state's 11 universities. Its aim was to de-...

[**Schools post survey about four-day week**](#)

(Tampa Bay Online © 12/18/2011)

LAND O' LAKES – The Pasco County school district has launched an online survey to seek input from parents and others about a potential four-day school week. A link to the survey is on the school district website at www.pasco.k12.fl.us. The school district commissioned Hanover Research, an information services firm, to conduct the survey, which can be completed anonymously. ...

[**Feds reject Floridas early learning grant request**](#)

(WDBO AM-580 (Orlando) © 12/18/2011)

Gov. Rick Scott said the federal government rejected Florida's bid for a \$100 million early learning grant Friday because he wouldn't accept the money if there were "strings attached." Scoring sheets released by the U.S. Education and Health and Human Services departments, though, indicated many other factors also combined to doom the bid. The Republican governor said the state was asked for a c...

[**District: wait and see on governor's budget**](#)

(Citrus County Chronicle © 12/17/2011)

INVERNESS — Citrus County School District officials are urging caution to Gov. Rick Scott's pledge to significantly increase school spending next year. Scott's proposed 2012-13 budget includes \$1 billion more for education, a year after the Legislature slashed education funding at Scott's behest. The increase would mean \$3.6 million more for Citrus County, assista...

[**Community colleges growing stake in STEM**](#)

(CommunityCollegeTimes © 12/17/2011)

If community colleges wanted a clearer signal regarding how important they are to the future of a highly skilled workforce, they got one last week with a full-day summit on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) sponsored by the federal government. Although the Dec. 15 summit in Washington, D.C., was titled "Community Colleges in the Evolving STEM Education Landscape," it was not isolat...

[Bethune-Cookman reopens case on hazing complaint](#)

(Daytona Beach News-Journal © 12/17/2011)

DAYTONA BEACH – The Bethune-Cookman University president is going to reopen a case involving a complaint of hazing against a band member in August. Trudie Kibbe Reed said Friday she's taking the now former student's complaint "very seriously" and if there needs to be further inquiries into the Marching Wildcats – "it will be done." "The last thing I want to do is send a kid home in a coffin...."

[Session must not get sidetracked off jobs](#)

(Florida Keys Keysnews © 12/17/2011)

It was refreshing to hear that the Florida Legislature might shelve social issues during the upcoming 60-day session, which this year begins in January. But just call us skeptical. We've seen it way too often, where the Legislature just can't help itself from delving into social issues that divide, take up valuable time – and usually go nowhere. Jobs need to be the key focus of the ...

[Editorial: When is a second chance appropriate?](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 12/17/2011)

The number of students in the Duval County public schools using "grade recovery" to turn F grades into Cs is skyrocketing. The number is as large as a suburban school district, almost 30,000. School officials praise the practice as a modern way to allow students to raise their grades without having to retake an entire nine-week course. A few teachers, however, say that it is abused and cannot ...

['Mad Scientist' teaches science in a fun way at Seabreeze Elementary](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 12/17/2011)

When he opens the refrigerator in his Jacksonville Beach home, Justyn McKay questions whether the jar of pickles really contains pickles, whether the eggs are "naked" and the chicken bones have been turned to rubber. And he never knows what he will find in his wife's office lab. You see, he's married to the "Mad Scientist." That's Holly McKay's persona at Seabreeze Elementary School. Clad in a...

[Take time to thank your kids teachers](#)

(Florida Today © 12/17/2011)

Recently, I had the worthwhile occasion to write a letter to the principal of my son's high school (Viera) to highlight the positive attributes of one of his teachers and an administrator who went above and beyond their job to become a positive change in his life. These two individuals took the time to communicate concerns regarding his grades and behavior, and suggest recommendations to resolve ...

[Edison State College will quiz candidates for interim president Jan. 14](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 12/17/2011)

Two candidates for interim president at Edison State College will interview Jan. 14, the same day trustees will tap a headhunter to start searching for a permanent president. Meanwhile, Edison has signed a contract with the law firm Fowler White Boggs to investigate the performance history of District President Kenneth Walker, who was suspended Nov. 29 as trustees build a termination case. The fi...

[Guest opinion: FCAT's changes should be viewed favorably](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 12/17/2011)

As you've probably heard, the state will be rolling out its newest version of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, commonly referred to as FCAT 2.0. What makes this new version different is that it will require higher academic performance by our students as compared to previous versions. If there's one thing to know about FCAT 2.0, it's this: The change is a good thing. Initially, FCAT 2.0...

[Governor, feds trade blame as Florida loses out on early learning grant](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 12/17/2011)

TALLAHASSEE - Gov. Rick Scott said the federal government rejected Florida's bid for a \$100 million early learning grant Friday because he wouldn't accept the money if there were "strings attached." Scoring sheets released by the U.S. Education and Health and Human Services departments, though, indicated many other factors also combined to doom the bid. The Republican governor said the state was...

[Gov. Scott tries to rebuild reputation](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 12/17/2011)

It's probably just happenstance Gov. Rick Scott released his budget proposal, with more money for schools, the same week two polls came out showing the GOP governor has dismal approval ratings, even in his own party. The Public Policy Polling group's numbers put Scott as the least-liked governor in the entire country: Only 26 percent of Florida voters, and 46 percent of Republicans, approve of wh...

[Embarking on their future](#)

(Gainesville Sun © 12/17/2011)

As he surveyed the graduating class before him Friday night, Santa Fe College President Jackson Sasser acknowledged that, for many, the road here was not easy. "There is no doubt that this is a great victory," he said. "Many of you have struggled with real-life issues even while you pursued your degree or certificate." More than...

[Death of Florida A&M drum major ruled a homicide](#)

(Gainesville Sun © 12/17/2011)

ORLANDO - A Florida A&M University drum major was severely beaten in a hazing incident last month and died within an hour, the state medical examiner said Friday in declaring it a homicide. Robert Champion, 26, had bruises to his chest, arms, shoulder and back, and internal bleeding that caused him to go into shock, which killed him...

[Mistake irks magnet school applicants](#)

(Hernando Today © 12/17/2011)

BROOKSVILLE Parents of magnet school hopefuls were confused and upset Wednesday after being told they could only submit an application and portfolio to one school — contrary to what was allowed in previous years. However, Superintendent Bryan Blavatt said that was a mistake and on Friday — the deadline to turn in the applications — district staff were attempting contact those parents and allow th...

[Pinellas to Hire More Black Teachers](#)

(Lakeland Ledger © 12/17/2011)

The Pinellas school district will strive to hire more black teachers under a proposed legal agreement that goes before the school board next month. Some of the draft language is similar to what's in a 2000 federal court order tied to the district's desegregation efforts. But it renews the district's commitment and offers guidelines on how to boost t...

[Toughen the law](#)

(Miami Herald © 12/17/2011)

Before there was a federal Race to the Top for education reform, governors throughout the nation looked to infuse competition into a stale public school system that was leaving behind millions of children, mostly in poor neighborhoods. Thus, charter schools were born, becoming a public-private hybrid of a new system that has, indeed, brought higher standards, demanded results and produced achievem...

[Miami Central High meeting reviews turnaround efforts](#)

(Miami Herald © 12/17/2011)

More than 100 parents, students, alumni and community members packed the bleachers at Miami Central Senior High Tuesday night to learn more about how their school can continue to improve and avoid another threat of closure. The mood was upbeat: The school has improved its graduation rate to 72 percent in 2011, up from 64 percent in 2009. Plus, the undefeated Rockets football team is headed to the s...

[Regalado: 'My untold story'](#)

(Miami Herald © 12/17/2011)

Maya Angelou wrote that, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." On some level, however, we are all made up of untold stories, of intimate truths that we share only with our nearest and dearest. But as a child of public figures my life has had few untold stories; privacy, after all, was a luxury that we were not afforded. A little over a year ago, however...

[Reading to learn: How Miami-Dade can get to the top](#)

(Miami Herald © 12/17/2011)

Miami-Dade is at the back of the pack, screamed a recent front page Miami Herald headline. A study commissioned by the Beacon Council, the county's economic development agency, revealed that Miami-Dade badly trails competitors when it comes to the percentage of young professionals, an educated workforce and other important economic indicators. It turns out we have fewer college-educated wo...

[An improvement](#)

(Miami Herald © 12/17/2011)

My son is in the seventh grade at Pinecrest Preparatory Middle High, a charter School. He attended a public elementary school, and the experience was not as pleasant for him or me. One of the most critical issues for parents is access to their child's teacher. The process was chaotic in the traditional public schools. However, the charter-school approach is completely different. The door is ...

[Some Edison trustees may prefer to buy out Walker's contract rather than fight in court](#)

(Naples Daily News © 12/17/2011)

a.inline_topic:hover { background-color: #EAEAEA; } Edison State College has signed a contract with a law firm to investigate terminating embattled President

a.inline_topic:hover { background-color: #EAEAEA; } Kenneth Walker with cause. But some trustees indicated Friday they might prefer to buy out Walker's contract if it would be easier and less expensive for the school. Cathy Beveridge, ...

[Broward Students Attempt to Set Guinness Book Record for Largest Group Handshake](#)

(NBC6.NET South Florida © 12/17/2011)

J.P. Taravella High School students were hoping to get into in the Guinness Book of World Records Friday for the longest group handshake. More than 1,500 students, teachers and staff will participate in the handshake as part of the school's "Let's Shake On It!" campa...

[Schultz: Tallahassee doesn't plan to pay for merit pay](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 12/17/2011)

Anyone who knows the politics of public education in Florida would have seen it coming. We at The Post did. Now, though, we can confirm that another Great Tallahassee Schools Scam is heading our way. This one is about merit pay, the latest supposed miracle cure for education. The Legislature passed a merit-pay plan in 2010, but Gov. Crist - desperate for non-Republican votes - vetoed the bill tha...

[Palm Beach County schools may sell ads for revenue](#)

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel © 12/17/2011)

Advertising could be displayed on Palm Beach County public school websites, inside buses and across campuses starting next year as part of a strategy to get cash flowing into depleted budgets, according to a study released on Friday. A citizens committee asked officials to develop by next month a recommendation for a school advertising program. It's in anticipation of a \$52 million operating budg...

[Critics say Florida lawmakers are too cozy with charter schools](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/17/2011)

LAND O'LAKES — State Rep. John Legg strode up to the podium to pitch the Pasco County School Board. His charter school, Dayspring Academy in New Port Richey, wanted to grant its prekindergarten students automatic entry into the next level without having to go through a lottery. The popular, A-rated school has a long waiting list, and state law required charter schools to randomly select stu...

[Get graduation numbers right](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/17/2011)

What is the graduation rate in Florida's high schools? It depends on whom you ask. And that's ridiculous. No measurement is a more important indicator of the health of the public school system than the percentage of students it graduates into college or careers. It shouldn't be that hard to come up with a common calculation that could be used by every school district, every state and the federal g...

[Hernando County School Board has right approach on redistricting](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/17/2011)

The Hernando School Board offered a polite response to their counterparts on the County Commission this week: No thanks, we don't want to see you in court. More importantly, when declining to sign off on new political maps carving the county into five geographic areas of 34,500 people each, the School Board showed justifiable contempt for a process skewed to benefit a single candidate for publi...

[Pinellas poised to recruit more black teachers](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/17/2011)

The Pinellas school district will strive to hire more black teachers under a proposed legal agreement that goes before the School Board next month. Some of the draft language is similar to what's in a 2000 federal court order tied to the district's desegregation efforts. But it renews the district's commitment and offers guidelines on how to boost the ranks of black teachers through recruiting ...

[Teacher assesses new FCAT mandates](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/17/2011)

Florida Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson wants to raise the minimum scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test for grades 3-10. Without evidence, he claims the tougher test will help our high school graduates become college-ready. The Florida Board of Education is scheduled to vote on the proposal on Monday. While not publicly opposing higher minimum scores, many superint...

[School superintendent wants accused coach fired](#)

(St. Petersburg: WTSP (Ch. 10) © 12/17/2011)

Winter Haven, FL – The head football coach at George W. Jenkins High School who was arrested Wednesday on charges of having sex with a 17-year-old female student, may lose his job. Superintendent of Schools Sherrie Nickell plans to recommend school board members fire Matt Thompson at the board's Jan. 17 meeting. According to Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd, 30-year-old Matt Thomps...

[Accreditation agency suggests impact study](#)

(Suwannee Democrat © 12/17/2011)

Live Oak — The accrediting agency for the Suwannee County School District recently completed a four day review of its schools and has suggested the board analyze the impact of class configuration. The board was given the preliminary results of its findings at a Dec. 7 meeting. Even though the District won't receive the detailed report of its findings for about 30 days, a prop...

[Governor defends call for FAMU presidents ouster](#)

(Tampa Bay Online © 12/17/2011)

TALLAHASSEE — Florida Gov. Rick Scott said today he was doing the right thing by asking for the suspension of Florida A&M University's president until an investigation is completed on hazing that could have led to a band member's death. "I care about what happens to FAMU," Scott insisted. "It's important to our state. It's important to the country." Scott said today it was important to let...

[New Bill To Enforce Teaching Terrorism In Classrooms](#)

(WIOD NewsRadio 610 (Miami) © 12/17/2011)

There's a good chance teachers across Florida will have to teach students about the September 11th attacks in the classroom. State Representative Joseph Abruzzo tells South Florida First News he learned about Pearl Harbour in class and 9/11 should be added to the curriculum. "I feel the best defense to our nation is through the education of our children," Abruzzo said. He says he's sponsoring t...

Have a great day!

Deb



Please see article below.

Tallahassee Democrat

Bill Cotterell: Retirements fill the state's workforce horizon

6:25 PM, Dec. 16, 2011

Every year at this time, the Department of Management Services publishes an interesting head count of state employees.

But the Annual Workforce Report is more than just a trove of big and small facts, figures and trends on everything from how many people work in each agency to participation levels in the United Way campaign. It's also a useful tool for managers to see where government is going.

DMS Secretary Jack Miles was immediately struck by the large number of retirements likely in the next few years. Employees eligible to join the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) did so, in greater numbers, last year and this year because of an impending cut in interest payments on DROP accounts.

Now that they're in, they're going to have to drop out of their state jobs within the next five years. And that's not counting all the other people who, not in DROP, will age out or have a change in circumstances that makes it possible or necessary for them to retire.

Bear in mind, figures in the AWR are for the State Personnel System. That's Career Service, Selected Exempt and Senior management — the three classifications embracing about 65 percent of all state employment. The State University System, courts and a few other pay plans are not counted on the SPS retirement charts.

Also, it should be remembered that not everybody who can retire does so. Many can't afford it, especially if their adult sons and daughters come back to the nest or they have elderly relatives to support. Many (and I'm speaking personally here, at 68, though I don't work for the state) are fortunate to make a living doing something they like and don't know what they'd do in retirement.

That in mind, the state figures are impressive. The AWR projects that 16,089 employees in the Big Three pay plans will reach retirement eligibility — by age or length of service — in the next five years. And the AWR said DROP will have 7,483 members timing out over the next five years.

For those unfamiliar with DROP, it allows employees to retire on Friday and come back to work Monday. Monthly pensions are held for them, while they continue earning their regular salaries, for up to five years. The 6.5-percent interest on DROP accounts was cut to 1.3 percent last year — causing a rush of enrollments, as those eligible signed up before the deadline.

Actually, there was a similar surge in sign-ups a year earlier, when the Legislature tried to cut the interest rate, but then-Gov. Charlie Crist vetoed the reduction. Gov. Rick Scott had no such qualms about it this year.

The AWR projects 1,172 DROP-outs this fiscal year — more than doubling to 2,366 in 2015-16. Meanwhile, the projection for all retirements — DROP or not-DROP — goes from 2,873 this year to 3,472 in that time.

"The striking piece for me, as I went through this, is looking at the roughly 22 percent of state employees that, in the next five years, will or can retire," Miles said in an interview.

"Almost a quarter of our employee base could be walking to the door in the next five years," he said. As a manager, Miles asked, "What's our plan, relative to succession or making sure we're doing the right thing to transfer knowledge from those employees to others?"

A retirement rate of better than one-in-five is an opportunity for Scott and the Legislature to further reduce the size and cost of state government. But not even the most conservative Republican has ever proposed eliminating 22 percent of the workforce.

As Miles points out, most of the position eliminations in Scott's first budget, as well as the new one he proposed this month, are vacancies. So it's an opportunity for agencies to move work around, consolidate and automate, maybe fill only three or four of every five openings.

And, Miles noted, 22-percent retirement means an opportunity to move up, for the other 78 percent of the workforce — or 70 or 75 percent, depending on how many of those vacancies will be filled. Chances are, they'll be filled at lower salaries than the departing retirees were earning, too, although that's just speculative.

One big problem with this kind of theorizing and speculating about future reductions in the size of government is that we're starting with an already small base. And state personnel doesn't cost nearly as much as a lot of critics would like us to believe.

The AWR has a couple of specially significant statistics about that. Florida ranks last in its ratio of state employees — 116 per 10,000 population — and last in per-capita cost of state payroll — at \$38. The national averages are 217 state employees per 10,000 population and \$75 personnel costs per citizen.

You can't just knee-jerk presume that being first or last, or somewhere in the middle, is necessarily good or bad. But to be so far below the national average, and to be there year after year, can only mean that Florida has a consistently small, relatively low-paid workforce.