

From: [Clare Crowson \(Clare@afloridapromise.org\)](mailto:Clare.Crowson@afloridapromise.org) <ClareAF@meridianstrategiesllc.com>
To: Undisclosed recipients:
CC:
Date: Thu, 9/8/2011 12:36:06 PM
Subject: Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 9/8/11

Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 9/8/11

For more education news, visit www.TheEdFly.com.

NATIONAL NEWS

- 1) [Perry Defends Ed. Record, Gingrich Praises Race to Top](#); Klein – Education Week

FLORIDA NEWS

- 2) [Opinion: A winning formula for schools](#); Editorial Board – Miami Herald
- 3) [Virtual school in session this year in Florida](#); Breitenstein – Fort Myers News Press

STATE NEWS

- 4) [Connecticut Taps Charter School Founder as Schools Chief](#); Cavanagh – Education Week
- 5) [Southwest Idaho districts look to take lead in school overhaul](#); Manny – Idaho Statesman
- 6) [Michigan Department of Education to raise bar on test scores](#); Wilkinson, Chambers and Donnelly – Detroit News

NATIONAL NEWS

Perry Defends Ed. Record, Gingrich Praises Race to Top

Education Week

By: Alyson Klein

September 7, 2011

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2011/09/perry_defends_ed_record_gingri.html

Gov. Rick Perry, the frontrunner among GOP presidential candidates, just cannot get away from U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's [criticism](#) of his record on education in Texas.

During the Republican candidates' debate Wednesday night, NBC's Brian Williams hit the Lone Star State governor with a question on the cuts he's made to education in Texas. This past session, lawmakers there rewrote state budget rules so that they could provide schools with \$4 billion less over the next two years to help close a \$27 billion shortfall on a \$127 billion state budget. (For more on what went down, check out [this story](#).)

But Perry said cutting education hasn't hurt results in the state.

"The reductions we made were thoughtful reductions," he said. "We're making progress" in boosting student achievement, including for some minority populations, he said. And he said the state has challenges because it "shares a border with Mexico. We have a unique situation. I stand by the record [we have] for what we've done with the resources we have."

Perry also noted that Facebook and other big companies have recently come to Texas, which he said is proof that the state has a strong educational system. (Check out fellow Politics K-12 blogger Michele McNeil's look at Duncan's claim that he "feels sorry" for the children of Texas [here](#).)

In another education nugget, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who has worked with the Rev. Al Sharpton to spread a pro-charter school, pro-merit pay agenda, was asked why he's a fan of Race to the Top, the Obama administration's signature education reform program. Gingrich said he likes the fact that Race to the Top called on states to expand their charter schools and said this is "the one area where I very much agree with [Obama]." Gingrich is a fan of anything that broadens choice in education.

Gingrich also said he'd like to see "Pell Grants" for K-12 schools, which sounds like vouchers to help low-income students go to private schools. Interestingly, President George W. Bush [proposed](#) a program with almost exactly the same name back in 2008. It never went anywhere.

Other K-12 tidbits, at the debate, which was held at the Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California and sponsored by NBC News and *Politico*:

- Herman Cain, the former CEO of Godfather's Pizza, said offhand that he doesn't think the federal government should micromanage education.

- U.S. Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, said he doesn't think that schools should have to educate the children of illegal immigrants. (The Supreme Court disagrees, or at least it did back in [Plyler vs. Doe](#).)

[\(Back to top\)](#)

FLORIDA NEWS

Opinion: A winning formula for schools

Miami Herald

Editorial Board

September 7, 2011

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/09/07/2395393/a-winning-formula-for-schools.html>

Miami-Dade business leaders will hear from Miami-Central Senior High School Principal Rennina Turner Thursday about how business partnerships, coupled with a strong mentor and tutoring program, are helping turn around a once failing school to one where more students are on track to head to college or trained for work.

City Year's third annual breakfast will celebrate how far students have come since the mentoring program was launched in 2008. Young leaders who are serving as City Year tutors and mentors for K-12 students are a huge help to teachers, too.

Unfortunately, long-range planning for public education is not something state government does well. Gov. Rick Scott has made no secret that he supports taxpayer-backed vouchers for private schools, though he has pulled back — for now — from forcing the issue because Florida's Constitution prohibits public money for private schools. Yet most Floridians want their public school system to be top-notch.

Tough times call for sacrifice, to be sure. But there is a breaking point, and it seems ever closer.

State funding for public education has plummeted — and that began before the Great Recession. In fact, the state's current base student allocation is at the same level it was a decade ago, and maintaining school facilities has been crippled by a bad economy and poor tax revenues. Teachers, who in most districts have not had a raise in several years, have had to dip into their salaries to cover a larger portion of their pension costs. And in Miami-Dade County, teachers also have increased their contribution to their healthcare insurance costs.

All these measures have been reasonable ones to offset layoffs during a financial crisis. School districts that avoided such measures are now facing Broward County's predicament: having to lay off more than 1,000 teachers.

Despite all these challenges, Florida can begin now to chart a course for investing in public education as the economy starts to turn around. Otherwise, the temptation will be to "settle" for the way things are, expecting teachers and administrators to embrace ever more reforms and cutbacks without rewarding their good work and successes.

To that end, the state Board of Education held a meeting last month to hear from educators, think tanks and leaders of community colleges and K-12 public schools on ways to prod the Legislature to restore funding and reward excellence. A recurring theme during that meeting: Get ready to invest as the economy starts to improve.

Miami-Dade Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho proposed some intriguing ideas:

- Develop a five-year statewide plan that earmarks a specific percentage of economic growth dollars to be reinvested in public schools year to year. Without consistent funding, public schools are losing their best teachers.
- Establish a "pupil poverty index adjustment" in the state's education funding formula. Miami-Dade used to benefit from a population formula, but the GOP-led Legislature used a power play and dumped it to help growing suburban districts in Central Florida instead.
- Extend general obligation bonds from 20 years to 30 years, to repair aging schools and build new ones when needed.

South Florida legislators need to commit to this strategy. As Florida's economy grows, so would its investment in education — a win-win for students and the businesses that will one day employ them

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Virtual school in session this year in Florida

Fort Myers News Press

By: Dave Breitenstein

September 7, 2011

<http://www.news-press.com/article/20110908/NEWS0104/110907051/0/LIFESTYLES/Virtual-school-session-year-Florida>

Lee County plans for all students to have computer access

This year's freshman class won't just have virtual courses as an option.

It will be a requirement.

A new law mandates Florida high school students, starting with current ninth-graders, enroll in at least one virtual course before they graduate. The thinking is students, whether they head to college or into the workforce, will need to continue their education.

"All students will be doing some kind of online courses in college or on-the-job training," said Al Shilling, assistant director of emerging technology and virtual instruction for Lee County public schools.

High schoolers in Lee will have multiple options to complete their virtual course requirement. The school district has its own offerings through Lee Virtual School, and students also can enroll in Florida Virtual School classes. Additionally, two virtual charter high schools are seeking to start classes in August 2012.

Lee County is making plans for students who have the technological wherewithal, but don't have a computer with Internet access at home. Shilling speculates fewer teens have home computers than five years ago.

"There are probably more people on the other side of the digital divide because of the economy," Shilling said. "Whether it's a lot of students or only a few students, there are students who do not have Internet access at home."

The district has about 36,000 student computers, according to Dwayne Alton, director of information technology. Shilling said students without home computers will be able to complete assignments during or after the school day.

The American Civil Liberties Union hopes so. It is calling on Florida districts to ensure no student is at a disadvantage educationally.

"We are concerned about issues of access," said ACLU spokesman Baylor Johnson. "There is a digital divide in this country and Internet access is limited by economic means."

In Lee County, about two-thirds of students are considered low-income by federal standards.

Courses

Virtual courses still feature the same content and assignments as brick-and-mortar classes, according to Liz Kroll, a language arts teacher with Lee Virtual School.

The only differences is how instruction is delivered. Students partake in chat rooms or discussion boards to converse with their classmates, and teachers pick up the telephone or send emails to connect with students.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

STATE NEWS

Connecticut Taps Charter School Founder as Schools Chief

Education Week

By: Sean Cavanagh

September 7, 2011

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2011/09/connecticut_picks_new_schools_chief.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+StateEdwatch+%28State+EdWatch%29

Stefan Pryor, a top city official in Newark, N.J., who has a background in charter schools, [has been named](#) Connecticut's next commissioner of education.

Pryor currently serves as [deputy mayor](#) for economic development for the city of Newark, but he has extensive ties to Connecticut.

He worked as policy adviser to the mayor of New Haven, Conn., from 1994 to 1997, and was the co-founder of a widely praised charter school in that city, Amistad Academy. A group that set about to expand Amistad's model, Achievement First, has since opened additional schools in New Haven and New York City, according to Pryor's bio. For a colorful and detailed overview of Amistad Academy, which discusses its origins and its academic approach, check out Education Week Teacher's 2006 [profile](#) of the school.

Before coming to Newark, Pryor worked as president of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. In that capacity, he served as the agency's chief executive. The organization was created by New York state and city officials to plan and help coordinate the physical and economic rebuilding of Lower Manhattan after the Sept. 11, 2011, terrorist attacks.

He also has served as the vice president at the Partnership for New York City, a business organization, leading the organization's public education efforts and acting as executive director of its main school reform program.

Additionally, Pryor teamed with [Paul Vallas](#), the former school leader in Chicago, Philadelphia, and more recently, Louisiana's [Recovery School District](#), to develop plans for rebuilding and improving schools in Haiti, following that country's devastating earthquake.

The state board of education in Connecticut recommends the commissioner to the governor, Dannel P. Malloy, who announced Pryor's appointment today.

"Stefan Pryor is the whole package," Malloy said in a statement Wednesday. "His experience working as a turnaround leader in the economic development arena, combined with his leadership on education issues, will help him turn the department of education into an agency that helps prepare our state's children for whichever path they may choose."

Pryor is one of a number of former charter school officials who have moved into top positions in education departments. New York's commissioner of education, [John King](#), who co-founded the charter school Roxbury Prep in Massachusetts and led the charter network Uncommon Schools, is another.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Southwest Idaho districts look to take lead in school overhaul

Idaho Statesman

By: Bill Manny

September 8, 2011

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/2011/09/08/1790152/districts-look-to-take-lead-in.html>

Superintendents will ask the Legislature to tweak the law on online learning.

The coalition's nine superintendents recognize a need for "systemic changes in our districts, and we want to do it as a team," said Boise Superintendent Don Coberly.

WHAT IS THE PARTNERSHIP?

The Treasure Valley Educational Partnership has drafted four goals and plans to approach the Idaho Legislature next session to ask for a change in the law for online learning passed last spring, Coberly told a Boise City Club forum Wednesday. He was joined by Meridian Superintendent Linda Clark.

The coalition's goals are to better prepare students for education beyond high school; provide "blended instruction using technology solutions"; improve teacher skills; and build partnerships with the community and businesses.

The partnership grew out of meetings that started last spring among superintendents in the southern Idaho athletic conference: Boise, Meridian, Nampa, Caldwell, Vallivue, Kuna, Middleton, Emmett and Mountain Home.

Other partners are the Treasure Valley United Way and the Idaho Business Coalition for Education Excellence.

WHAT WILL IT ASK OF THE LEGISLATURE?

The superintendents will ask for more flexibility under the online education law, which mandates that each high school student take two online courses before graduating.

Blended online courses are a mixture of online and in-class instruction, and the schools hope to see those count for the requirement.

But the law says that the majority of instruction must be online and that the teacher cannot be in the same building as the students. That's inefficient and needlessly restrictive, Coberly and Clark said.

"We are hampered — hamstrung would be a better word — by the definition of 'blended education' that is embodied in the law," said Clark.

"We believe that (the law should encourage) a highly skilled teacher using the very best, most timely, up-to-date, appropriate materials to deliver instruction in a meaningful way."

The superintendents are not preparing to ask the Legislature for other changes, Coberly said.

WHY THIS PARTNERSHIP NOW?

Graduation rates in Southern Idaho are good, and in Boise and Meridian above 90 percent.

But getting students to pursue education after high school has emerged as a top issue for Idaho education and for the superintendents in the partnership.

Less than half of Idaho graduates enroll in college the first semester after they leave high school.

Idaho has among the lowest college attendance and retention rates in the nation. Coberly noted that the number of jobs for workers without education beyond a diploma is dwindling.

"We must prepare all students for a world in which some form of post-secondary training is a must," he said.

The superintendents set a goal of 80 percent of students going on to post-secondary education, with intentions of raising that target to 100 percent, Clark said.

"We're talking about every student being prepared for the fourth 'R' — reality," said Clark. Getting students "prepared for the reality of life when they leave our classroom is our job, from the moment they come to us."

[\(Back to top\)](#)

Michigan Department of Education to raise bar on test scores

Detroit News

By: Mike Wilkinson, Jennifer Chambers and Francis X. Donnelly

September 8, 2011

<http://detnews.com/article/20110908/SCHOOLS/109080422>

Student proficiency standards in key subjects may sharply increase

State education officials are proposing a steep rise in testing standards that could trigger an equally sharp decline in the number of schools and districts where students are considered proficient in math, reading, science and social studies.

In some cases, the students will have to correctly answer twice as many questions this year to be considered proficient, according to a draft proposal by the state Department of Education obtained by The Detroit News.

The state Board of Education will consider the tougher standards, called "cut scores," at a meeting Tuesday.

Education officials say the changes are necessary because existing standards reward students for average work and have disguised dismal ability levels. For instance, just 10 percent of third-graders are not proficient in reading, according to last year's Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) tests.

State Superintendent Mike Flanagan said the newer scores will show that more than 60 percent are not proficient. In a statement, Flanagan said the current score levels give "a false sense" that students are on track to enter college or trade programs, when far too many are not.

"This needs to change," he said. "Anything less is a disservice."

Education officials said the standards were set lower "at a very basic level" to give schools time to improve. The standards were good enough for students who hoped to get into a basic trade but did not reflect the need to produce college-ready students.

A review of last year's MEAP scores shows the state average score in math is below the proposed "cut score" in grades three to eight. In 2010, between 78 percent (eighth grade) and 95.3 percent (third grade) of students were considered proficient.

Robert Floden, interim dean of the College of Education and co-director of the Education Policy Center at Michigan State University, said the changes in cut scores will dramatically reduce the number of students meeting standards, particularly in mathematics and science.

Bringing these numbers up will require substantial work to improve instruction, he said.

"The change in cut scores for MME are an important shift, which will give students a more accurate picture of their readiness to succeed in college," he said.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind law, students must be "proficient" on standardized state tests by 2014. Schools that fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress toward that standard for two or more years face progressively steeper sanctions, including replacement of school staff, conversion to a charter school or a state takeover.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who is to visit Detroit today, has embraced the state's choice to raise the standards.

In his education reform blueprint, Duncan urges states to adopt college- and career-ready standards and assessments. The goal by 2020: for all students to graduate or be on track to graduate ready for college and a career.

"I applaud Michigan for being honest with students on where they stand," he said in a statement. "Michigan's education leaders are putting kids first by taking critical steps to help them compete in a global economy."

Lou Glazer, president of Michigan Future Inc., said the new standards would give a more realistic picture of how students are faring. "It's not fair to kids, not fair to high schools, not fair to anyone to have a system that doesn't give you accurate information," he said.

The shift would help schools design strategies to improve students' performance, Glazer said.

Michigan is among 43 states and territories adopting core standards aimed at boosting rigor and consistency on what students should learn at each grade level to be college ready — defined as not needing remedial help in college. In Michigan, 70 percent of students who enter community colleges out of high school take remedial classes.

Amber Arellano, executive director of The Education Trust-Midwest in Ann Arbor, said the state board of education has been "lying" for years about how well Michigan children are doing in school and the change is long overdue. Still the change would not be aligned with national assessment standards, she said.

"What our students, parents and educators really need is an honest assessment of how much they are learning and how well their schools are doing compared to other states," Arellano said. "The state board needs to take the full step toward public transparency and responsibility, and align completely our state assessments with the NAEP's (National Assessment of Educational Progress) rigor and high standards."

If the new standards are adopted, most students will have to answer many more questions correctly to gain the "proficiency" rating. On the third-grade math test, a student who got just 34 percent of the questions right last year was "proficient." That would rise to 72 percent this year.

The highest current requirement is getting 52 percent right on the seventh-grade reading test; the lowest to gain proficiency: getting just 29 percent of the fourth-grade math questions.

Under the changes, students would have to get at least 58 percent of the questions correct on math (fourth, sixth and 11th grades) and up to 83 percent of the fifth-grade science questions.

Now, a fifth-grader getting 48 percent of the science questions is considered proficient.

[\(Back to top\)](#)