

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF DISTRICT SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

AUGUST 21, 2019

BROWARD COLLEGE

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33301

INTRODUCTION

**Robert W. Runcie, Superintendent
Broward County Public Schools**

OPENING COMMENTS:

Welcome to Broward County! On behalf of my fellow Superintendents and FADSS, I want to thank Commissioner Corcoran and the State Board for their continued support of public education. This month, schools across our state welcomed back 2.7 million students. I am thankful to all of our teachers and staff for another year of successfully opening our schools. We are very excited for the new opportunities and possibilities for students throughout Florida this school year.

SCHOOL SAFETY:

School safety remains our number one priority. Superintendents across our state continue to ensure the safety of their students and staff. In Broward County Public Schools, we have continue to make safety enhancements based on recommendations from the MSD Public Safety Commission, the Broward League of Cities, the President's Council on School Safety and 3rd party experts that are providing consultation to the District – particularly Safe Havens International. Broward, and other districts throughout the state are advancing initiatives to improve the security in our schools through infrastructure and technology because our students and staff are our most important assets. In Broward, we are centralizing our school-based security personnel under our newly created Office of Safety, Security & Emergency Preparedness. Centralization will help us use some of the amazing work going related to safety and security, partner with the Department of Education's Office of School Safety and implement international best practices across one of the largest school districts in the country. We make sure the safety and security experience delivered anywhere across our District is under consistent leadership and has a focus on making our schools safe. These efforts are enable our educators to focus on our primary mission of Education.

Based on the conversation at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission last week, I want to briefly discuss school district oversight of charter school compliance with SB 7030. First, regarding the discussion of charter schools being in compliance, Superintendents wholeheartedly agree with the Commission that the responsibility is on the charter schools, not on law enforcement, for compliance with SB 7030 in providing an approved School Safety Officer. And we agree that authority to hold charter schools accountable rests with the School Board that approved the charter. That is why, in Broward, I have communicated repeatedly that we will move to shut down any

school that is non-compliant. I nor any Superintendent, has the authority to recommend revoking a charter because a school does not have a long-term, sustainable plan. That would be a pre-emptive sanction for non-compliance. Districts must monitor. And if there is not compliance, then we will move to sanction. I hope this body, and if necessary, the legislature, will provide explicit guidance on this matter to school districts across the state,

MENTAL HEALTH:

My colleagues and I are extremely grateful for the Mental Health Assistance Allocation funding provided by the Legislature. In Broward County Public Schools, we have used the funds to support the expansion of comprehensive mental health services designed to address prevention, intervention, and post-intervention across the District, utilizing the Multi-tiered System of Support framework of service delivery.

FADSS focused intensively on mental health and comprehensive wellness in our discussions last year. Superintendents are sharing their efforts, their experiences, and learning from each other as they find new ways to partner with community health providers.

Broward County Public Schools, like districts across the state, recognizes that an inclusive approach to the delivery of mental health services is essential to student success and requires the involvement of community partners, employees, and families. Our Mental Health Assistance Allocation Plan includes delivery of evidence-based mental health services; supports that address mental health needs; collaborative partnerships with community providers and agencies; and the process for coordinating mental health services with a student's primary care provider and other mental health providers. These efforts will only be strengthened by the explicit five hours of mental health instruction per year that this Board has put into place for all secondary students in Florida.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:

Florida continues to make monumental improvements in school grades across the state and we have our amazing educators to thank for this. In Broward, we have no traditional F schools. In fact, North Side Elementary catapulted last year from an F to a C. Additionally, Nova Blanche Forman, Silver Shores, and Wilton Manors increased by two letter grades, from a C to an A.

We reached our highest graduation rate of more than 84%, which includes all of our traditional high schools, centers and charter schools. That's an increase of 3.3 percentage points from the previous year and we're up almost 13 percentage points in the last decade.

We are also very proud that Broward's percentage of third grade students who scored proficient or higher continues to increase.

And we are rapidly expanding our career and technology pathway offerings by partnering with industries in South Florida. Broward leads the state in industry certifications, and we look forward to further expansion.

STANDARDS REVIEW:

The reconsideration of learning standards for our students offers all Floridians a chance to affirm our definition of a high-quality education. This process matters a great deal and we have encouraged our community to express themselves through the FL DOE Standards Review. Our community believes that a clear and universal set of expectations for the minimum set of knowledge and skills asserted through a Florida High School diploma is timely and appropriate. Districts also want enough flexibility to include locally driven academic and life-readiness expectations in the students' curriculum. For example, in Broward County, we are ensuring that debate, civic engagement and computer science are included in school. Local communities should be able to build from the base established by state expectations.

One of the most important processes connected to the outcome of the standards review is the State's regulations and allocation for selecting and procuring instructional materials. Additionally, we are hopeful that the State will examine the accountability system built to gauge student achievement and growth in mastering the standards. This accountability system is the set of examinations, cut-scores, definitions of learning gains, and other factors that determine school grades. The State of Florida should extend its reconsideration of the educational standards to the reconsideration of the accountability system. The accountability system must do better in informing the public on the impact that schools have on student learning. We need to find ways to minimize the impact of high stakes testing, to report on school climate, and to improve how we gauge student development in a comprehensive manner. Our accountability should connect academic, career, social-emotional, and civic development.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:

Again, we thank the Governor, Legislature, and the State Board for their investment in public education last Session. We hope we can build on this investment during the 2020 Legislative Session. Teacher pay in Florida remains a critical issue and one that can be addressed by continuing to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA).

In terms of school safety and mental health, we are thankful that the state continues to increase their investment in these critical areas. We ask that the legislature also redirect the Guardian funds to the Safe School Allocation to provide districts greater flexibility to comply with SB 7026 & SB 7030.

Thank you for coming to Broward County and for the opportunity to speak with you this morning.