

**MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING**

November 13, 2025
Wakulla County School District
69 Arran Rd
Crawfordville, FL 32327

Chair Ryan Petty called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and welcomed members and guests to the State Board of Education meeting. The following members were present: Vice Chair Esther Byrd, Daniel Foganholi, MaryLynn Magar, Layla Collins, Dr. Grazie Christie, and Kelly Garcia. Chair Petty recognized Pastor Derricke Gray of River of Life Church to deliver the invocation and asked everyone to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Welcome

Chair Petty recognized Rick Myhre, Superintendent of Wakulla County School District, to welcome the board and provide the Florida Association of District School Superintendents update. Superintendent Myhre shared that Wakulla County Schools consists of four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school, along with a Pre-K to 8 charter school in St. Marks, serving approximately 5,000 students. While it's one of the smaller districts in Florida, it offers the opportunity to implement unique educational approaches. Superintendent Myhre shared that improving school safety and crisis responses is a priority, and he thanked the state leaders for their collaborative support.

Chair Petty withdrew Consent Item 31, the Hope Operator Designation for Somerset Academy.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Chair Petty recognized Anastasios Kamoutsas, Commissioner of the Department of Education, to present his report. Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that his report will focus on the work by the Department and issues concerning Alachua and Leon districts. An Alachua County School Board meeting revealed ongoing intimidation towards parents who speak up, highlighting a toxic culture despite directives from the board. An inflammatory comment made by Vice Chair Certain regarding Charlie Kirk was discussed, and there are hopes for positive change followed by this meeting. Additionally, complaints of discrimination against vulnerable students in Alachua are being investigated by the Department's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services to ensure all students receive adequate support.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that the Leon County School District is experiencing delays in salary increases for teachers despite legislative funding intentions. Teachers have not received their raises on time, with allocations continually falling behind the October 1 deadline for five years. This year, they were offered minimal increases of \$30 to \$40 per month, while administrative staff received substantial raises of \$10,000 or more in several positions.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that Rocky Hanna, Superintendent of Leon County, priorities impact teacher salaries in Leon County, where cutting administrative positions could redirect funds to educators. Despite surrounding districts negotiating salary increases successfully, Leon County's leadership struggles with low-capacity schools and fails to prioritize teachers.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that in the Division of Early Learning (DEL) manages an educational system for children from birth to postsecondary education, overseeing programs like school readiness and voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK). In the 2024-2025 school year, there were 6,900 school-readiness providers for about 211,000 children and 6,300 VPK providers for approximately 151,000 children, totaling over 350,000 children served. A new accountability system for VPK providers resulted in 88 percent meeting or exceeding expectations, improving the quality of early learning programs in the state.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that the Just Read Office and the Division of Early Learning hosted the Summer Literacy Institute for over 850 educators, focusing on evidence-based literacy practices for teachers and literacy coaches.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that Florida has invested significantly in workforce education, awarding \$40 million to 49 programs through the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program, bringing total investments to \$240 million since 2023. Additionally, \$14.6 million was awarded to 34 entities through the Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program to support apprenticeship programs, benefiting over 7,100 students through hands-on training.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that the Florida College System's (FCS) cybersecurity collaborative held its third annual competition with participation from 28 institutions, aimed at promoting best practices and workforce partnerships in cybersecurity. Students engaged in real-world challenges. With the increasing demand for cybersecurity professionals, approximately 4,500 students are enrolled in relevant programs, receiving practical training for their future careers.

Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that on Victims of Communism Day, commemorated on November 7th in Florida, the 100 million victims of communist regimes were honored. Established through House Bill 395, this day emphasized educating future generations about the suffering, including famines and political persecution, endured under communism. Governor DeSantis signed Senate Bill 1264 in 2024, mandating comprehensive instruction on the history of communism, which Senator Jay Collins sponsored. He highlighted the expansion of the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative, which grew from 59 teams in 11 counties in 2020 to over 330 teams across all 67 counties. This initiative fosters civic dialogue and critical-thinking skills among students. The annual championship will feature a \$50,000 scholarship for the winner and further scholarships for finalists.

Commissioner Kamoutsas recognized three students, Hayden Moore, Kylie Moore, and William DeWitt, who established the first Turning Point USA chapter at Wakulla High School to empower peers to express free speech, engage in civic debate, and foster meaningful dialogue.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the commissioner's report. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Ms. Magar. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the minutes from the August 20 and September 24, 2025, board meetings. Ms. Magar made the motion with a second by Dr. Christie. The motion passed unanimously.

Updates

College System – President Murdaugh on behalf of the Council of Presidents (COP)

Chair Petty recognized President Jim Murdaugh of Tallahassee State College to provide an update on behalf of the COP. President Murdaugh shared that Florida's College System showed strong performance, with over 680,000 students and 137,000 degrees in high-demand fields, and experienced a 7.2 percent enrollment increase. Florida ranks first nationally in higher education, leading the nation in two-year graduation rates and skilled workforce development. The Lightcast Economic Impact Report reveals that the FCS supports over 640,000 jobs, representing nearly 4 percent of state employment. The system is aligned with high-wage, in-demand careers, leading to graduates earning above-average wages, as shown by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information System (FETPIP). FCS is considered a key economic engine, critical for sustained growth and talent development. Additionally, 90 percent of graduates remain in Florida, contributing positively to local economies.

Update on Madison County School District's Turnaround Option Plan

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Peggy Aune, Vice Chancellor for Strategic Improvement, for an overview of Madison County School District's turnaround plan. Dr. Aune shared that in January 2025, Madison County presented a turnaround plan for Greenville Elementary to the State Board, resulting in the school's closure and student reassignment to the C-graded Madison Central K-8 School. The district is tasked with providing regular updates on student progress, including attendance, grades, interventions, and personnel evaluation metrics to ensure improvements. Additionally, the Bureau of School Improvement will conduct monthly visits to monitor teaching and execution of the plan, with Madison Central showing instructional enhancements and receiving continuous support from educational teams.

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Karen Pickles, Superintendent of Madison County School District. Superintendent Pickles shared that, as part of the district-managed turnaround plan, the consolidation of Greenville Elementary students into Madison County Central School has been completed, with 68 students transitioning successfully. The district is collaborating closely with the Bureau School Improvement Team, monitoring student grades and ensuring compliance with teacher effectiveness ratings. Four full-time interventionists have been hired to provide immediate support based on real-time data, and both attendance and referrals of the transitioning students are being closely monitored. She also shared that Greenville Elementary reports that 81 percent of students had fewer than 2 absences, with no students facing 10 or more absences.

Alachua County School Board

Chair Petty recognized Commissioner Kamoutsas to provide an update on Alachua County. Commissioner Kamoutsas shared that, as previously reported, issues in Alachua County persist, characterized by intimidation during board meetings and divisive public comments on social media. The behavior of Vice Chair Certain is particularly concerning, as it targets community members, dismisses teachers, and alienates the public. Vice Chair Certain's remarks suggest that laws are not always appropriate, which raised questions about the commitment of board members to uphold the law. The community needs to trust that school board members will act with integrity and accountability.

Chair Petty recognized Vice Chair Tina Certain, Alachua County, for her response followed by questions from the board.

Action Items

Ratification and Adoption of the Phoenix Declaration: An American Vision for Education

Commissioner Kamoutsas expressed strong support for the principles outlined in the Phoenix Declaration, emphasizing parental choice, curriculum transparency, academic excellence, and instruction on objective truth. He shared that these are universally agreeable concepts and advocate for their advancement through the State Board of Education. With critiques of current educational issues, such as the teaching of gender identity and critical race theory and asserts the need to empower parents and improve education standards, and he shared his view on the adoption of this declaration as a pioneering step for educational reform.

Chair Petty called for a motion to ratify and adopt the Phoenix Declaration. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Vice Chair Byrd.

Chair Petty recognized Maggie McDonald, Myosha Powell, Carol Gauronskas, Kathleen Murray, Crystal Marull, Jessica Carey, and Tim Marden in support.

Chair Petty recognized Madelin Austin, Jane McNulty, Dahlonaga Peck, and Marihelen Wheeler in opposition.

The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Rules 6A-1.09401, Student Performance Standards; 6A-1.09412, Course Requirements – Grades K-12 Basic and Adult Secondary Programs and 6A-1.09414, Course Requirements - Grades PK - 12 Exceptional Student Education

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Paul Burns, Senior Chancellor, for an overview of the next two items. Sr. Chancellor Burns shared that the introduction of Florida's State academic standards outlines this role in promoting high-quality teaching and learning. These standards specify what students should achieve at each grade level, developed by Florida educators through a rigorous public work group process including feedback collection. The new initiative, following Senate Bill 1264 signed by Governor DeSantis, introduces History of Communism Standards aimed at providing comprehensive instruction on communism's history and its implications, ensuring students understand its dangers and consequences. Key changes include a new history of communism strand, updated access points for students with significant cognitive disabilities, and alignment with existing social studies standards, including civics, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and African American history. Additionally, a revised career experiences course for students with disabilities is proposed, tied to a new workforce credential program initiated by House Bill 1105 in the 2025 legislative session.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the amendment to rules 6A-1.09401, 6A-1.09412, and 6A-1.09414. Vice Chair Byrd made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi.

Chair Petty recognized Myosha Powell, Phu Le, Anthony Le, Tan Van, in support.

Chair Petty recognized Lithuanian Gauronskas in opposition.

The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Turnaround Plans for the School Districts of Gadsden and Pasco County

Sr. Chancellor Burns shared that both school districts have options available to them upon receiving a first-time F or a second consecutive D grade. Districts must choose from four options: hiring an external operator, engaging a charter operator, implementing a district-managed turnaround plan, or closing the school while transferring students to higher-performing schools. Historically, the majority of districts opt for the district-managed turnaround plan, where they are tasked with developing a strategy to allocate resources and interventions aimed at enhancing student achievement.

Chair Petty recognized Elijah Key, Superintendent of Gadsden County School District. Superintendent Key shared that they are hiring an additional math specialist and enhancing English Language Arts coaching, extending learning opportunities such as after-school tutoring and small group sessions during planning times, alongside ongoing progress monitoring to provide immediate feedback and necessary assistance based on student performance data. Professional Learning Catalog coaches are actively engaging with schools to provide support, particularly through instructional coaching at the district level. The Bureau of School Improvement is contributing significantly by training district leaders and principals, including assistance provided at West Gadsden. The focus is on leadership development, and the district is currently seeking a math coach for West Gadsden Middle School to improve educational outcomes further.

Chair Petty recognized Commissioner Kamoutsas for his recommendation. Commissioner Kamoutsas recommended the approval of the district's turnaround option plan for West Gadsden Middle School.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve Commissioner Kamoutsas' recommendation for West Gadsden Middle School. Vice Chair Byrd made the motion with a second by Mr. Foganholi. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Petty recognized Senior Chancellor Burns. Sr. Chancellor Burns shared that this school is undergoing a district-managed turnaround plan, approved by the State Board in Fall 2024, after receiving a D grade for four consecutive years since 2021. If the school does not achieve a C grade or higher by the end of this school year, the district will either select an external operator, a charter operator, or close the school and reassign students. The district has opted for an external operator and is requesting an extension of their turnaround plan for the '26-'27 school year.

Chair Petty recognized Dr. John Legg, Superintendent of Pasco County District School. Superintendent Legg shared the plan to improve Gulf Middle School's performance, one of the chronically underperforming schools in Pasco County. This initiative, part of our broader commitment to transform such "opportunity schools," aims to replicate past successes, including a significant improvement in school performance. Our strategy includes a complete system overhaul, leadership and staff changes, compliance with educational standards, and the introduction of a new curriculum aligned with Florida Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (BEST) standards, focusing on strong instruction and community engagement, and supporting recent legislative reforms that improve attendance policies.

Chair Petty recognized Commissioner Kamoutsas for his recommendation. Commissioner Kamoutsas recommended to not extend the district managed turnaround and to promptly consider an external operator for Gulf Middle School.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve Commissioner Kamoutsas' recommendation for Gulf Middle School. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Vice Chair Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-10.044, Residency for Tuition Purposes

Chair Petty recognized Kathy Hebda, Chancellor of the Florida College System, to provide an overview of the next two rules. Chancellor Hebda shared that Rule 6A-10.044 aims to implement s. 1009.21, F.S., allowing students to be classified as Florida residents eligible for in-state tuition by maintaining legal residence in the state for 12 months prior to enrollment, and also the rule, first established in 1992, seeks to clarify and standardize the language to ensure uniform treatment of students across institutions. This aligns with recent regulations passed by the Board of Governors, which promote consistent residency determinations in public higher education, update streamlined definitions, remove outdated language, and enhance transparency regarding residency requirements. Colleges are now required to clearly outline the criteria for establishing initial residency or reclassification in their publications and websites.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the amendment to rule 6A-10.044. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-14.092, Textbook and Course Material Affordability and Transparency

Chancellor Hebda shared that Rule 6A-14.092 addresses Textbook and Course Material Affordability and Transparency, building on existing statutes related to instructional materials in higher education. Institutions are required to post textbook and course material information at least 45 days before the semester commencement for 95 percent of their courses. This amendment enhances transparency by expanding the requirement to include syllabi for all courses, not just general education ones, detailing course objectives, instructional materials, and assignments. It aims to ensure students have clear expectations prior to enrolling in courses, thereby promoting informed decision-making.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the amendment to rule 6A-14.092. Vice Chair Byrd made the motion with a second by Ms. Magar.

Chair Petty recognized Crystal Marull in support.

The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Request from Tallahassee State College for a Bachelor of Applied Science in Audit and Compliance Management

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Calandra Stringer for an overview of the request from Tallahassee State College for a Bachelor of Applied Science in Audit and Compliance Management. Dr. Stringer shared that Tallahassee State College is proposing a Bachelor of Applied Science in Auditing and Compliance Management to meet local workforce needs. The service district has 349 annual job openings in audit and compliance-related roles, classified as high-skill and high-wage, with salaries between \$34,000 and \$51,000. Currently, there are no public institutions in Florida offering a bachelor's degree focused on this field.

Mr. Burk shared that we are a CPA and advisory firm established in 1964, employing around 275 staff primarily in Florida, with offices in Tallahassee, Daytona Beach, DeLand, and Ocala. Recruitment heavily relies on local college fairs, particularly in college towns. Auditing constitutes about a third of our business, with significant student interest in this

area, often at the expense of tax services. The work spans nine industries, focusing mainly on state and local government, nonprofit, and various commercial audits. He shared since 2020, there has been a decline in enrollment in accounting programs, resulting in fewer new graduates entering the field, which has impacted the growth of the team. Recruiting students who possess both interest and foundational knowledge in accounting to ensure they are well-prepared for their roles. With 15 years in Tallahassee and 20 in recruiting, it is noted that access to a knowledgeable student pipeline is crucial for effective recruitment in the region.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the Bachelor of Applied Science in Audit and Compliance Management for Tallahassee State College. Ms. Magar made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Request from Tallahassee State College for a Bachelor of Applied Science in Management Analytics

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Calandra Stringer for an overview of the request from Tallahassee State College for a Bachelor of Applied Science in Management Analytics. Dr. Stringer shared that the Bachelor of Applied Science in Management Analytics addresses a local demand for skilled professionals, with 550 annual job openings for management and data analysts in our service district, offering average salaries between \$38,000 and \$60,000. Notably, Florida State University and Florida A&M University do not provide a specific degree in management analytics, prompting us to engage local employers to advocate for this program.

Dr. Emily Saras, CEO of Knowli Data Science, a growing tech business based in Tallahassee, supports Tallahassee State College's proposed new Bachelor Degree Program in Management Analytics due to the rapid growth of data science and management analytics in the region. She highlighted the rapid growth of Knowli, recognized as one of the Jim Moran Institute's (JMI) 30 in 2025, there is a significant need for trained professionals capable of interpreting data and developing strategic business insights. This degree is positioned to enhance the local talent pool, bridge gaps between data and business strategy, and contribute to the region's economic strength and innovation. Its timing and relevance align with the needs of various industries in the greater Tallahassee area.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the Bachelor of Applied Science in Management Analytics for Tallahassee State College. Ms. Magar made the motion with a second by Vice Chair Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Request From Daytona State College for a Bachelor of Science in Radiologic and Imaging Science Applications

Chair Petty recognized Dr. Thomas LoBasso, President of Daytona State College for an overview of the Bachelor of Science in Radiologic and Imaging Science Applications. President LoBasso shared that Florida has over 26,000 credentialed imaging professionals, but less than one-third have advanced certifications in modalities like CT, MRI, or mammography, and fewer than 100 bachelor's degrees in radiologic sciences are awarded annually. This shortage creates a gap in imaging department leadership and technology. Projections indicate 93 job openings in imaging sciences in Volusia and Flagler counties over the next eight years, with wages between \$40 and \$48 per hour. Local healthcare systems, such as Halifax Health, demonstrate significant support for Daytona State College's proposed Bachelor's of Science in Radiologic and Imaging Sciences, addressing the urgent need for bachelor-prepared professionals to manage compliance and deliver advanced services, especially as hospitals face challenges in recruitment and retention of qualified

technologists.

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve the Bachelor of Applied Science in Radiologic and Imaging Science Applications for Daytona State College. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

Consent Items

Chair Petty called for a motion to approve consent items 14-30, and 32-33. Dr. Christie made the motion with a second by Ms. Magar. The motion passed unanimously.

Member Comments

Vice Chair Byrd thanked Chancellor Hebda for the thorough process on the new degree programs. Additionally, she advocated for Florida to become the first state to implement classical education statewide, as proposed in the Phoenix Declaration, emphasizing its historical significance and effectiveness as a teaching method. Ms. Collins highlighted the effort behind legislation addressing the teaching of communism and socialism. Dr. Christie expressed gratitude for the approval of the Phoenix Declaration. Ms. Magar expressed appreciation for the Governor's support for workforce funding and gratitude for the Phoenix Declaration being approved. Ms. Garcia expressed her appreciation for the department's staff, and regrets the amount of time spent, again, on Alachua County as it overshadowed positive developments in student achievement, as highlighted by Commissioner Kamoutsas' data on student growth. There is also excitement about the new communist education standards, which emphasize the need for students to understand the dangers of socialism and communism in today's culture. Chair Petty highlighted the thorough review process for standards, acknowledging the roles of educators and public scrutiny and he stressed the significance of public involvement in Florida's decision-making.

Chair Petty announced that the next meeting would be on January 21, 2026, in Tallahassee.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, Chair Petty adjourned the meeting of the State Board of Education at 1:48 p.m.