



136 S. Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301
Phone: (850) 521-1200
Fax: (850) 521-1278

www.floridachamber.com

April 27, 2010

The Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor of the State of Florida
The Capitol, PL 01
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Re: Florida Chamber of Commerce's Recommendations to Enhance Florida's Race to the Top Application

Dear Governor Crist,

Thank you for the opportunity to represent the voice of Florida's business community as part of the Race to the Top Working Group. The Florida Chamber of Commerce wholeheartedly supports the state's efforts to compete for and win this national competition.

We applaud Florida's accomplishment of earning the fourth-highest score in Phase 1 of the \$4.35-billion federal Race to the Top education reform competition out of 41 applicants. Florida's application garnered national recognition for highlighting more than a decade of education reforms that have driven unprecedented student achievement gains as well as for bold plans to promote more innovation and excellence in Florida's public schools.

Many experts have advised me that by simply resubmitting Florida's Phase 1 application with no changes, our chances of winning are high, but we certainly have an opportunity to make enhancements that could increase our Phase 2 score. While there are opportunities to earn more points relating to a variety of selection criteria, we ask that you advise the Race to the Top Working Group to avoid consideration of a rewrite, a do-over, or any additions or modifications to our current application that would cause Florida to score fewer points in Phase 2 than we earned in Phase 1.

As we consider enhancements to Florida's application, if it is decided any are to be made, we should carefully consider the words of President Barack Obama's Secretary of Education Arne Duncan who said recently in the *Wall Street Journal* that "watered-down proposals with lots of consensus won't win" and "proposals that drive real reform will win." Secretary Duncan said that he welcomed the friction between union and state officials but warned against states weakening their overhaul plans simply to win buy-ins from unions. That being said, the continued collaboration from our state's teachers' unions is welcome and important, as it has been since the start of this initiative, as long as our discussions are focused on making Florida's Race to the Top education reform plans bolder and stronger. President Obama challenged us to keep the focus on "making sure our students are prepared for success in a competitive 21st century economy and workplace." Let's

respect President Obama's expectations by maintaining the focus on improving the success of our students throughout this process.

After a thorough review of Florida's Phase 1 application by the Florida Chamber team and our partners, we submit for the Race to the Top Working Group's consideration the attached "**Recommendations for Higher Scoring on Florida's Phase 2 Race to the Top Application.**"

As a backdrop to these recommendations, we also encourage you to emphasize in Florida's Race to the Top application, the state's commitment to protecting its investment in K-12 education. Despite a \$3.2 billion budget shortfall and a constitutional mandate to craft a balanced budget, the Florida Legislature will soon adopt a 2010 General Appropriations Act that maintains current year spending levels for Florida's primary and secondary students. We believe that this continued investment in Florida education during historically challenging budget times clearly demonstrates our state's commitment to making education funding a priority.

The Florida Chamber continues to believe that Race to the Top has the power to dramatically elevate the quality of education Florida students receive. Our state's economic and financial future depends on a skilled and highly-trained workforce. The students of today represent the community leaders, business owners, and entrepreneurs of tomorrow. They must be given the foundation necessary to prepare for their future, and funding from Race to the Top will provide the resources necessary to equip our teachers to do just that. We look forward to further collaboration with you, our state's teachers' unions, and the Race to the Top Working Group to improve Florida's competitive positioning for success in Phase 2. Florida's children are counting on us to seize this opportunity to contribute to our state's future economic prosperity through bold education reform today.

My best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Wilson
President and CEO
Florida Chamber of Commerce

cc: Steve Halverson, Chair, Florida Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
Florida Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

Recommendations for Higher Scoring on Florida’s Phase 2 Race to the Top Application

A. State Success Factors

Selection Criteria	Points Left on Table	Primary Recommendations	Other Clarifications
A. State Success Factors	24.6		
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	15.8		
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	0.2	No required change.	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	9.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure teachers' union buy-in without sacrificing application rigor 	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	6.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase expected student achievement levels resulting from proposal implementation to match level of RTTT funding requested • Recommend ways to narrow achievement gaps while significantly improving achievement for all Florida students, not just minorities 	
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	6.2		

(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a more comprehensive explanation regarding how Florida will sustain RTTT-related improvements after RTTT funding expires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How LEA activities will result in improved student performance ○ Why Florida's Differentiated Accountability program is limited to the lower 5% of schools ○ The types of professional development that FDOE staff will receive to help them implement the RTTT proposal ○ How FDOE will obtain public and legislative buy-in for the RTTT proposal
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure teachers' union buy-in without sacrificing application rigor 	
(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	2.6		
(i) Making progress in each reform area	0	No required change.	
(ii) Improving student outcomes	2.6		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How specific reform efforts have led, causally, to student achievement gains ○ How the RTTT proposal will generate more students performing at the "proficient" and "advanced" levels, rather than merely at the "at or above basic" level

B. Standards and Assessments

Selection Criteria	Points Left on Table	Primary Recommendations	Other Clarifications
B. Standards and Assessments	1.0		
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	0		
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe standards and assessments implications of Senate Bill 4 	
(ii) Adopting standards	0		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	0		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	1		

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

Selection Criteria	Points Left on Table	Primary Recommendations	Other Clarifications
C. Data Systems to Support Instruction	6.2		
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	0	No required change.	
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	1.4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of current data systems and how the proposed changes will significantly improve performance ○ How proposed data systems will enable access and use by non-FDOE and non-education stakeholders
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	4.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of current data systems and how the proposed changes will significantly improve performance ○ How proposed data systems will enable access and use by non-FDOE and non-education stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and researchers ○ How data systems will be used to evaluate instructional strategies and approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How proposed data systems will be used to provide professional development for teachers, principals, and support staff

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

Selection Criteria	Points Left on Table	Primary Recommendations	Other Clarifications
D. Great Teachers and Leaders	29.4		
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	4.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a more detailed proposal for assessing and addressing principal shortages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The degree to which Florida provides or will provide alternative non-district / non-higher-education teacher certification programs More clearly the data relating to certification program completers The level of selectivity of Florida's teacher certification programs
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	11.0		
(i) Measuring student growth	1.4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The definition of student growth, including the elements that will be measured when evaluating student growth
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	3.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure teachers' union buy-in without sacrificing application rigor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How LEA's will be held accountable for proposal implementation The timeline for including all teachers under the proposed evaluation system) How teachers will be differentiated based on student growth
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	1.8		
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	4.0		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How high school student performance will be included in the evaluation process
(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	7.0		

(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	3.8		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How Title II funds have impacted high poverty/minority schools ○ How proposed initiatives are tied to performance measures
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	3.2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How LEA's will be held accountable for providing an equitable distribution of quality teachers in high poverty/minority schools ○ How FDOE will support LEA's in providing equitable distribution of quality teachers in high poverty/minority schools
(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	2.8		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How student achievement data will be linked to teacher/principal preparation program improvement ○ How teacher/principal preparation programs will change their operations based on student achievement data
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	3.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a better, more comprehensive plan for measuring and evaluating these support programs, including use of qualitative info for evaluation and improvement, linking of student achievement to professional development, and aligning with teacher evaluation and prep programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How FDOE will be held accountable for work with districts and schools ○ The role of consultants under this section ○ The skills FDOE staff and consultants will need to implement the proposal ○ How principals are addressed in this section

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

Selection Criteria	Points Left on Table	Primary Recommendations	Other Clarifications
E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools	6.2		
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	0	No required change.	
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	6.2		
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	0.2	No required change.	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	6.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that intervention and turnaround models are clearly described in the narrative. [Note: It appears that Florida's score in this section suffered primarily because a single reviewer deducted 20 points because he or she couldn't find a description of the intervention models cited.] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clearly, directly, and explicitly explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How Florida will ensure diversity among the effective teachers assigned to high poverty/minority schools ○ How FDOE helps or will help districts and schools determine which turnaround model to use ○ How the proposal is sustainable

F. General

Selection Criteria	Points Left on Table	Primary Recommendations	Other Clarifications
F. General	1.2		
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	0.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that, in a year of many tough budget cuts, the Legislature made it a priority to maintain current K-12 per student funding levels. 	
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	0.8	No required change.	
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	0	No required change.	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

Selection Criteria	Points Left on Table	Primary Recommendations	Other Clarifications
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	0	No required change.	