

Report on Paperwork and Data Collection Reduction in Florida School Districts

**Presented to the
State Board of Education**

September 18, 2007

Florida's 2007 Report on Paperwork and Data Collection Reduction

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STATUS REPORT to STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION As of September 7, 2007 For State Board of Education Approval

Introduction

The 2006 Florida Legislature, acting on the recommendations of the Paperwork Reduction Task Force created by Chapter 2005-31, codified in statute that the following activities occur annually, beginning in the 2006-07 school year [§ 1001.42(22), Florida Statutes]:

1001.42 Powers and duties of district school board.--

The district school board, acting as a board, shall exercise all powers and perform all duties listed below:

(22) REDUCE PAPERWORK AND DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.--Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year:

- (a) Each district school board shall designate a classroom teacher to serve as the teacher representative to speak on behalf of the district's teachers regarding paperwork and data collection reduction.
- (b) Each district school board must provide the school community with an efficient method for the school community to communicate with the classroom teacher designee regarding possible paperwork and data collection burdens and potential solutions.
- (c) The teacher designee shall annually report his or her findings and potential solutions to the school board.
- (d) Each district school board must submit its findings and potential solutions to the State Board of Education by September 1 of each year.
- (e) The State Board of Education shall prepare a report of the statewide paperwork and data collection findings and potential solutions and submit the report to the Governor, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives by October 1 of each year.

Generally speaking, Florida law requires school districts to designate a teacher representative, facilitate the efforts

of that teacher representative to communicate with and speak on behalf of district teachers regarding possible paperwork and data collection burdens and potential solutions, and communicate those findings and recommendations to the local school board. School boards are required by law to submit findings and potential solutions to the State Board of Education by September 1 of each year, and the State Board of Education is required to submit a report of these findings and solutions to the Governor, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives by October 1 of each year. This report summarizes local and state findings pursuant to this law.

Overall, because law did not define a common reporting format for districts, varied responses were received, ranging from letters describing paperwork issues and charts comparing issues with district actions to analyses of online surveys completed by teachers.

Although many of the issues reported can be and are being alleviated at the district level, this was a good reflection exercise for districts. Leadership seemed to take a sincere interest in reducing the paperwork burden for teachers and some districts have made great strides in this direction based on teacher input. The Department of Education is interested in district findings as a means to explore simplifying paperwork burdens across the state.

Background

Paperwork reduction initiatives are not new to the Department of Education (DOE). From consolidating data entry systems and reducing duplication, to the most recent efforts that began with the passage of legislation creating the statewide Paperwork Reduction Task Force, paperwork reduction has been a part of the State Board of Education's Strategic Plan, which prioritizes efforts of the DOE. Specifically, the department endeavors to decrease the amount of time a teacher needs to complete paperwork 'burdens' as part of the instructional day, as part of its statutorily-mandated goal to improve "quality efficient services" (§ 1008.31, Florida Statutes).

The statewide Paperwork Reduction Task Force was formed in 2005, as directed by the Florida Legislature, to recommend ways to reduce the burden placed on teachers, principals, and district staff. Its findings

included evidence that a majority of the paperwork and data collection burdens placed on classroom teachers originate locally.

The following recommendations of the task force evolved into the statutory provisions addressed in this report:

1. School boards are not to exceed paperwork and reporting requirements mandated by the state without extensive public hearings, input from local paper reduction task forces, and detailed analysis of “burden hours” needed to complete the paperwork (hard copy and electronic) for the proposed mandate.

2. Each district school board must create a task force, comprised predominantly of teachers, to reduce the paper and electronic reporting requirements in their district and to report their actions to the Department of Education

See § 1001.42(22), Florida Statutes, for the incorporation of these recommendations.

District Reports – Statewide Findings

As of September 7, 2007, thirty-six districts had submitted a report (see Appendix A). Regardless of a district’s status as of the date of this report, the DOE will pursue and report on the status of all outstanding reports to ensure compliance with the intent of law.

District actions to reduce paperwork and data collection burdens resulting from this legislation varied greatly. From appointing a district designee to appointing district task forces or work groups, it was evident that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to this issue. The goal is clear, though, that teachers need to have the time to teach and should not be burdened with unnecessary reporting requirements.

The majority of the districts reporting indicated that they are working to solicit input from district teachers, principals, and other staff through either forming a committee or task force, a web-based survey, or a combination of these two efforts. The incidence of inclusion of these actions appeared in numerous reports, as follows:

1. *Implementing a district task force or committee.* 15 districts reported that they either had already formed a task force by the time they submitted this report or that they would be soon doing so.

2. *Surveying the school community.* 11 districts indicated that they conducted a survey for this report, or will be surveying in the future.

3. *Process in place.* All districts are working toward a process for paper reduction or evaluating paperwork requirements, with evidence that they had been using this process to reduce the paperwork burden.

4. *Web-based Reporting.* 16 districts have made a conscious move to web-based reporting on various topics.

Additionally, the following issues were mentioned as areas where paperwork was a concern:

- ESE – 14 districts
- ESOL – 3 districts
- Attendance Reporting – 9 districts
- Report Cards/Interims – 6 districts
- Professional Development – 2 districts
- Progress Monitoring – 7 districts

Districts are working to alleviate these issues by consolidating forms and making them electronic, participating in the statewide electronic Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for ESE students, changing to electronic grade books, creating teacher Web sites to communicate with parents, reporting through online Progress Monitoring Plan, and other innovative and successful initiatives.

Interesting suggestions were found in several reports:

- More staff for data input – 5 districts
- More time for teacher planning – 3 districts
- Attention to subgroup assignments per teacher – 1 district

State Progress on Reducing Paperwork and Data Collection Requirements

The DOE is implementing the recommendations of the Paperwork Reduction Task Force and pursuing statutory modifications, as necessary.

Initiatives that are already in motion include deployment of a statewide electronic IEP through a state portal called “Sunshine Connections,” elimination or consolidation of redundant student plans like the Academic Improvement Plan (AIP), reduction of progress monitoring requirements for the K-12 reading plan from four to three times per year, and implementation of an online lesson plan database.

In addition, House Bill 511 passed in 2007, exempting academically high-performing districts from completing certain reporting requirements.

State Board of Education Potential Solutions

Based on this data and the review of district reports, the Department of Education makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: The Department of Education should collaborate with district designees to develop a streamlined format and process for reporting paperwork reduction requirements pursuant to law.

The paper reduction statute does not establish a reporting format for the annual district or state report. Consequently, district school board reports varied greatly in depth, breadth, and impact on reducing the paperwork and data collection burden. In order to provide more structure and consistency to these efforts, and to reduce the effort needed to prepare such reports, the Department of Education should work with district designees to develop a format to streamline the reporting process for this statutory requirement.

Recommendation 2: Change statutory reporting deadlines to align school district reports with the end of the school year and the annual State Board of Education report with the beginning of the new school year.

Ironically, it has become apparent through the efforts to reduce the paperwork and data collection burden that it will be necessary to *create* paperwork and conduct data collection so that sound recommendations can be developed to reduce this same burden.

This necessary burden can be reduced by changing the due dates stipulated in this statute. Current law requires school boards to annually report findings to the DOE by September 1 and the State Board of Education to annually report to the Governor's Office and Legislature by October 1. These dates occur during a very busy time of the year for school districts as they are focused on the beginning of the school year during the month of August.

School district and State Board of Education efforts to provide more comprehensive reviews could be accomplished through a change to statutory reporting dates. For example, DOE recommends July 1 (annually) as the deadline for school board reports, and September 1 (annually) as the State Board of Education to the Governor's Office and Legislature. This simple statutory change in timing would provide district

designees time to receive feedback during the entire school year, and the DOE to more thoroughly evaluate the reports and work with district designees to develop statewide recommendations.

Recommendation 3: Determine a way to measure the paperwork and data collection burden placed on the school community.

In order to evaluate the impact of paperwork reduction efforts, the DOE should collaborate with school districts to develop a metric for estimating the time associated with paperwork and data collection burdens placed on the school community. The metric should be applied to establish state and local baseline data.

Recommendation 4: Continuously review and update the recommendations of the Paperwork Reduction Task Force with consideration of local findings and ongoing internal evaluations of requirements and measures to consolidate, reduce, or eliminate requirements.

Some school district reports submitted in 2007 included a compilation of the paperwork and data collection requirements that impact their school community, similar to the comprehensive analysis performed by the Paperwork Reduction Task Force.

The DOE should continue to assess ways in which it may consolidate and/or minimize paperwork, data collection, and survey requirements.

In addition, the DOE will task the Ambassador Teacher to communicate with teachers on an individual level to gain their insights and recommendations on ways to reduce or eliminate paperwork.

Recommendation 5: Share the exemplary practices of districts so that others can replicate them.

Beginning this year with the K-12 Conference and annually thereafter, the DOE will provide an opportunity for districts that reported significant changes to share their approaches. Other districts can benefit from these best practices.

Plan for Distribution of Report Findings

As required by statute, this report will be submitted to the Governor, President of the Florida Senate, and Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives. In addition, this report will be provided to:

- District Paperwork Reduction Designees
- District School Superintendents
- School Principals
- Classroom Teachers
- Education Association Leaders

Contact Information

More information on the efforts of the State Board of Education and Department of Education regarding this issue can be obtained by visiting the Paperwork Reduction Web site at www.fldoe.org/PaperReduction or by contacting the Office of the K-12 Chancellor at (850) 245-0509.

This report will also be posted on the Paperwork Reduction Web site, along with the individual district reports and contact information for district designees (www.fldoe.org/PaperReduction).

Appendix A

School District Reporting Status

Florida Law Requirements:

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Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year:

(d) Each district school board must submit its findings and potential solutions to the State Board of Education by **September 1** of each year.

(e) The State Board of Education shall prepare a report of the statewide paperwork and data collection findings and potential solutions and submit the report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by **October 1** of each year.

District Reports Received in Time to be Included in the State Board of Education Review

The following 36 of 71 school districts, including lab schools, have submitted their reports:

Alachua	Leon	Wakulla
Bradford	Madison	Washington
Calhoun	Monroe	
Clay	Okaloosa	
Collier	Osceola	
Columbia	Palm Beach	
DeSoto	Pasco	
Dixie	Polk	
Escambia	Putnam	
Flagler	St. Johns	
FSU Lab School	St. Lucie	
Glades	Sarasota	
Hamilton	Seminole	
Highlands	Sumter	
Hillsborough	Suwannee	
Jackson	Union	
Lee	Volusia	

