

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Gerard Robinson
Commissioner of Education

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July 31, 2012

Kathleen Shanahan
Chair of the Florida State Board of Education
Florida Department of Education
Turlington Building, Suite 1514
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Chairwoman Shanahan:

After much contemplation and discussion with my family, I want to inform you of my intention to resign as the Florida Commissioner of Education effective August 31, 2012. It has been an honor to serve as Commissioner during an unprecedented period in the history of school reform in the state of Florida. During 2011-2012, we have broadened the conversation about the importance of preparing our students for colleges and careers through Common Core Standards, supported creativity and innovation in PK-20 education, and strengthened public-private partnerships. It has been rewarding to work hand-in-hand with you and the other state board members to establish standards to prepare our students and educators for a future full of opportunity. I equally enjoyed working with Governor Rick Scott and the Florida legislature to enhance the Florida school accountability system. Overall, I am proud of our accomplishments and want to highlight some of them with you:

- For the first time in 10 years, the State Board of Education approved new achievement level scores for grades 3-10 in reading and grades 3-8 in mathematics on annual FCAT 2.0 assessments.
- Florida students that score a 262 or higher in achievement level four on FCAT 2.0 reading can enter one of our 28 Florida Colleges without the need to enroll in a non-credit bearing course in reading—saving students, parents and taxpayers money in postsecondary remediation costs.
- Florida is moving forward with its Race to the Top plans for school leaders, and recently hosted four-day workshops for 2,000 teams representing 67 counties and 8,000 educators.
- The Commissioner's Taskforce on Inclusion and Accountability improved learning opportunities for Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, and students enrolled in our Exceptional Student Education programs.

Chairwoman Kathleen Shanahan

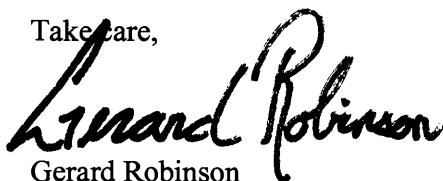
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- The State Board of Education authorized the creation of a Florida 2.0 Digital Learning Group to create a template to fund and advance best practices for digital learning in our state.
- The Florida Department of Education created a Just for Teachers community portal to encourage educators to communicate with each other about closing the achievement gap, professional development, and classroom strategies for improving student outcomes.
- The Florida Department of Education partnered with the National Alliance for Charter School Authorizers to host three workshops to discuss best practices associated with the review, denial or approval of a virtual public charter school application.
- Adopted new competency and skill standards for STEM teachers taking Florida Teacher Certification Examinations.
- Approved pre- and post-assessment measures for our Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK), and improved standards for VPK providers by increasing to 70% the score necessary for children deemed ready for kindergarten based on the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener.
- Florida earned a provisional No Child Left Behind waiver from the U.S. Department of Education.
- Partnered with Microsoft to create the nation's first IT Academy Program focused on middle and high schools.
- Created a Just for Parents online portal to inform them about changes to the Florida school accountability system, and partnered with Hillsborough, Duval, Orange, and Broward to send from me a personalized school grade telephone message to over 100,000 homes in each county.
- With the challenges associated with 2012 FCAT Writing scores, I created with the State Board of Education a new process for approval and dissemination of information about writing standards to the public, expanded the FCAT Writing 2.0 time for students from 45 minutes to 60 minutes, and hosted a reactor panel of 20 education, business and postsecondary stakeholders that recommended a new score for consideration on FCAT Writing 2.0 in 2013.
- Hosted in partnership with Macy's the 2012 and 2013 Florida Department of Education Teacher of the Year Celebration to honor our best and brightest educators.
- Participated in Conversations with the Commissioner, town hall meetings, school and college visits, and other events with stakeholders in 26 counties.

In closing, it has been an honor to be the Commissioner of Education and to work with a great team of professionals at the Florida Department of Education for the past year. Living far away from my family has proven to be the one challenge all this progress could not overcome. So it is with sincere appreciation and deep regret my time of service to Florida's students, parents, teachers, superintendents, college and university presidents, business and community organizations is cut short. Together we have established a foundation for great things to come, and I am proud to have played a leadership role in this effort.

Take care,



Gerard Robinson