

## NEWS RELEASE

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## **Florida Council of 100's 'Horizons 2040 Project' Offers Bold Vision for Florida's Schools**

*Group's blueprint for bolstering state's schools includes  
increasing teachers' salaries and expanding PreK programs*

**TAMPA** – The [Florida Council of 100](#) today announced the release of [the Horizons 2040 Project: Grades PreK-12](#), a far-reaching, bold vision for education in the state over the next two decades.

Florida's quality of education has improved steadily over the past 15 years, as shown by rising test scores and skyrocketing graduation rates. We are fortunate to have strong leadership in Tallahassee, through Governor Ron DeSantis and Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran, to maintain the momentum. The Horizons plan offers recommendations to further strengthen schools for the next 20 years, including raising teachers' salaries and expanding pre-kindergarten programs to all-day or summer programs where needed.

"As business leaders, we know that education is the building block of prosperity," said John Kirtley, Chairman of the Council's K-12 Education Committee. "We want to ensure every student in Florida gets the education that prepares them for success for years to come."

The Florida Council of 100 has been a highly regarded organization of business and civic leaders for almost 60 years. The nonpartisan organization developed the long-term plan because improving education is essential to maintaining Florida's competitive workforce and thriving economy.

The report includes nine educational goals critical to ensuring that future generations of Florida students are prepared to compete in an ever-changing world. It's the outcome of three years of work and visits to public and private schools statewide to learn the best educational practices.

After effective parenting, the main determinant of student success is having an outstanding teacher, the report noted. Yet average teacher pay in Florida is ranked 46<sup>th</sup> in the nation, and only about half of Florida teachers feel supported

and encouraged. The report stressed the need for higher pay to recruit and retain the best and brightest teachers.

Among the report's other key recommendations:

- **Support teachers in meaningful ways.** In addition to increasing teachers' salaries so they're competitive with those of other highly valued professions, Florida schools should devise ways to create an environment where teachers feel they have a voice and are part of a team.
- **Empower students to succeed.** This includes teaching students life skills such as better decision-making and goal-setting; requiring school districts to offer options like career and technical schools; and creating a rigorous academic program that stretches students while providing a safe environment – a second “home” for learning -- in which students aren't afraid to fail.
- **Stay committed to high-quality standards.** This includes demanding strong accountability and rigorous but appropriate assessments of students, teachers and schools; providing teachers and administrators with additional and ongoing training; and making teacher evaluations objective and related to student performance.
- **Improve the state's voluntary PreK program.** Currently, only about half of Florida's voluntary PreK students test ready for kindergarten, and research shows that children who can't read proficiently by grade 4 are four times more likely to eventually drop out of high school. Expanding PreK to all-day or summer for struggling students and ensuring their social-emotional health needs are met are two ways to help these students succeed.
- **Allow schools to practice mastery-based education.** Under this approach, students have the opportunity to learn at their own pace, progressing when they are ready.

“Core academic areas like reading, math and science are absolutely vital,” said David Dyer, former President and CEO of Chico's FAS and the Florida Council of 100 chair of the committee that led the charge for much of the report. “But schools also must provide students with important life skills so they can become successful, productive citizens.”

The Horizons 2040 Project is the council's latest report designed to give lawmakers, educators and other civic leaders a starting point for making informed policy and budget decisions affecting education in Florida. The report lauds the nearly two decades of academic improvement in Florida while setting a far-reaching course for the future of education in the state.

“We realized the need for a long-term approach that builds on the state’s five-year strategic plan,” said Rhea Law, of counsel for Buchanan, Ingersoll, and Rooney and former Chair of the Florida Council of 100. “If we follow this blueprint, Florida will lead the nation in creating successful students equipped for life.”

A copy of the full report can be downloaded at: [the Horizons 2040 Project: Grades PreK-12](#)

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**About the Florida Council of 100**

Formed in 1961, the Florida Council of 100 is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of business, civic and academic leaders. It exists to improve the quality of life and economic well-being of all Floridians through the relentless pursuit of better, business-driven public policy. Visit [www.fc100.org](http://www.fc100.org) for more information.