



PRESS RELEASE
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**EDUCATION REFORM TAKES POSITIVE STEPS FORWARD
DESPITE TERRIBLE BUDGET**

~Report Highlights & Applauds 3 Key Decisions~

Tampa, FL- First, a comprehensive, evenhanded approach to grading high schools; second, officially joining a national initiative aimed at ensuring that all students are equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century and third, the establishment of a Florida College System that will help Florida meet it's demand for more bachelor's degrees and a highly trained workforce. While the education community is taking drastic measures to cope with severe budget cuts, education reform efforts in Florida continue to move forward, according to a [report](#) released today by ENLACE Florida. "It's hard to argue that this has been a bad year for education, policy makers nevertheless took three positive steps forward," said Paul Dosal, Ph.D., Executive Director for ENLACE Florida. One of those steps was in the direction of improving the methodology associated with the designation of high school grades. This year the legislature approved major reform resulting in a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of high schools by including other factors in the determination of a school grade. Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, only half of a high school's grade will be determined by student scores on the FCAT exam. The other half of a school's grade will be determined by other factors, including the school graduation rate, postsecondary readiness of students, student participation in Advanced Placement & International Baccalaureate courses, and the growth or decline in these components. "If the Governor signs this approved reform bill into law as he is expected to do, it will strengthen our state's commitment to improving education in Florida by producing a more accurate assessment of teacher and school performance," said Dosal. A second positive step this year in education reform came directly from the Governor's Office. Governor Crist committed Florida to join the [American Diploma Project](#) (ADP), a nation-wide effort to increase the rigor and relevance of our high school

curricula and prepare our graduates for a college education. Florida became the 33rd state to join the ADP Network launched by Achieve, Inc. in 2005. Through this collaborative effort, Florida is committing to an ambitious reform agenda that is expected to better align its high school graduation requirements with college and workforce expectations. “The Governor did the right thing when he decided to join this national initiative,” said Braulio Colón, Assistant Director for ENLACE Florida. “When 3 out of 4 future jobs in our state will require some form of post-secondary education, the need to align our curriculum to meet that demand is simply a no-brainer,” said Colón. Thirdly, an important step was taken through Senate Bill 1716, sponsored by Senator Steve Oelrich, R-Gainesville, which creates the State College Pilot Project for the 2008-09 year and a Florida College System Task Force charged with developing a strategic plan and providing recommendations for transitioning community colleges to baccalaureate-granting colleges. This bill responds in part to growing and widespread concerns about the capacity of the eleven state universities and their ability to meet Florida’s workforce demand for bachelor’s degrees. Community Colleges participating in the project will be obligated to respond to community needs for postsecondary academic education and career degree education as their primary mission while continuing to provide outreach to underserved students and remedial education. “With our state institutions at or very near capacity, the issue of access to higher education is a critical concern to all high school graduates in Florida,” said Paul Dosal, Ph.D. “This move toward a middle-tier system may alleviate some of the pressure on the state universities and open the doors of higher education to increasing numbers of college-ready students,” said Dosal. ENLACE Florida applauds all state education leaders pressing forward producing results in positive education reform despite a terrible education budget year.

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