



Capital Office for Administrative, Accreditation & Legislative Services

May 3, 2014

TO: All FACCS Administrators  
FROM: Dr. Howard G. Burke, FACCS Executive Director  
RE: End of Legislative Session Capital Report

The Florida Legislature adjourned the 2014 session at 10:40 p.m. Friday after approving a \$77.1 billion budget. The motion to adjourn *sine die*, Latin for 'without day', is the last action of a session of the Florida legislature. The budget will now go to Governor Rick Scott who has line item veto authority. The final budget includes a **\$54** per child increase for the **Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)** Education Program, increasing school-year scholarships from the current \$2,383 per child to \$2,437. The final increase is a compromise by the Senate after an earlier rejection of the House's request for a \$108 per child increase.

The major detrimental bills we were tracking for the most part all died including: regulation of summer church week day camps by DCF, employment discrimination expansion, sexual orientation & gender identity mandate, bills related to bullying and redefinitions tied to cyberbullying, the inability to consider criminal activity in the screening of an employment applicant, negative changes to Bright Futures Scholarships that would have cut the program to a system of "means assessment for qualification," changes in physical/medical assessment to participate in the FHSAA programs, and much more.

The **Step Up Bill Corporate Tax Credit Program (SB 1512)** after being declared dead three times this session was revived this afternoon and added as part of 141 page amendment to **SB 850** and passed the Senate and House exactly as we sought: The bill removes the prior-public attendance requirement for eligibility in the CTS Program. Current state law requires that children in grades 6-12 who are otherwise qualified for CTCSS scholarships must have spent the prior year in a public school in order to obtain scholarships. There is no such requirement for children in kindergarten to 5th grade. **SB 850** specifically states private schools will maintain autonomy over the curriculum and standards used in their classrooms. As it exists in current statute, scholarship schools may continue to administer national norm-referenced assessments which meet validity and reliability specifications set by the Florida Department of Education. The bill also creates personal learning accounts for some students with disabilities in kindergarten through high school. The bottom line is there is no mandated state assessment, no additional school accountability; no professional development or Common Core Standards directed by Step Up, there is a prohibition on Step Up disallowing use of their administrative funds to lobby the legislature, etc. While Step Up may not be pleased the legislation with limited expansion not tied to sales tax as a new revenue stream could not have gone better for current schools participating in any of the CHOICE scholarship programs. The bill went to the House was passed and sent to the Governor.

**HB 7069/SB 1702** regarding early childhood, in its final form after a multitude of significant negative amendments by Senators Legg and Gibson, including the expansion of control by DCF and Office of Early Education; had a \$1 million appropriation added for DCF to employ 18 positions to inspect private schools, mandated additional powers to DCF to promulgate any additional rules necessary to enforce the revised definition of substantial compliance and issue annual regulatory Certificates to private schools that complied; added additional training for personnel along with additional unacceptable amendments that really sought to empower the State and Early Learning Coalitions in a major shift toward control of those programs that accepted school readiness money or participated in the VPK Program passed the Senate after being held hostage in the Senate until SB 850 was approved in the House with the Senate amendments. The amended EC Senate Bill was then substituted by amendment for the House bill with the Senate changes and went back to the House for concurrence. When received by the House it was "temporarily postponed" in messages. Then a miracle of grace happened, the Senate named the

Career and Tech Bill the Don Gaetz Bill and the House got upset at such doings. As a result of the insult the House refused to approve the Early Childhood bill after all the changes and **it died when adjournment took place**. So there is no change to religious exemption, no expansion of DCF oversight, no change in the historical definition of substantial compliance, no mandated inspections, no falsely so-called equality or use of Class I-III Violations; no additional posting of inspections; no unnecessary communications to parents every time an inspector took issue with something at a school site, no expanded authority given to the Early Learning Coalitions or their agents, no curricular or governance changes, no change in accreditation recognitions in current statute including the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA), the Florida Association of Academic Nonpublic Schools (FAANS) or the Middle States Association of Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA) as umbrella agencies and the positive list goes on and on! (By the way if you are Gold Seal designated the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools has been removed from the DCF/Gold Seal Program. Contact the DCF for additional details if you did not receive their April 2014 notice.)

As to the issue of **dual enrollment SB 1148**, relating to postsecondary education, while gaining the Stargel amendment did not get taken up and **Died on Special Order**. Likewise did **SB 924 & HB 981 Die in their respective Committees of assignment**. There is a rumor that possibly another route was taken and dual enrolment issues were addressed but if so it cannot be confirmed at this minute with the volume of action over the last 12 hours.

There is much more of a positive outcome by virtue of the bills that did not get a hearing to rejoice over. Once all the electronic dust settles on entangled legislation packaged in vast bundles settle an expanded report will be provided.

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