



Citizens for Strong Schools, Inc.
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Voice of the People
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Editor: Just before our schools closed for the Winter Break, Governor Rick Scott sent a letter to all of Florida's school superintendents asking them to support his proposed budget for the 2012-13 school year.

In that letter, Governor Scott said "After listening to educators and parents, touring schools and visiting with students, I have heard them tell me that in spite of the educational shortfall we face, our top priority in this budget should be K-12 education."

Under the Governor's proposed budget, Alachua County would gain about \$152 more per student for the next school year, an increase of about 2.5%. It doesn't make up for last year's cuts, and it comes nowhere near getting our schools back to where they were five years ago. (He'd have to raise funding by more than \$900 per student to accomplish that.) But at least it's a move in the right direction.

Of course, the legislature has the final say in drafting a budget, although in his letter the Governor says "I will not sign a budget from the Legislature that does not significantly increase state funding for education."

Of course, the other side of the ledger involves expenses. Even with more funding, schools can get further behind the eight ball if state leaders keep passing expensive and unfunded mandates.

We can't say for sure whether the advocacy of groups like Citizens for Strong Schools and Fund Education Now out of Orlando, or the lawsuit on education adequacy that's been filed against the state, have had an impact on the Governor's thinking—but they certainly haven't hurt!

Governor Scott closed his letter with the following: "As educators, you have incredibly important jobs, and the future of our state literally depends on the work you do every day." We need to keep up the pressure until all our state leaders recognize the truth of that statement—and act on it.

For information about contacting our local legislators or to learn more about Citizens for Strong Schools, please visit www.yesforalachuaschools.org.

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