‘A Paramount Duty’

School Funding in Florida and Alachua County
Alachua County earned third straight ‘A’ grade in 2009

Increase in number of ‘A’ schools from 17 to 21
About our schools...

• Four high schools ranked among the nation’s best in *Newsweek’s* annual report

• Eastside, Buchholz, GHS and Santa Fe all among the top 4% of public high schools
About our schools...

- Alachua County SAT scores tops in state; total average score of 1613 well above both state and national figures
- AP passing ratio also #1 in state
About our schools...

• Students, schools and staff continue to win local, state and national awards
The quality of public education in Alachua County and throughout Florida is in jeopardy!
Florida’s Constitution says...

Article 9, Section 1 (approved by voters in 1998)

“It is a paramount duty of the state to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders. Adequate provision shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure and high quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high quality education...”

Paramount: Ranking higher than any other*  
*Webster’s New World Dictionary
The reality

• According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Florida ranks 50th in the nation in per pupil funding compared to wealth.

• According to 2010 Quality Counts* report, which grades states on education, Florida received an ‘F’ grade for school spending.

• That grade was based on 2007 funding figures—state funding has since been cut dramatically.

*Education Week, Jan. 2010
The reality

• Since 2007, the legislature has cut Florida’s K-12 public education budget by $1.4 billion

• In 2006, Florida spent $7400 per pupil

• In 2009, Florida is spending $6500 per pupil (down 12%)

• The national average is $10,000 per pupil

*2009-10 Florida Legislative Conference Report*
The reality

*From Tough Choices: Update 2009*

“Florida continues to place large financial burdens on local governments to provide school funding... the local share of public school funding continues to increase with no signs of slowing.”

*LeRoy Collins Institute, Florida State University*
Shifting responsibility

- When constitutional amendment was passed in 1998, local dollars made up 38% of school funding statewide.
- Today, local dollars make up 56% of school funding statewide.
School operations funding this year comes from three main sources:

• State funding (primarily sales taxes): 48%

• Federal funding (primarily stimulus dollars): 5%

• Local funding (property taxes): 47%

Most of the local property tax rate for schools is set by the Florida Legislature, not local school boards!
Since the beginning of last year, state funding for Alachua County is down $700 per pupil (17%).

Since the beginning of last year, local funding is up $186 per pupil (6.5%).

Federal stimulus funding is providing $339 per pupil (about $9 million) this year.

Even with stimulus, overall per pupil funding in Alachua County is down $513 (7%) this year, not including one mill revenue.
• Since 2007-08, state funding for Alachua County is **down** $1359 per pupil (28%)

• Since 2007-08, local funding is **up** nearly $566 per pupil (23%)

• Even with federal stimulus funding, overall per-pupil funding is **down** nearly $800 (11%) since 2007-08, not including one mill revenue

Federal stimulus funds, one mill revenue and budget cuts are keeping Alachua County Public Schools afloat in 2009-10
What about the lottery?

• Lottery was supposed to ‘enhance’ education.

• Instead, lottery dollars have been used to replace general revenues.

• Most of lottery money goes to prizes, advertising, and Bright Futures scholarships.

• This year, public schools will receive zero discretionary dollars from the lottery.
State of Florida’s budget shows that education isn't as important as it used to be twenty years ago.
Local budget cuts

- Elimination of middle school summer school and drastic reduction of high school summer school
- Reduction in number of elective classes and increased class sizes in electives
- Significant reduction of extended day program during the summer
- Reduction in number of bus routes, bus stops
- Elimination of district and school-based positions
- Reduction in overtime, travel and other expenses
- Other cuts
Future challenges

• More mid-year state budget cuts

• End of federal stimulus money in 2011

• Required full implementation of class size law in 2010

• More unfunded and underfunded state and federal mandates

• Federal law (No Child Left Behind) says all students must be on grade level by 2014
How we started

- Group established in June of 2008
- Made up of parents, business people, community activists, educators and other citizens
- Original goal was to promote the one mill referendum
- One mill was approved in November by a two-to-one margin
About the one mill

• Lasts for four years, unless approved again by voters
• Brings in about $13 million a year for Alachua County schools
• Costs average homeowner about $10 per month
• Funds can only be spent as outlined on ballot
• Independent oversight committee of local citizens makes sure money is spent as promised
About the one mill

Revenues from the one mill have restored and will maintain:

- Full-time elementary art and music
- School nurses
- Middle and high school media programs
- Academic and career/technical magnet programs
- Middle school band funding
- Elementary guidance counselors
- Classroom technology
With passage of one mill, Citizens for Strong Schools now focused on:

• Educating the public about the school funding crisis

• Lobbying state leaders to properly fund public education
What can you do?

• Stay informed about Florida’s school funding crisis
• Talk to family and friends
• Write letters to the editor
• Contact legislators and push for better school funding
• Participate in upcoming rallies and other activities
• Join Citizens for Strong Schools!
What can you do?

Visit our website at:
www.yesforalachuaschools.org

Features include:

• Easy, online membership ($11)
• Updates on school funding news
• Links to other grass-roots organizations
• Calendar of upcoming activities