

Funding

- This is a bigger topic, but I will give a snapshot of my thoughts here:

According to the Florida School Finance Council Budget Priorities & Recommendations for FY2020, between the school years 2007-2008 and 2018-2019, inflation-adjusted spending on FEFP went down \$1100/student. 11 years, \$1100 dollars per student. We have 100,000 students in Pinellas County. That is \$110 million dollars we are less-funded today than we were in 2007-2008. \$110 Million dollars. (\$3B state-wide.)

Last fall I attended an event where a Pinellas state representative on the PK-12 Appropriations Committee shared in a very proud way that the state had increased FEFP per student funding by \$242, and the Base Student Allocation by \$75. He said that he was disappointed that districts did not put the money into teacher raises. Please allow me to put these increases into perspective:

- The \$242 they raised the FEFP is a 3% increase over last year's \$7,408. Inflation in Florida in 2018 was 2.44%. A half-percent over inflation. Better than the last decade of negative demonstrated above? Yes. We would need a 15% increase just to get back to where we were 11 years ago.
- The \$75 they raised the Base Student Allocation was a 1.2% increase. Less than half the inflation rate. Our school districts are having to use funds from all kinds of sources to simply keep up with the cost of healthcare for their employees, the cost of energy, salaries and goods. It is egregious for our elected officials to say they are disappointed that our districts are not giving teachers raises.

My idea on funding education from the state level? Fund education like it matters. Fund it like we believe what Article IX of the state constitution says, that "the education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida". Fund it like the 4th largest economy in the country, like the 17th largest economy in the world. Fund it like it is the largest single employer and land-owner in the county, and in the state. Most importantly, believe in it..., believe in our educators. Pay our teachers the professional wage they deserve; give them the professional development, support and voice they deserve; and tell them you believe in them. Not that you are watching them and grading them and testing them and will replace them...but that you believe in them. Lead Education. Believe in it. Invest in it.

If you hear someone talking about “record increases” in education funding in Florida...be sure to give it the context of 11-years and inflation.

At the county level, when it comes to budget, we have a \$1.5B budget. With an MBA in finance and years of executive experience responsible for over \$700M, I believe that I am a strong addition to our school board in terms of financial management.