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**Governor Crist Recommends Full Funding for K-12 Education**

*~ Provides \$394 increase in per-student funding ~*

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today recommended \$33.5 billion in funding for all phases of education, including \$138 million to fully fund any K-12 reductions that would occur as a result of voter approval of Amendment 1 on January 29, 2008.

“Florida’s educators are working to provide students a year’s worth of learning in a year’s worth of time, and we must ensure that they have the necessary tools and resources to help students succeed,” Governor Crist said. “Florida’s schools have demonstrated that with hard work and dedication, every student can achieve in the classroom. We must continue to provide the resources needed to create the best learning environment possible.”

Governor Crist’s budget includes a 5.46 percent increase in per-student funding – up \$394, for a total of \$7,606 per student. The proposed budget also includes funds for middle school physical education, reading coaches, virtual tutors, bonuses for outstanding teachers and prevents a tuition increase for community colleges and state universities.

“Last week, Florida was recognized as having one of the top 15 public education systems in the nation. The budget recommendations presented by Governor Crist today will enable our state to continue making progress toward the goal of ensuring every child is successful in school and well-prepared for their futures,” said Education Commissioner Eric J. Smith. “I commend Governor Crist for his leadership and commitment to Florida’s students.”

“This budget recommendation reflects Governor Crist’s great understanding of the need to fund public education in a tough budget year,” said Dean Colson, Special Advisor to the Governor on Higher Education and member of the University of Miami’s board of trustees and capital campaign.

**Grades Pre-K-12**

Governor Crist recommends \$23 billion for pre-K-12 education, a \$1 billion increase over current spending. The Governor’s budget priorities for pre-K-12 public education include the following:

- *Physical Education* – Governor Crist’s budget recommendations expand his goal of physical education for every student, every day. Governor Crist recommends

providing \$100 million in incentive funds for every middle school student who participates in physical education with a certified physical education teacher.

- *Reading Coaches and Virtual Tutors* – A budget increase of \$6.5 million will provide \$202 million to support more reading coaches, virtual tutors and other reading programs. Reading coaches assist classroom teachers with applying research-based strategies for teaching reading in all subject areas. The Virtual Tutors program, an online instruction tool, provides clear information to parents about children’s progress and how to help students improve academic skills.
- *Class-Size Reduction* – To meet the requirements of a 2002 constitutional amendment requiring smaller class sizes in grades K-12, Governor Crist is recommending \$847 million for new teachers and additional classroom space.

## **Teacher Bonuses**

Governor Crist’s proposed budget includes \$467 million for bonuses for teachers who improve student achievement and who work diligently to improve their teaching skills through national peer review. Governor Crist proposes funding the Merit Award Program created by the 2007 Legislature to provide significantly increased performance bonuses to the state’s best public school teachers and educators.

In addition, the proposed funds provide additional opportunities to earn salary bonuses through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate Bonus Program. In 2007, Florida ranked first in the number of new National Board Certified Teachers (1,675) and second in the total number of teachers achieving the certification over time (10,875).

## **Higher Education**

Governor Crist’s proposed budget includes \$5.42 billion for state universities and community colleges and calls for no tuition increase. The Governor recommends a \$52-million increase for new student enrollment at Florida’s 11 state universities and a \$23-million increase for medical schools at Florida State University, Florida International University and University of Central Florida. He also plans a \$56-million increase to community colleges’ annual budgets to help meet needs created by enrollment growth.

Governor Crist is recommending \$101.5 million for challenge grants that require matching funds for the endowment funds of state universities and community colleges. To help establish additional Centers of Excellence at Florida’s research universities, Governor Crist proposes \$60 million that can be used to ensure Florida remains on the cutting edge of biotech and clean technology industries.

Details of Governor Crist’s recommended budget will be released on Monday, February 4, 2008. Visit [www.myflorida.com](http://www.myflorida.com) and click on “The People’s Budget.”