



SANDRA "SAM" HIMMEL – SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

*"Where Learning is the Expectation
And Caring is a Commitment"*

May 12th, 2015

Florida Governor Richard L. Scott
State of Florida, The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

The Citrus County School district has been designated as a "High Performing School District" for the past eight years and has experienced continual success in meeting high state expectations.

While the Citrus County School Board supports accountability, we insist the measures must be valid, reliable, equitable, and fully funded. We recognize the importance of reliable assessments and have used this data to improve teaching and learning toward district success—exemplified by our own Superintendent Sandra "Sam" Himmel named as the *2014 Lavan Dukes District Data Leader of the Year Award*.

Our schools have experienced many of the same test administration problems that have occurred state-wide during this year's Florida Standards Assessments. Recurrent technical problems and platform design issues created significant disruptions for many students during the test, which included delays in being able to access the test, continuous interruptions during the test, and the unexpected error requiring students to complete two test sessions in one day instead of the original test schedule of two sessions over two days.

These testing issues have put these students at a great disadvantage and created an inequitable testing environment that is unacceptable for the purposes of accountability and the accurate measurement of learning. We have heard many additional concerns from our teachers, administrators, students, parents and community members. "Accountability" based on faulty data and flawed assessment processes has no real value and can be detrimental to students, teachers and schools.

The district must be able to make local decisions to best serve the school community. We request the opportunity to decide students' grades, graduation requirements, promotion requirements, and performance pay for staff in Citrus County.

We therefore are imploring you to use the authority of your office to immediately sign an executive order that would suspend:

- the use of these assessments for students' grades,
- the use of these assessments for course requirements,
- the use of these assessments for graduation requirements,

THOMAS KENNEDY
DISTRICT 1

VIRGINIA BRYANT
DISTRICT 2

DOUGLAS A. DODD
DISTRICT 3

SANDRA BALFOUR
DISTRICT 4

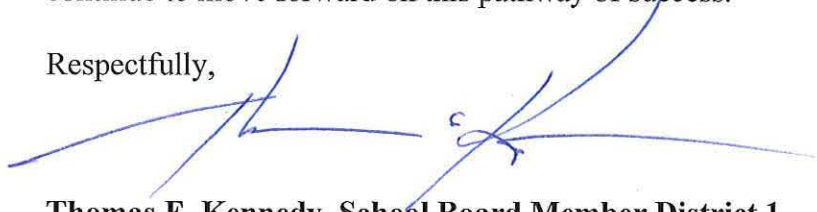
LINDA B. POWERS
DISTRICT 5

- the use of these assessments for any performance pay requirements for teachers and administrators
- the school accountability/school grade for the 2014 – 2015 school year.

In addition, we ask that you provide districts the local authority to make decisions related to assessments and performance pay in the above areas.

The future of our country's well-being relies on quality teaching and quality learning, the essential elements of public education. Florida is a national and global leader in public education. Your vision, support, and understanding of current conditions, are critical as we continue to move forward on this pathway of success.

Respectfully,



Thomas E. Kennedy, School Board Member District 1



Virginia Bryant, School Board Member District 2



Douglas Dodd, School Board Member District 3



Sandy Balfour, School Board Member District 4



Linda B. Powers, School Board Member District 5

Cc: Florida Education Commissioner Pam Stewart
Florida Senator Charles Dean
Florida Representative Jimmie T. Smith
Citrus County Chronicle
Tampa Bay Times