



Council for Lifelong Learning  
**Dollars to the Classroom Act**

**Fact  
Sheet**

September 2001

<p>1. What is the Dollars to the Classroom Act?</p>	<p>The Dollars to the Classroom Act (Act) provides for the Legislature to establish minimum district academic performance standards. Districts that do not meet minimum academic performance standards are required by the Legislature to increase the percentage of their total current operating funds spent for classroom instruction.</p>
<p>2. What data did the Legislature review when establishing the Dollars to the Classroom Act policy?</p>	<p>The Legislature established the Dollars to the Classroom Act policy after reviewing the following statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Florida ranked near the top of all Southern States for funds appropriated per student.</li><li>• Florida ranked at the bottom of all Southern States (and below the national average) for percentage of district's expenditures to the classroom.</li><li>• When compared to Texas (a state of similar size and demographic makeup), Florida was below Texas on most levels of student performance and below Texas for percentage of dollars spent in the classroom.</li></ul> <p>It was concluded that one way to improve student performance is to increase dollars spent in the classroom vs. dollars spent in administration.</p>
<p>3. Why did the Legislature establish the Dollars to the Classroom Act policy?</p>	<p>The Legislature established the Dollars to the Classroom Act policy for several reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to uphold the Legislature's Constitutional duty to provide for a "high quality" system of education;</li><li>• to hold districts accountable for student performance;</li><li>• to continue to give freedom to districts that perform; and</li><li>• to incentivize low performing districts.</li></ul>
<p>4. How are district performance grades calculated?</p>	<p>District performance grades are determined by weighting individual school grades by each school's enrollment. A separate grade is calculated by district for each educational level: elementary, middle, and high school.</p>
<p>5. What are the 2001-2002 performance standards set in the GAA?</p>	<p>The 2001-2002 General Appropriations Act established four district performance standards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) the <i>state median</i> elementary school grade,</li><li>2) the <i>state median</i> middle school grade,</li><li>3) the <i>state median</i> high school grade, or</li><li>4) the <i>state average</i> nonpromotion rate.</li></ol>

## Dollars to the Classroom Act

	<p>Every district that is below the state median in any level of school performance or above the state median nonpromotion rate, must increase the district's expenditures directly into the classroom.</p> <p>The amount of expenditure to the classroom a district must increase is one percent over the prior year for each area in which the district is deficient.</p> <p>For example, if a district is below the state median for elementary school performance and above the state median nonpromotion rate, the district must increase its expenditures to the classroom by two percent over the prior year.</p> <p>If a district performs better than the state standards set, nothing happens - they continue to have flexibility over their expenditure of funds.</p>
<p>6. How many districts will be affected by this Act?</p>	<p>Based on preliminary 2000-2001 school grades, DOE estimates that districts would be affected as follows:</p> <p>Fifteen (15) school districts met or exceeded the district performance standard for elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and nonpromotion rate. These districts would be able to continue to spend their funds as they choose.</p> <p>Fifteen (15) districts did not meet performance standards in one area and would be required to shift an additional one percent of their total operating funds to the classroom. Twenty-four (24) districts did not meet performance standards in two areas and would be required to shift an additional two percent of their total operating funds to the classroom. Twelve (12) districts did not meet performance standards in three areas and would be required to shift an additional three percent of their total operating funds to the classroom. One (1) district did not meet performance standards in all four areas and is required to shift an additional four percent of its total operating funds to the classroom.</p>
<p>7. What expenditures are considered "classroom expenditures?"</p>	<p>Section 236.08102(3)(a), F.S., requires DOE to calculate each districts total K-12 operating expenditures for K-12 programs (dollars to the classroom) as prescribed in the most recent issuance of the DOE's <i>Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting for Florida Schools</i> publication.</p> <p>These expenditures include, but are not limited to the</p>

Dollars to the Classroom Act

	<p>following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• classroom teacher salaries and benefits;</li> <li>• classroom expenses;</li> <li>• classroom supplies;</li> <li>• teacher professional development; and</li> <li>• education paraprofessional salaries and benefits.</li> </ul>
<p>8. What else must a district do if it does not meet the established performance requirements?</p>	<p>Any district that does not meet any or all of the performance requirements must advertise (along with its general budget advertisement) that it has been required by the Legislature to increase classroom expenditures because the district performed below certain student performance levels.</p> <p>Districts must also prepare two reports. One report provides a proposed budget and activities to address improved student achievement and the second report provides the calculation which demonstrates whether or not the district has complied with the expenditure requirements.</p>
<p>9. Is there a penalty to a district that does not follow the expenditure requirements of this Act?</p>	<p>There is not a penalty for districts that do not follow the expenditure requirements of this act. However, they must provide a statement adopted at a public meeting and signed by the superintendent and school board which indicates why they are noncompliant.</p>
<p>10. What are the applicable statutes and rules?</p>	<p>Section 229.57(16), F.S. -- District performance grades            Section 236.08102(3), F.S. -- Classroom expenditures definition            Section 237.041, F.S. -- District budget requirements            Section 237.081, F.S. -- District advertisement</p> <p>2001-2002 GAA, S.A. 118</p>
<p>11. Where can I get additional information?</p>	<p>Department of Education            Office of Funding and Financial Reporting            (850) 488-5142</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives            Committee on Education Appropriations            (850) 488-6204</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives            Council for Lifelong Learning            (850) 414-6694</p>