



**Florida’s Next Governor’s Views on Education:
*A Side-by-Side of
 Gubernatorial Candidates
 Rick Scott and Alex Sink***

Florida TaxWatch Center for Educational Performance and Accountability

There is no doubt that the incoming Governor of Florida will play a key role in the state’s future prosperity. In these tough fiscal times, businesses—small and large—have identified improved talent development as a major need for their successful growth and expansion. Florida’s economic recovery relies on the performance and outcomes of its PreK-20 system, which dictates talent development and the quality of the state’s workforce. Thus, it is vital that voters understand the views of candidates on education as the next Governor will need to take strong initiatives toward education funding, policy, and reform that will have a profound effect on shaping the Florida of tomorrow.

Florida TaxWatch has compiled a side-by-side comparison of the positions taken on education by gubernatorial candidates Republican Rick Scott and Democrat Alex Sink. The positions of each candidate were gleaned from campaign materials as well as independent news sources to be presented here as a clear and concise voter guide courtesy of Florida TaxWatch.

ISSUE	CANDIDATE RICK SCOTT	CANDIDATE ALEX SINK
<i>Education Philosophy</i>		
Does the candidate acknowledge the importance of education to Florida’s future prosperity?	Yes, says as a businessman he knows the “importance of education in growing the economy.”	Yes, says that there is a “vital link between a vibrant economy, high-paying jobs, and a quality education system.”
Does the candidate demonstrate an awareness of the connections among education, workforce readiness, and economic growth?	Yes, says an educated workforce is necessary “to attract business, compete effectively in the global economy, and create 21st century jobs.”	Yes (see above)
Does the candidate endorse the concept of a student-centered education system that meets the needs of the state’s diverse student population?	Yes, says students should be “center stage” and that an educational framework should be created “that is customized so that each student can reach his or her potential.”	Yes, supports school/parent programs to get families more involved in their children’s education.

Does the candidate believe that there should be meaningful accountability at all educational levels?	Yes, supports accountability in education at all levels.	Yes, believes that there needs to be a de-emphasis on “high-stakes” testing, and accountability should be based on multiple measures.
Does the candidate believe that the needs of children should be among Florida’s top priorities?	Yes, believes education should better prepare Floridians for higher education or the workforce.	Yes, wants to make lottery funding supplemental to General Revenue funding for education.
<i>Early Learning</i>		
Does the candidate demonstrate commitment to early learning initiatives, such as the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program for all 4-year-olds (VPK)?	Yes, but wants to ensure continued access to private VPK providers.	Yes, wants to place bachelor degreed teachers in VPK classrooms; require consistent curriculum for VPK providers; and seek business community support for VPK.
<i>K-12 Education</i>		
Does the candidate support maximizing dollars for the classroom by securing non-instructional needs (like transportation, clerical, maintenance, and food services) at the most competitive rates?	Wants to ensure that Florida taxpayers get the best price and value for contracted goods and services in all sectors of government.	Wants to reform state contracting for all state government to ensure prices reflect fair market value of good/service; require more state contracts to go through competitive bidding to get the best value; ensure that every dollar spent on purchasing is necessary. Wants all state agencies to do a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of major privatization contracts.
Does the candidate support the essence of standards-based education that explicitly states what students should know and be able to do at all grade levels?	Yes, supports measuring performance outcomes using “objective, data-driven” criteria in a transparent environment to develop plans for improvement.	Yes, believes that such standards should be reflected in the development of achievement standards and tests. Supports reforming FCAT by increasing assurance that curriculum and instruction are more in sync with testing standards; wants to create a technical oversight committee to recommend improvements to the FCAT.

What is the candidate’s position on “grading” schools (“A” to “F”) as a means of accountability?	Wants to expand school accountability beyond grading to include how many resources were received by the school and how that money was spent.	Wants to grade schools on the basis of student progress made throughout the year.
What is the candidate’s position on evaluating teacher/school administrator effectiveness and accountability?	Supports using student outcomes as a basis for measuring teacher/school administrator accountability and improvement.	Wants to pay higher salaries to recruit quality teachers, coupled with higher performance-based expectations. Will require comprehensive accountability measures to ensure teachers are fairly rated and that student performance outcomes are achieved.
Does the candidate support programs that recognize the state’s most effective teachers and that provide appropriate training so that all teachers can enhance their skills?	Yes, supports merit-based pay for teachers.	Yes, wants to expand career ladders for teachers so that they can earn additional compensation for taking on additional roles/responsibilities, demonstrating mastery of professional standards, or earning advanced degrees.
What is the candidate’s position on merit-based pay for teachers?	Supports merit-based pay for teachers.	Supports performance-based pay for teachers.
What initiatives does the candidate support to provide resources to at-risk, struggling students?	Proposes using the Florida Virtual School to allow teachers to offer individual instruction to students based on a particular student’s needs. Wants to prioritize mentoring programs.	Wants to develop an early-warning system to deter students from dropping out; support career and technical academies in high schools; pair at-risk youth with older student mentors.
What is the candidate’s position on assisting schools that chronically underperform?	Wants to allow parents to choose alternatives to chronically underperforming schools, including charter schools, private schools, homeschooling, and virtual schools.	Wants to assess a school’s progress throughout the year, and make DOE a clearinghouse for best practices for improving low-performing schools, rather than punishing them.

Does the candidate support Amendment 8, which would provide flexibility to the Class Size Reduction Amendment while maintaining its basic principles?	Supports Amendment 8.	Supports Amendment 8.
Does the candidate believe that there should be a heightened awareness of the value of business partnerships in K-12 education?	Yes, supports the Tax Credit Scholarship program.	Yes, wants to expand public-private partnerships to broaden participation in current and expanded leadership programs for school principals.
Does the candidate support school choice programs such as charter schools, virtual education, and the corporate tax credit scholarship program?	Yes, the candidate supports expanding educational options for our children. Wants to allow parents to choose the means of educating their children, whether public schools, charter schools, home-schooling; supports tax credit scholarships for low income students to attend schools of their choice.	Does not address the issue of school choice. Wants to ensure that private education providers using tax dollars are held to the same standards of accountability as public schools, including FCAT scores and class-size standards.
Does the candidate believe that Florida should work toward increasing student achievement, improving graduation rates, and decreasing school dropout rates?	Yes, by expanding school choice and taking advantage of modern technology to meet the needs of individual students.	Yes, by enhancing services for at-risk students (see above).
<i>Colleges/ Universities</i>		
What is the candidate's position on Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM) at the secondary & postsecondary levels and support for initiatives like the Sunshine State Scholars Program?	Wants to attract individuals with skills in math & science from the private sector by expediting the accreditation process and removing barriers to recruiting these individuals; supports State University System Chancellor Frank Brogan's "New Florida" initiative.	Would add economics, civics and the arts to the STEM curriculum.
What is the candidate's position on needs-based student financial aid?	Supports the Florida Resident Access Grant program to give Floridians access to independent colleges and universities.	Wants to strike a balance between needs-based and merit-based scholarships.

Does the candidate see a viable role for state colleges, community colleges, and universities—be they public or private, or for-profit or non-profit?	Yes, views universities as incubators for new technologies that will bring new industries to Florida (e.g., biotechnology).	Yes, wants to increase access to workforce training or postsecondary education.
Does the candidate support any connection between degrees conferred by state colleges and universities and Florida’s changing workforce needs?	Yes, supports Chancellor Brogan’s “New Florida” initiative that emphasizes high technology developed in partnership between universities and private industry.	Yes, recognizes the important role higher education institutions play in building a better-educated workforce; states that Florida must leverage its higher education systems to diversify our economic base and be globally competitive in a knowledge- and innovation-based economy.

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About the Center for Educational Performance and Accountability

Florida TaxWatch’s Center for Educational Performance and Accountability (CEPA) was formed in 2005 based on acknowledgement of two key realities: the large portion of education funding in the state budget and the profound fiscal and economic impact that quality PreK-20 education has on Florida’s competitiveness, both nationally and internationally.

CEPA conducts research, issues publications, and engages in meaningful actions to promote exemplary student achievement within a cost effective environment. CEPA analyzes and makes recommendations about educational policies, practices, and expenditures as regards their contributions to improved financial and student performance in Florida’s schools. CEPA also identifies specific educational issues that affect the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of state government, local school districts, and postsecondary institutions. Finally, CEPA brings together partnerships and collaborations in a concentrated effort to effect positive and dynamic change in Florida’s system of PreK-20 education.