

INTRODUCTION

The Lawton Chiles Foundation is holding a contest to help set the record straight about Florida's performance in education. We are asking high school and college students to help us spread the truth about how our education system compares to other states. The "Truth About #10" contest will give young people a chance to create a video spot to help educate the people of Florida about where we stand.

CONTEST SUMMARY

The "Truth About #10" contest is open to high school and college students in Florida. Students will write and produce 1-minute video spots – similar to television advertisements – to correct inaccurate statements that Florida ranks #10 nationally in education. You will post your entry on the web for people to vote on, and contest winners will have a chance to come to Tallahassee to participate in a press conference with The Lawton Chiles Foundation to release the video to the media. Winning videos will be permanently posted on the Worst To First website, and promoted to our members across the state of Florida.

YOUR MESSAGE FOR THE VIDEO

Your mission is to boil a complicated issue down to a simple and compelling message. It won't be easy.

Here's our problem: Education Week, a respected national publication, every year releases a ranking of state education systems, and in 2009 Education Week said Florida ranked #10 out of all 50 states in education. Unfortunately, this doesn't mean that Florida has the tenth best education system. Education Week's ranking was based mainly on Florida's written policies, and less on real-world performance that we think is just as important, such as high school graduation rates, college readiness, and the amount we spend to educate each student.

A report from the non-profit, non-partisan Florida Center for Fiscal and Economic Policy (which we've attached to this packet for you) says that Florida actually flunked the test for education spending. Education Week also gave Florida an F grade for college readiness, and a D-minus in the status of education achievement for kindergarten through high school.

Here's where Florida ranks on some other indicators:

High School Graduation Rates

- * Florida ranks 47th in the nation, with 57.5 percent of public high school students graduating with a diploma in the class of 2006.
- * In the class of 2009, it is projected that 103,990 students out of 244,395 will not earn a diploma. An average of 578 students drop out every day.
- * Nearly 10 percent of all teens are not attending school and not working, ranking Florida 40th in the nation.
- * Florida ranks 4th in the nation in the percentage of teens who are incarcerated.

College Readiness

- * Florida students rank 48th in the nation in average composite scores on the ACT, a standard college entrance exam.
- * Florida students score more than 3 percent below the national average on the math section of the SAT college entrance exam.
- * 63 percent of the students in 10th grade are not reading at grade level.
- * Only 37 percent of students in 11th grade are at grade level in science.

Spending on Education

- * Florida ranks 50th in per capita (or per person) spending on education.
- * Florida ranks 41st in adjusted per pupil spending on education.
- * Florida has eliminated state funding for the seven period school day and summer school.

Despite these facts, the media and many people in Florida continue to say we have the 10th best education system. It's important to set the record straight, because we know we need to improve education in this state and give our students a better chance to succeed in life. If average people in Florida believe we are really #10, then they will never demand that our state's leaders make real improvements.

Your mission with the "Truth About #10" video is to get people's attention and let them know the truth about how Florida is really doing in education. When people hear that "Florida is #10," they should know they aren't hearing the whole story.

CONTEST RULES

Who can enter?

All high school and college students in Florida can enter the contest. Teams may have up to four members.

What should the video be?

Your video must be no longer than one minute in length, and include a two key elements:

- * The video must tell people the truth about #10 – we're not the tenth best state, we're one of the worst.
- * The video must include a call to action to: "Go to WorstToFirst.org to sign the Pledge For Florida's Children."

CONTEST DEADLINES

- * All entries are due by 5 p.m. on January 15, 2010. However, we encourage you to submit your entry earlier if you are able.
- * Winners will be informed on January 29, 2010.
- * The winning videos will be announced to the public on Feb. 9 at a press conference in Tallahassee.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR ENTRIES FOR THE CONTEST

1. Create a free member account on the WorstToFirstCampus.org website

2. Create a blog site on WorstToFirstCampus.org to upload your video (YouTube video format is preferred)

3. Email Geoff@WorstToFirst.org a link to your video once your video has been uploaded to your WorstToFirstCampus.org blog. Please include the following information for each person in your group who participated in creating your video (4 person per video maximum):

Name, Email, Primary Phone Number, Age and grade level, School, City

WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONTEST?

Our campus coordinator is Michael Winn, and you can contact him at Michael@WorstToFirst.org. We prefer email, but you can also contact The Lawton Chiles Foundation by phone at 850-385-7800.

A FEW ADDITIONAL THINGS TO NOTE

The Lawton Chiles Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan organization working to make Florida a state in which children thrive. We don't expect to do this, but we do reserve the right to reject entries that we feel aren't appropriate.

YouTube encodes its video as Flash video, which can downgrade the picture quality. In the event that you are among our contest finalists, we may ask you to share the original footage for your video so we can produce a higher quality version. Please keep this in mind and save your digital files for us.

Thanks, and have fun!