

The School District of Osceola County, FL Blaine A. Muse, Superintendent

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Florida TaxWatch Gives Project CHILD High Marks

Florida TaxWatch, a private, non-profit, non-partisan research institute, recently released its latest study into the Project CHILD program, currently in place at seven elementary schools in Osceola County: Canoe Creek Charter, Central Avenue Elementary, Cypress Elementary, Deerwood Elementary, Hickory Tree Elementary, Partin Settlement Elementary, and Reedy Creek Elementary. Results found that the program, which uses teams of teachers in multiple grade level clusters, is providing greater reading and math achievement, especially among minority students, while reducing third grade retention.

As part of the study, Florida TaxWatch evaluated the academic progress of CHILD students in Osceola and Marion County in each of the last four years as teachers integrated technology and hands-on active learning into reading, writing and math classes in elementary schools. According to TaxWatch, the results were as follows for Osceola County students:

"In Osceola County, on all SAT-9 and FCAT reading tests for Grades 1 through 5 over two years, African American and Hispanic CHILD students outperformed their Non-CHILD counterparts six out of ten times. White CHILD students outperformed Non-CHILD students five times and economically disadvantaged CHILD students scored better seven times. On the math tests for Grades 1 through 5 in the two years, African American and White CHILD students performed similar to their Non-CHILD counterparts while Hispanic CHILD students outperformed Non-CHILD counterparts six times out of ten and economically disadvantaged CHILD students did better seven times."

Overall, the conclusions showed that Project CHILD narrowed the achievement gap for poor and minority students versus white students. Minority and economically disadvantaged CHILD students outperformed their Non-CHILD counterparts on both reading and math tests in the majority of cases.

The CHILD system was developed in 1988, and involves teachers working in teams of three with each becoming a specialist in reading, writing or mathematics. Students stay with their cluster team of teachers for three years, allowing the teachers to become very familiar with each student's strengths, learning styles, and needs. Students work at six learning stations, one of which the teacher can work with individual students and small groups for additional instruction as needed.