



THE SCHOOL BOARD OF GADSDEN COUNTY

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"Putting Children First"

PRESS RELEASE

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GADSDEN ELEMENTARY MAGNET RECEIVES SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

Gadsden Elementary Magnet School (GEMS), in Gadsden County School District was recently recognized by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) as a Florida School of Excellence. Schools earning this distinction must have maintained either an "A" or "B" school accountability grade from FDOE for the past three years.

GEMS was one of 75 other combination schools recognized in Florida for this distinction. Fifty nine middle schools, 56 high schools, and 73 elementary schools also received the distinction for 2016-2017 school year. GEMS is one of 263 schools out of the state's 4,269 schools to be recognized as 'excellent', putting it into the top 6% of all schools in Florida. GEMS has earned an "A" school grade every year since it became a graded school in 2005.

Florida legislators created the Schools of Excellence Program to provide administrative flexibility to the state's highest performing schools. In the highly controversial bill authorized in the 2016-2017 legislative session known as HB 7069, legislators made many changes to the school improvement and school recognition programs. The new bill requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to annually designate such schools whose percentage of possible points earned in its school grade calculation is at least in the 80th percentile for at least two of the last three years as a School of Excellence. This recognition allows schools to retain the designation for up to three years and provide renewal criteria.

The legislation allows a School of Excellence an exemption from any law or rule that requires a minimum period of daily or weekly instruction in reading; principal autonomy as provided under Florida Statute (F.S) section 1012.28(8); to count one year of employment as 20 in-service points, up to 60 points total, for the renewal of a professional certificate; exemption from compliance with school district policies establishing times for the start and end of the school day; and calculation of class size compliance based on the average number of students at the school level.

Superintendent Roger P. Milton is very proud of the efforts that the staff and leadership of GEMS continues to exhibit every year. The Gadsden School Board also applauds the school's efforts to "Put Children First". District leadership and School Board members will be meeting with GEMS staff at a faculty meeting this week to commend them for all their great work and continuing efforts to help Gadsden County Public Schools move from "Good" to "Great".

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