

# THE CONCERNED CITIZEN

Exposing the hard truth about Franklin County







August 15, 2013

Franklin County is hurting. Just off 98 and often out of sight, people are suffering. This is where the folks who are hungry, poor, sick, hopeless and disillusioned live in ever-growing numbers. You would not believe it from looking at our pristine coastline, speaking to a friendly and helpful Franklin County resident, tasting our delicious seafood or participating in one of many religious, social or festival events that are always occurring, but it is all too true.

## Why is this happening?

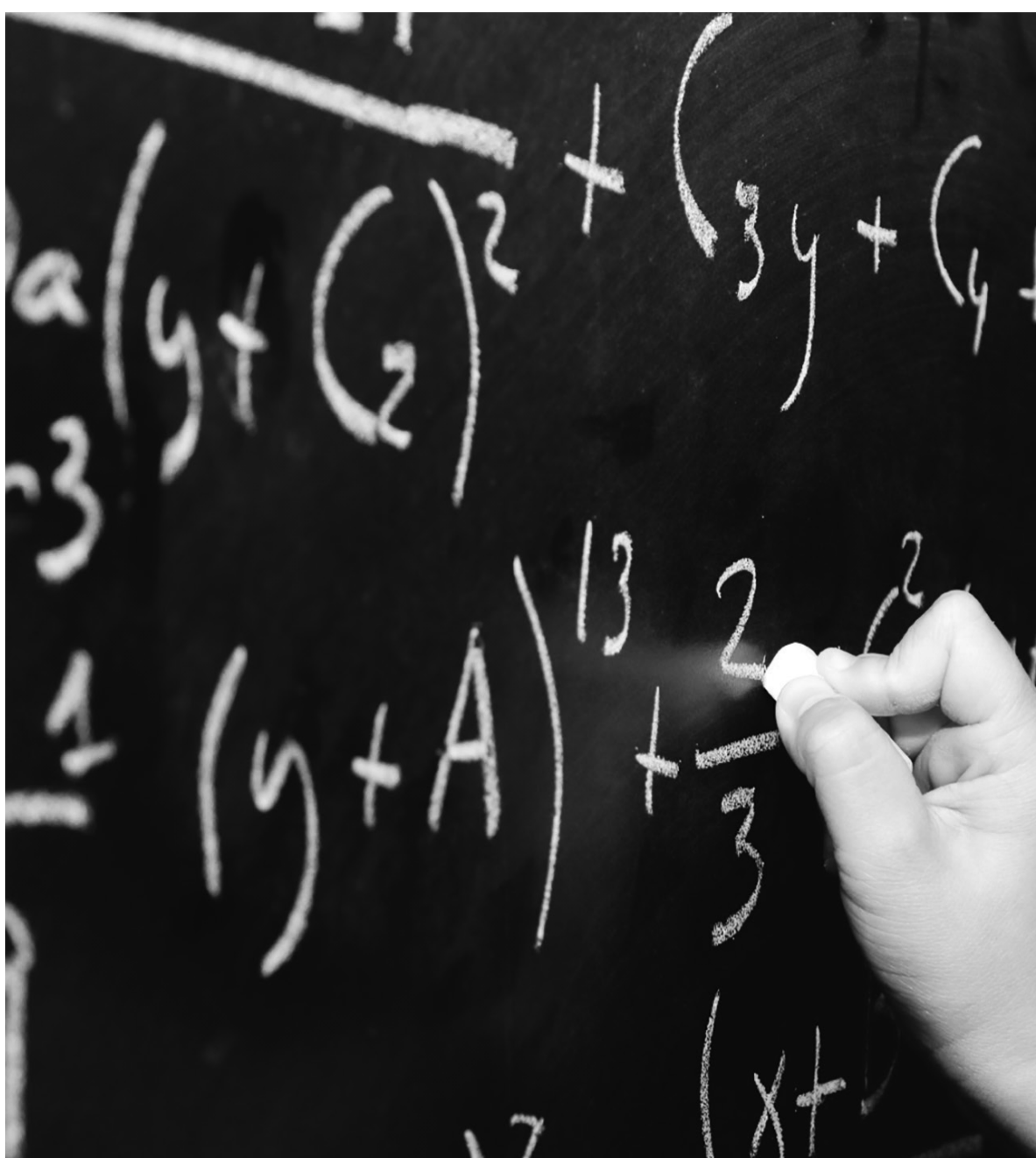
Franklin County suffers from all the same challenges that our bigger neighbors experience, but no one is discussing real solutions. Concerned Citizens for Franklin County (CCFC) seeks to hold our leaders and the apathetic among us accountable.

Today we launch The Concerned Citizen, a multi-part expose' designed to start a dialogue that can lead to much needed change in our county in the following subject areas:

-  Education
-  Economic Development
-  Healthcare
-  Government
-  Taxation
-  And most important of all, the people who live work and help to support our county.

Public apathy kills off hope - a little bit at a time. We hope this series helps you better understand our current situation and that your children, your future, and our County are worth your effort to get involved in making changes for the better.

Think of these six moving parts as the operation of a well-tuned engine. Without all elements firing together, the engine simply does not develop enough power to win races and may even stall when needed the most.



 **DID YOU KNOW: APPROXIMATELY \$13,200 IS BEING SPENT PER CHILD AT THE FRANKLIN COUNTY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL (RATED C/D) VS. ABOUT \$8,500 PER CHILD AT THE FRANKLIN COUNTY CHARTER SCHOOL (RATED A)**

## CONCERNING ISSUE 1

# Education in Franklin County - More dollars, Less Results

Franklin County School District encompasses the Consolidated School, the Franklin County Academy, Charter School and District offices. All the schools and operations receive state and federal tax dollars. Your Ad Valorem (Franklin County assessed) taxes support all of these schools except for the Charter School which does not receive local tax dollars for operations.

Our small and shrinking 1,200 student District budget is projected to spend about \$15,700,000 this next fiscal year. Approximately \$2.8 million is used to service existing debt and new capital projects leaving about \$12.9 million for the education of our children. Approximately \$13,200 is being spent per child at the Franklin County Consolidated School where that individual expense money earns the school a C/D grade from the state's comparative ratings system. (That C grade would have been lowered to a "D" if not for new State rules that do not allow a drop of two grade letters in the same year)

About \$8,500 is spent per child at the Franklin County Charter School which earns an A grade on the state's rating system. The Charter School has much the same demographics as does the Consolidated School. (The Florida statewide average spent per pupil is \$8,741 according to the Florida Department of Public Education.) The C/D grade of the Consolidated School clearly shows that the high-priced education you pay for at \$13,200 per pupil does not necessarily deliver the high-quality education the cost would lead you to expect. The A grade of the Charter School shows that system gets much better results at \$4,700 lower per pupil costs.

But this is not primarily about money. Education is a fundamental right of every child. The best education possible is needed for tomorrow's futures.

**WHAT MAKES THE GRADE-A CHARTER SCHOOL. MORE EFFECTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL IN TEACHING FRANKLIN COUNTY STUDENTS?**

Even though their per-student expenditure is approximately \$4,700 less than at the county's Consolidated School, their educational piston has been better-tuned to successfully drive the Charter school's engine.

It is a crime that there has been no public debate by the elected School Board or the electorate to investigate and discuss the huge differences in those school outcomes. Why is the community willing to accept such poor results from their public school, even as they point with pride to the educational results at the Charter School?

**HOW CAN THE ANSWERS BE FOUND TO HELP ALL OUR FRANKLIN COUNTY SCHOOLS EARN THAT DESIRABLE AND VERY NECESSARY A GRADE FROM THE STATE?**

Our student populations deserve the best education our money can buy. What problem causes our Consolidated School to be rated C or worse? There is no shortage of money per pupil. We have an excellent physical plant. We have many good teachers. But our graduation rate is very low and our educational outcomes are very poor as compared to other counties.

These issues must be solved if we are to give our students a reason to hope, a reason to aspire to something more than traditional and low-income jobs. Economic development will not come to Franklin County without good schools. Our children will not be able to thrive and develop their futures here without those good jobs that demand a good education. Good-paying, reliable, future-building jobs will

not come to Franklin County without good educational results in all our schools, not just the one. Government can't hire everyone!

Poor educational results and the lack of good outcomes send families with children away from our Consolidated school - and our county - in ever-increasing numbers. They seek better learning, good jobs and a successful future for their family. This sound of exodus is a dangerous warning that our County's education engine is misfiring. We are one of the few counties in the state that now provides free meals year-round to needy children. We are thankful that children don't go hungry, but devastated that circumstances are so dire. Because our educational system is failing its customers, there are more and more needy children whose futures are sadly limited by the failing results of the Consolidated School outcomes.

The CCFC is willing to help coordinate and support anyone who wants to join with us to further investigate and work toward a better tomorrow. Alone, no one can change the system. The will to do so must come from parents and taxpayers who know that, instead of the Cadillac luxury education you pay for, children are being offered a Kia education instead.

**DO YOU AGREE THAT THE FRANKLIN COUNTY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL ENGINE NEEDS A MAJOR OVERHAUL?**

Call, email or write to us at CCFC and tell us how important you think a better education is for all Franklin County's children. Each of us in Franklin County has an important stake in the educational programs offered here. Whether we have children in our schools, whether we help to support those schools with our taxes or whether we see the schools as an incentive for companies to bring jobs here, we are all involved!