

Sumter County School District

Finance Department

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do I have a different taxable value for School taxes than my County taxes?

The property appraiser determines your home's taxable value. There are numerous tax exemptions, the most popular being the homestead exemption. By statute, only the first \$25,000 of homestead exemption applies to school taxes.

"Every person who owns and resides on real property in Florida on January 1 and makes the property his or her permanent residence is eligible to receive a homestead exemption up to \$50,000. The first \$25,000 applies to all property taxes, including school district taxes. The additional exemption up to \$25,000, applies to the assessed value between \$50,000 and \$75,000 and only to non-school taxes."

<http://dor.myflorida.com/dor/property/taxpayers/exemptions.html>

Please see the Department of Revenue's website for additional information.

<http://dor.myflorida.com/dor/property/taxpayers/exemptions.html>

2. Is the Villages Charter School a public school?

Yes. The Villages Charter School is a unique kind of school, statutorily defined as a Charter-in-the-Workplace (FS 1002.33.15) and is a public school of choice. This type of Charter school was created in statute to expand business partnerships, reduce crowding in traditional public schools and offset initial construction costs. The Villages Charter School provides a quality education to help attract/retain employees of the many businesses in the Villages that provide services for the residents of the Villages.

3. How do schools receive money?

Education funding has always been a combination of local, state and federal dollars. The state legislature is primarily responsible for ensuring that adequate funding for education is provided and that it is properly allocated. In 1973, the Florida Legislature enacted the **Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP)** as its method for funding public education in a manner that would **"guarantee to each student in the Florida public education system the availability of programs and services appropriate to his or her educational needs which are substantially equal to those available to any similar student notwithstanding geographic differences and varying local economic factors."** Although it has changed considerably over the years, Florida's FEFP has consistently been deemed to be a national model for funding fairness and equity. Also, it's important to note that the FEFP is only the centerpiece of the total funding for education. Funding for a variety of programs and services – such as school construction, workforce development and preschool programs – is provided in addition to the funds allocated through the FEFP, usually in the form of categorical revenues earmarked exclusively for those areas.

<http://www.fsba.org/userfiles/File/2009-10%20FEFP%20101.pdf>

4. How are the local property tax dollars determined?

The school tax revenue that is generated by the Sumter County tax base is divided into three parts:

1. REQUIRED LOCAL EFFORT (RLE) - Used for operating purposes and required by statute

The FEFP is funded with both State General Revenue (primarily sales tax) and Local Revenue derived from property tax. In order to receive state funding, school districts **MUST levy the local property tax millage set by the Legislature**. This is called the Required Local Effort and school boards are empowered to levy property taxes for this purpose.

Districts with higher property values will generate more funding than districts with low property values, but the amounts generated are supplemented by the state's contribution. If a district is property-poor, it will receive proportionally more state funding. Conversely, if a district is property-rich, it will receive proportionally less state funding. However the FEFP is designed to generate approximately the same operating revenue per student regardless of the property value. The difference is the source of the funds, not the amount.

1. DISCRETIONARY LOCAL EFFORT - Used for operating purposes

In addition to the RLE, districts may choose to levy an additional, non-voted property tax to add to that district's revenue.

2. DISCRETIONARY CAPITAL OUTLAY MILLAGE - Capital funds are to be used for the acquisition, leasing or construction of major capital facilities

The Legislature establishes the maximum millage that each district may levy. In the 2009 Legislative Session, the 1.75 millage authorized for Capital Outlay was reduced by .25 mills to 1.5 and the .25 millage shift was used to increase the Discretionary Local Effort from .498 to .748 mills.

5. Why do I have to pay school taxes? I don't have children in school.

Florida's constitution, with some statutory additions, determines the funding sources for education in Florida. Most states in the nation use property taxes due to the relative stability of the property tax base.