

# Hendry-Glades SUNDAY NEWS

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## Focus on graduates, enrollments

SPECIAL TO THE SUNDAY NEWS

LaBELLE, FL (Tuesday, Jan 30) — In the wake of a slump in agriculture reeling under Irma, fewer migrant students have predictably enrolled in Hendry schools, resulting in part in an estimated \$1 million less state funding expected to flow into the county in state per-pupil support.

Of 37 migrant students in the district, 32 or 86.5% graduated with a standard diploma.

The ESE graduation rate throughout Florida last year was 66%. “The picture doesn’t really look that good,” Schools Supt. Paul Puletti told the school board tonight. “Is it hopeless? No, it’s not hopeless.”

But he has a record of scouring relentlessly for places to cut funding, and given time, a \$1 million cut is possible without affecting quality of education, he thinks. Raises may be rethought.

### Graduation rates

Recently the State of Florida issued a list of school districts showing districtwide graduation rates. Hendry county ranked 27th.

Looking individually at the two high schools, a separate statistics emerges

Florida’s high school graduation rate, which had been 59.2% in 2003 before new accountability requirements and support programs went into effect, increased by only 1.6% last year, reaching a 14 year high of 82.3% for the state. Meanwhile, Hendry continued a three-year roll from a 67.5% in 2014 to an 84.4% in 2017.

“The state has been using a stronger, stricter metric to measure the graduation rate that came into being in 2011, the Federal Uniform Graduation Rate. . . . There has been over the years an upward trend in such scoring

showing progressively more is expected of students, noted Kelley.

### Rates among races & ethnicities

Florida’s graduation rates vary according to race and ethnicity, as everywhere in the United States.

Statistics showing very little difference in Hendry county between the comparative graduation rates among races and ethnicities. “We have less than 1% of a difference between the graduation rates of our African American graduates and our caucasian graduates,” Deputy Schools Supt. Lucinda Kelley stated. “We are really proud of that, because all over the world people are trying to close the achievement gap.”

It’s 86.5% for blacks, and 87.2% for whites.

The district rate is the total of every child, including those tangling with the law, the Academy students, ones hospitalized or home bound, of which the graduation rate is 84.4%, an all time high.

From the the statistics that go into the district rate of 84.4%, the individual high school rates show graduations for nearly 89%.

### Drop out rates

The Florida State Board of Education says 4% of students statewide drop out. At LaBelle High 5.8% dropped out, at Clewiston High 8.4% dropped out. “So this is one area that we want to focus on, not being above the state rate,” Deputy Supt. Lucinda Kelley noted.

All students entering ninth grade in Hendry County embark on one of two courses, a 24-credit program or an 18-credit academically challenging curriculum.

Whatever the choice, the grad-

uation requirements that exist at the time a student enters, with rare exceptions, don’t change as years go by. Students have to earn a cumulative 2.0 GPA on a 4 point scale.

They also have to pass the Florida Student Assessment test, Algebra I EOC, or participate in the fall, or earn a “concordant” score on the SAT, ACT or PERT, or receive a waiver for the assessment. Concordant scores get you into college. The school district has nothing to do with setting the level of a concordant score on an SAT, rather the state looks at Level 3s and what they are scoring on the SATs and ACTs, and draws a correlation that designates a concordant score. “This would be similar to what you’re taking with the FSA. That score changes. Every two years, you’ll see it bump up or down.”

Supt. Puletti added, “It’s like, the threes are here, and anybody higher . . . if we’re looking at the three, it’s the basic base score’s past, where is the concordant score on the SAT or ACT. And so, the state makes that determination. We don’t set those at all.”

### Cohort

The graduation class size, called a “cohort,” is the headcount of students entering ninth grade at the same time. The only changes allowed for that group are for a death of a student or a student relocating to verifiably enroll elsewhere in another school, and some new arrivals in ninth or tenth grades.

The ELL graduation rate throughout Florida last year was 67.3%. Hendry county’s rate is lower than that mark, but improving. Of 28 ELL students in Hendry county, 17 of them graduated with a standard diploma.

## Special-needs students, and those mixed up with the law are getting attention in Hendry County

SPECIAL TO THE SUNDAY NEWS

LaBELLE, FL (Tuesday, Jan 30) — Deputy Schools Supt. Lucinda Kelley reported tonight that of Hendry county’s 62 students with disabilities, 72.6% graduated in 2017 with a standard diploma.

Since 2013, students with disabilities in Florida have received high school diplomas, and Hendry County’s requirements have been modified, as individual cases allow, according to individual assessments, providing options for them in the district’s standard 24-credit program.

All students entering ninth grade in Hendry County embark on one of two courses, a 24-credit program or an 18-credit academically challenging curriculum.

Requirements for disabilities students are actually modified rather rarely — there were none this year — using a Florida Alternate Assessment test which is available for students who qual-

ify. The course may be designed at the start for a student with disabilities, providing special “access points” for teaching wherever a place is appropriate, and generally allowing work towards standards on the same general curriculum at the special needs’ student’s own level to earn a standard diploma.

### Despite being mixed up with the law

Two graduates last year were in the Hendry County Jail.

Kids arrested and spending time in jail remain part of the graduating class nevertheless. “The state doesn’t want those kids to be throwaways or lost. They want someone to be responsible for them. There are a lot of very stringent guidelines to this, and a lot of reporting,” Kelly noted.

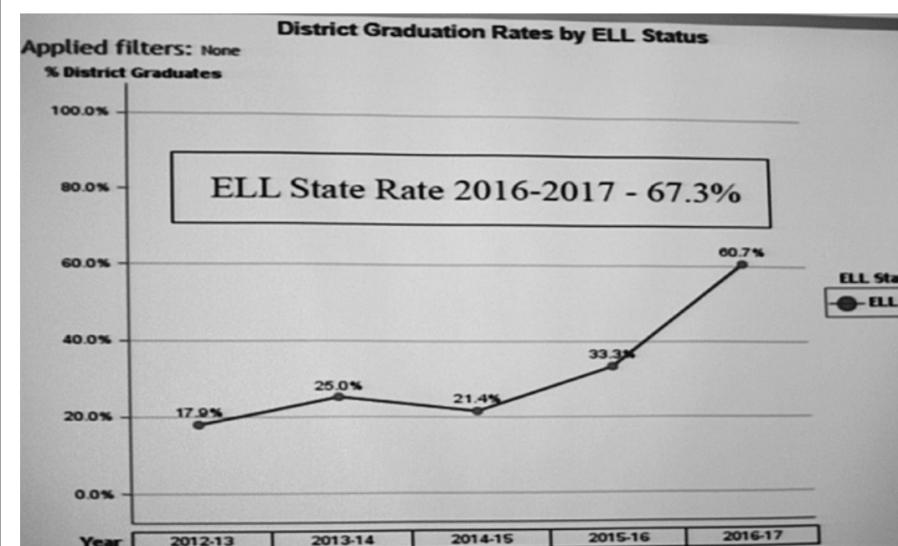
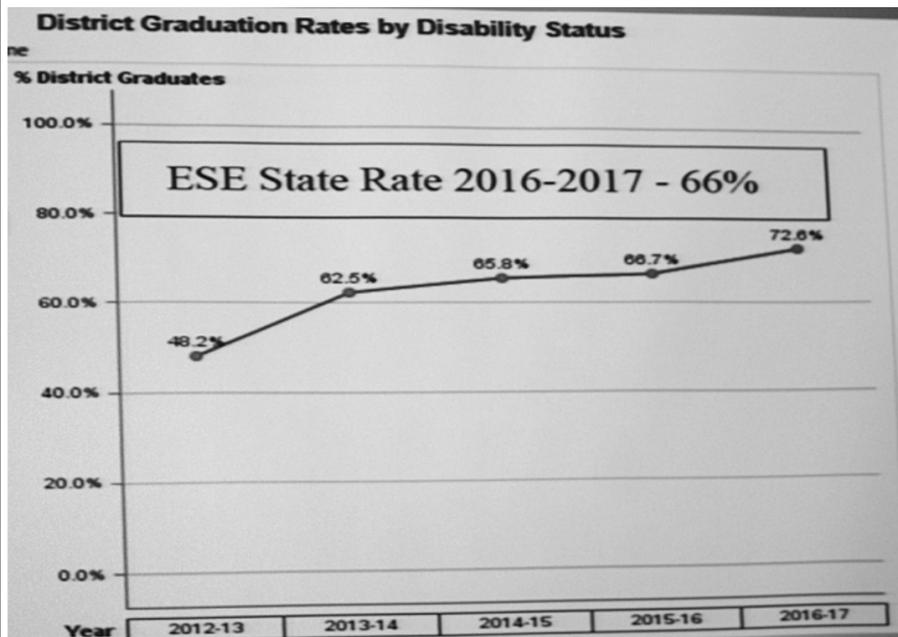
“Their reason, in a nutshell,” Kelley said, is that when a kid is remanded nine months into the

Justice system or corrections, when they come back, “you’re very anxious to get them back in school, and caught back up.”

**HGSN: How can you be responsible for a kid who’s off in jail someplace?”**

Kelley: “It is the rule, and we do have to comply with it. We really try to make sure we get those kids connected back somewhere when they return to us.”

Schools Supt. Paul Puletti: “The idea is that these students are coming back at some point. That’s the whole point, and we take them and plug the holes and figure out through our labs, or whatever, how to plug that hole and get him or her caught up with the others. . . . You may have sometimes heard that we have sent teachers to the Hendry County jail so that we might keep them going.”



LHS: Cohort 258 CHS: Cohort 214  
LHS: 126 FSA, 90 Concordant, 15 Waivers  
CHS: 126 FSA, 50 Concordant, 11 Waivers

**Total of 231 Graduates— LHS**  
**Total of 187 Graduates— CHS**

*These students all received Standard Diplomas from Hendry District Schools*

## Hendry District Rates:

- 2012-13 – 67.8 %
- 2013-14 – 67.5 %
- 2014-15 – 76.8 %
- 2015-16 – 78.1 %
- 2016-17 – 84.4 %

## School board foundation set free

SPECIAL TO THE SUNDAY NEWS

LaBELLE, FL (Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2018) — Hendry County’s Board of Education, on recommendation from Schools Supt. Paul Puletti, changed the status of the district’s Education Foundation to that of an independent body, rather than continue its affiliation with the school district, thus freeing it

from the burden of complying with government Sunshine Law obligations. Much of the foundation’s contribution has been in the area of presenting the annual Golden Apple Honors dinner, and those responsibilities and the much work it entails, will remain the responsibility of the school district. The action granting independence came at the founda-

## ‘Vietnam vets observance in LaBelle

On Saturday, March 3rd, at 9am, the American Legion Post 130 is asking the Community to come out to the Fort Denaud Cemetery to “Welcome Home” the surviving Vietnam Veterans who were ambushed 50 years ago and lost half of their platoon in eight minutes. Posters and markers will be avail-

able to personalize your “Welcome Home” message, and you are free to bring your own. Please share this and help us get this word out to all our Vietnam Veterans, wherever they may be, and invite them to this event, to give them the Welcome Home they did not receive 50 years ago. — Joe Thomas, LaBelle

## Busted for holding meth is new teacher

SPECIAL TO THE SUNDAY NEWS

LaBELLE, FL (Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2018) — Charged with a third degree felony possession of methamphetamine early today was a 30-year-old LaBellian with a promising career in teaching, Patricia Danielle Pack of 4545 Ft. Keis Ave, LaBelle.

She was today suspended from her teaching assignment at LaBelle High, then submitted her resignation.

She also received a first degree misdemeanor charge in connec-

tion with possession of marijuana.

It all took place shortly before midnight last night when the car she was in with two males was observed sloppily parked in the parking lot of a busy LaBelle downtown fast food restaurant. An officer stopped to talk to the driver, Michael J. Daily, 36, of 890 “B” Road, LaBelle, about his parking. Daily then opened the car door to get his license releasing the smell of marijuana smoke apparent. The license had been

suspended, and daily was charged with driving while license suspended.

The car was searched and a weapons check was made of the purse being carried by Pack, who sat in the front passenger seat, near a three-inch marijuana cigarette that later tested positive for THC. There was found a small baggie containing white powder that later tested positive for methamphetamine.