

Thumbs up, thumbs down: Winners, losers in the news

FLORIDA TODAY editorial staff 8:06 a.m. EDT July 31, 2015

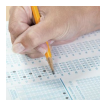


(Photo: Getty Images/iStockphoto)

[Who didn't do their homework? \(/story/news/education/2015/07/23/teachers-get-bonus-based-sat-act-scores/30575687/\)](#)

Thumbs down to the Florida Legislature for its plan to give qualifying teachers up to \$10,000 per year through "Florida's Best and Brightest Scholarship Program." Get out your No. 2 pencil and list all the problems with this plan, meant to attract and retain the smartest educators. The plan allows teachers rated "highly effective" to qualify for the bonus if they scored in the 80th percentile when they took their ACT or SAT test and new teachers with high test scores to qualify upon earning that highly effective rating. Educators were already insulted when Florida stopped pay bumps for advanced degrees. It's not been proved, according to many

experts, that scores on a standardized test are a predictor of future success at any job — and many highly regarded universities are doing away with ACT and SAT requirements. Teachers across Florida simply want to be evaluated and compensated fairly. This program just doesn't make the grade.



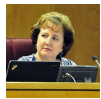
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[Teachers could get \\$10K bonus based on SAT, ACT scores](#)

[\(http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/education/2015/07/23/teachers-get-bonus-based-sat-act-scores/30575687/\)](http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/education/2015/07/23/teachers-get-bonus-based-sat-act-scores/30575687/)

[Calling the cops on software deal \(/story/news/local/2015/07/27/kneessy-asks-law-enforcement-review-software-deal/30753299/\)](#)

Thumbs up to School Board Chairwoman Amy Kneessy, who took the strongest possible step to find answers regarding the district's controversial \$8 million purchase of business software. Two years after the purchase, the software meant to run payroll, contract and financial programs does not yet function. Yet district officials have paid millions to the vendor for a product not yet "delivered" — something auditors deemed improper. To find out why and stop any potentially illegal activity, Kneessy met with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Brevard Sheriff's Office and asked them to investigate. The FDLE confirmed it is on the case.



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[Authorities asked to review Brevard Schools software deal](#)

[\(http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/local/2015/07/27/kneessy-asks-law-enforcement-review-software-deal/30753299/\)](http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/local/2015/07/27/kneessy-asks-law-enforcement-review-software-deal/30753299/)

Privatized health care a flop?

Thumbs down to HMOs that operate Florida's privatized Medicaid program for pushing for a 12 percent statewide rate hike, which would wipe out any savings over traditional, dysfunctional Medicaid. In the system, Florida offers poor residents a choice of private insurance plans, then pays their premiums. Health insurers then assume responsibility for containing costs and preventing fraud. It seemed to be working — state costs stayed flat while health outcomes improved. The Florida Senate and key business groups see it as a fiscally responsible way to expand Medicaid to 800,000 uninsured people and cover hospitals' costs for caring for the poor. The health plans, however, say they lost \$540 million last year, due to higher drug costs and the higher reimbursement rates they pay providers. Their rate request demands state scrutiny.

[Palm Bay on road to repairs \(/story/news/local/2015/07/29/palm-bay-road-maintenance-fund-may-triple-million/30825481/\)](#)

Thumbs up to news that Palm Bay's annual road maintenance budget may triple, going from \$675,571 to \$3 million. Anyone who's driven in the city more than a few times knows how patch-worked, potholed or barely-there some of the roadways are in Brevard's biggest city. "Fix our roads first" has become a battle cry for many residents who'd rather see funds go to road repair than most any other expenditure. With an unfunded \$162 million road-repair backlog covering 524 miles of fast-fading streets, there's still a long way to go. "But this is only the beginning. This is the start," said City Manager Gregg Lynk.



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[Palm Bay road maintenance fund may triple to \\$3 million](#)

[Give missing teens' parents a break \(/story/news/local/2015/07/31/after-week--searching-no-sign--boys-lost--sea/30924733/\)](/story/news/local/2015/07/31/after-week--searching-no-sign--boys-lost--sea/30924733/)

Thumbs down to online commenters worldwide who have heaped blame on the parents of two Florida teens missing at sea since July 24. The families of avid boaters Austin Stephanos and Perry Cohen, both 14, are surely distraught, confronted by the possible loss of their children. Who hasn't known good moms and dads whose good kids have made ill-advised, even fatal, mistakes in judgment? As their boat was found with no trace of the boys and hope for their rescue fades, the last thing their families need is to be chastised by strangers through cruddy Internet shaming.



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[After week of searching, no sign of boys lost at sea](#)

<http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/local/2015/07/31/after-week--searching-no-sign--boys-lost--sea/30924733/>

[New coach a true game-changer \(/story/sports/nfl/cardinals/2015/07/28/arizona-cardinals-introduce-jen-welter-nfl-first-female-coach/30792551/\)](/story/sports/nfl/cardinals/2015/07/28/arizona-cardinals-introduce-jen-welter-nfl-first-female-coach/30792551/)

Thumbs up to the Arizona Cardinals, who announced on Monday the hiring of Jen Welter to the team's coaching staff, the first woman to hold such a position in the National Football League. Welter will work with the Cardinals' inside linebackers. She joins a short list of women coaches in professional sports, including Becky Hammon, an assistant coach with the San Antonio Spurs of the National Basketball Association. This month, Hammons led the Spurs to a summer league title. Welter joins another pioneer in the NFL — Sarah Thomas, who is the league's first female referee. She will be a line judge for the upcoming season.



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[Arizona Cardinals make history with introduction of Jen Welter](#)

<http://www.floridatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/cardinals/2015/07/28/arizona-cardinals-introduce-jen-welter-nfl-first-female-coach/30792551/>

[Schools squeezing out coaches? \(/story/sports/high-school/2015/07/23/willcox-resigns-bayside-football/30576467/\)](/story/sports/high-school/2015/07/23/willcox-resigns-bayside-football/30576467/)

Thumbs down to Bayside High School, which just lost its head football coach for the third summer in a row. Bobby Willcox resigned because he couldn't get a full-time teaching job on campus, where coaching football itself is nearly a full-time job. His departure seems to be symptomatic of something bigger, we fear. If it isn't the lack of salaried work for coaches, who earn a tiny stipend, it's too much — as coaches have been pressed along with the rest of Brevard faculty to teach six periods instead of five, and in more substantial subjects. Who cares about coaches? You should. Taxpayers spend almost nothing on sports because coaches coordinate boosters to fund-raise for uniforms and gear. And ticket revenue from football games fund sports such as tennis and wrestling that don't draw crowds.



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[Willcox resigns from Bayside football](#)

<http://www.floridatoday.com/story/sports/high-school/2015/07/23/willcox-resigns-bayside-football/30576467/>

[Animal's trophy killing disgusting \(/story/news/nation-now/2015/07/30/federal-wildlife-officials-walter-palmer/30891753/\)](/story/news/nation-now/2015/07/30/federal-wildlife-officials-walter-palmer/30891753/)

Thumbs down to Walter Palmer, the Minnesota dentist and trophy hunter who has admitted to killing Cecil, a protected lion and one of the most famous animals at Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force alleges Palmer and hired guides lured Cecil off park land. Palmer shot the animal with a crossbow. Then, they tracked Cecil for 40 hours before Palmer used a gun to finish off the black-maned lion. The guides were arrested on poaching charges and Palmer could face charges, too. Whatever your feelings on big-money trophy hunting, even many hunters agree the manner in which this "hunt" took place, and Cecil's grisly death, are sickening. In 2008, Palmer pleaded guilty on federal charges related to the poaching of a black bear in Wisconsin. That revelation makes Palmer's claim that he regrets killing the beloved Cecil ring even more hollow than it did before.



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[Feds open investigation into Cecil the lion's death](#)

Feeling less bloated already

Thumbs up to health researchers at Harvard University for debunking the myth that people need to drink eight tall glasses of water a day. Where that idea came from is unclear. But a study reported in the *Harvard Health Letter* concluded that 30 to 50 ounces of fluid intake a day is ideal. That works out to four to six small glasses a day. And the liquid doesn't have to be water.

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27:51



[Video: Matt Reed talks Pluto](/videos/opinion/3230448659001/4367585576/)
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[Video: Matt Reed talks space, sharks with Brevard tourism director](/videos/opinion/3230448659001/4332564090/)
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July 31, 2015, 4:24 p.m.



Suspect in airport mishap refused sobriety test, documents show

[\(/story/news/local/2015/07/31/suspect-airport-mishap-refused-sobriety-test-documents-show/30948813/\)]((/story/news/local/2015/07/31/suspect-airport-mishap-refused-sobriety-test-documents-show/30948813/))

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July 31, 2015, 3:10 p.m.



Zimbabwe: American lion killer's extradition being sought

[\(/story/news/local/2015/07/31/zimbabwe-american-lion-killers-extradition-sought/30970295/\)]((/story/news/local/2015/07/31/zimbabwe-american-lion-killers-extradition-sought/30970295/))

[\(/story/news/local/2015/07/31/zimbabwe-american-lion-killers-extradition-sought/30970295/\)]((/story/news/local/2015/07/31/zimbabwe-american-lion-killers-extradition-sought/30970295/))

July 31, 2015, 8:29 p.m.

