



Legislative Update: Establishing Legislative Priorities **March 4, 2019**

The Florida Legislative Session begins on Tuesday, March 5, 2019. It will convene for 60 days until May 3, 2019. DTU and FEA will advocate for and shine a light on the needs of public education students and employees.

Why We Must Act Now:

Public education is at a crisis point. Too many of our children...Florida's future... are not receiving the educational opportunities promised to them by the State. Over the past 20 years, public education funds have been systematically drained from our public schools and diverted into private unaccountable companies. This has created a burden on public schools that has helped to drive educators from the profession and create an unprecedented teacher shortage. The protections stripped from educators that allowed them to advocate for their students without fear of reprisal needs to be restored.

Our state invests less in our public school students now than prior to the recession of 2007. Florida has the 7th largest economy in the country and yet Florida ranks 42nd in total education spending per pupil and 46th in school staff salaries per pupil. No other state collects less to support public schools than does Florida. Florida is not a poor state, but it treats its public schools poorly. We can do better. It is essential that we have a state budget with the potential to move all Florida students forward.

Legislative Priorities:

1. Student Success:

Safe, Healthy and Effective Environment

- Ensure campuses (Pre-K through higher education) are secure, safe, and well maintained and are able to provide student and family supports as well as behavioral and disciplinary interventions.
- Provide support for expanded wrap around services and community schools.
- Honor the intent of the voters to eliminate overcrowded classrooms as expressed in the 2000 class size constitutional amendment.
- Provide planning time and enhanced funding for all turnaround schools including community engagement and wraparound services.

Supports for Learning

- Maximize flexibility and support for instruction in schools with high poverty student populations.
- Prioritize student learning over high stakes testing including alternative assessment (e.g. portfolios, projects and performance assessments), formative assessments and rapid return of results from low stakes assessments.
- Expand upon 2017 efforts to provide timely and specific feedback on student learning and growth throughout the school year to teachers and parents and specific, actionable feedback on student growth before the next school year.
- Ensure transparent teacher evaluation and feedback is focused on improving effective teaching and learning strategies.
- Ensure education staff professionals have up-to-date training on the best practices for instructional support and health and safety of students in our schools

2. Investment in Public Schools:

Fairness in Funding

- Prioritize competitive salaries, benefits, and pay raises that count toward retirement to attract and retain highest quality teachers and education staff professionals and oppose short-sighted bonus programs such as the Best & Brightest Scholarship.
- Capture increases in property value through the "Required Local Effort" and end the practice of rolling back the RLE that keeps the previous year's funding levels the same and puts more pressure on local districts to make up the difference.
- Increase the per pupil funding allocation to at least the national average.

- Ensure students and schools with greatest deficits receive enhanced support.
- Fully fund the costs associated with legislative mandates to include eliminating overcrowded classrooms, extended school day and year, school improvement and turnaround efforts, new teacher mentoring and safe transportation.
- Align funding of capital projects to needs assessments in local districts for maintenance, renovation and new construction.
- Increase the Safe Schools allocation to meet the needs of neighborhood schools and fully fund security guards at every school, in addition to and not at the expense of other school priorities.

Public Trust

- Honor the constitutional authority of elected local school boards to supervise all schools in the school district.
- Increase public engagement in all schools through staff, parents and community representation on school advisory councils, school improvement teams, open public hearings, meetings and records.
- Hold all schools receiving public funds (including charter and private schools) to the same high standards for providing safe facilities, well-qualified staff and high-quality curriculum and instruction.

3. Recruitment and Retention:

Staff Quality

- Incentivize retention in the profession with extended and multi-year contracts after a probationary period.
- Address teacher shortage and student debt through incentives such as loan-forgiveness, grants, scholarships and support for pre-service teacher programs.
- Protect Florida's existing retirement system and all current retirees and fully vested employee benefits and maintain the defined benefit and defined contribution options for all education employees.
- Strengthen alternative certification preparation to require instruction and supervised practice before a new teacher assumes responsibility for student instruction.
- Provide funding and time for structured mentoring support of new teachers.
- Design streamlined certification pathways and incentives for instructional aides to become teachers.
- Provide meaningful professional development for instructional and non-instructional professionals.
- Grant fee waivers along with tuition waivers to Graduate Assistants and university employees.

Member Action Alert:

For the next 60 days, members should be involved in some action:

Each Monday During the Session: Wear Red for Ed

To stay up to date on the Legislative session see below:

Stay Up-to-Date This Legislative Session

Lots of decisions will be made in Tallahassee during the legislative session that can impact your job, your retirement, your students and your school. DTU will email you weekly legislative updates, but to stay on top of the issues you can also:

- » Sign up for email Action Alerts by going to:
tinyurl.com/FEATakeAction
 - » Follow FEA on Twitter:
@Floridaaea
 - » Like FEA's Facebook Page and watch for quick session updates:
Facebook.com/floridaea
 - » Follow FEA on Instagram:
@Florida_ea
- » Sign up for Action Alert texts:
Send feaactivist to 31996
 - » Visit our newly designed Legislative Session webpage:
FEAweb.org/session
 - » Sign up to receive the weekly FEA Frontline Report:
tinyurl.com/Frontline2019



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