



2024 Legislative Update

December 2023

A Brief Recap of the Week

This week was light on legislation and full of presentations. Only one bill was heard in an education committee this week: a bill to rename Tallahassee Community College to Tallahassee State College.

The most eventful part of the week took place on Tuesday nearly 500 miles away from Tallahassee when Gov. DeSantis visited a charter school to announce his [budget recommendations for the 2024-25 fiscal year](#). This was followed by a Senate Education Committee meeting on Wednesday where Commissioner Manny Diaz presented the [education portion of the budget proposal](#) and took questions from the committee. Read below for more details.

Governor DeSantis' Budget Proposal

Governor DeSantis suggested that Florida's teachers and staff receive a \$1000 raise for the upcoming year. The proposed increase will cement the fact that Florida instructional personnel will remain among the lowest paid in the nation even though the Governor suggested there would be a \$16 billion dollar Florida surplus.

As you may have already heard, Governor DeSantis announced his proposed per-student-funding of \$8841 as "historic" and the "highest ever." When adjusted for inflation, however, DeSantis' most recent budget proposal spends \$500 less per student than the budget he first proposed back in 2019. If it feels like you are being asked to do more with less, it is because you are.

The good news is that the governor's budget proposal is just that, a proposal. It is up to the Legislature to craft a budget. In previous years we have seen the final budget looks much different from what the governor initially proposed. We'll fight once again to make sure there is enough funding in the education budget to make sure every educator is paid the professional salary they deserve.

Senate Education Appropriations Committee Meeting

When Manny Diaz presented Governor DeSantis' proposed budget to the Senate Education Appropriations Committee, he touted the teacher salary increase allocation and wanted the committee to believe that Governor DeSantis has made increasing teacher pay a priority. The reality is that Florida's teachers are in the bottom five in the nation in average teacher salary.

We appreciate Senator Tracie Davis (D-Jacksonville) for pushing back and asking Diaz why this proposed budget keeps Florida's teachers in the bottom five in the nation in average teacher salary. Diaz gave a somewhat incoherent response ([you can watch it here](#)) in which he blamed school districts and collective bargaining for salaries being so low.

It may or may not be the case that some school districts around the state are keeping their fund balances unnecessarily high when those funds could be used to increase salaries and benefits for employees. That is why our local unions are so important as they fight to get the best raises possible. Let's not miss the big picture: in 2006-07 Florida's teachers were 28 in the nation in average teacher salary. When adjusted for inflation, per-student spending that year was nearly \$1,500 more per student than in Governor DeSantis' proposed budget. For each educator in Florida to be paid what they deserve, Florida's politicians must prioritize funding public schools. That is why FEA is calling for \$2.5 billion in new education funding each year for the next seven years. When that happens, Florida's teachers will move from the bottom five in the nation in average teacher salary to the top ten.

We also appreciate Senator Corey Simon (R-Tallahassee) for asking about raises for education staff professionals. Like the answer about teacher salaries, this question

ignored the reality that Florida's schools are near the bottom in the nation in per-student spending.

Looking Ahead

Next week will be the final interim committee week before session starts in January. Be sure to stay tuned to [FEA's legislative webpage](#) for all the latest information regarding the 2024 legislative session.

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