



SESSION FOCUS

Six Critical Priorities

Strong public schools are the heartbeat of our communities. From the joy and energy of an elementary school cafeteria at lunchtime, to the camaraderie of sharing a school bus ride, to Friday night football with the grandeur of a high school marching band - school is where childhood happens. Our public schools are where children's imaginations are sparked, where lifelong lessons are learned and where students gain the skills they need to thrive as they transition to adulthood. **Our public schools are the best places to inspire students' natural curiosity and their desire to learn.** When we work together, we can build the world-class education system that we dream of. By ensuring that resources are available, the Florida Legislature can demonstrate its commitment to providing every child with the education they deserve, regardless of race, income or ZIP code.

1. **Salary** and healthcare benefits for all educators must be competitive with the top ten states nationwide.
2. **Provide** qualified, experienced teachers the opportunity to earn long-term contracts.
3. **Protect** academic freedom for all our students and teachers in K-12, state colleges and universities.
4. **Enhance** the Florida Retirement System without burdening employees with additional costs.
5. **Prioritize** teacher-led assessments and learning over state-mandated standardized tests.
6. **Respect** the rights of people to make decisions locally.



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Fighting for a Better Life

Members of the Florida Education Association work hard to ensure our public schools are places where students' imaginations can soar, and **each and every student is provided the tools and lessons to make their dreams come true.**

Unfortunately, rather than working with the teachers and education staff professionals who educate Florida's children to make that dream a reality, anti-public education politicians have tried to silence our collective voice. But those politicians who oppose the rights of teachers and staff to have a union are finding out their plan to attack us is failing. Already, more than 100,000 educators have made the switch from payroll deduction to another form of dues payment.

What the politicians don't understand is that educators have had enough; **we are coming together to fight for a better life for our students and ourselves.** We stand united to ensure lawmakers will

live up to their mandate in the Florida Constitution that every student has a right to a "high quality system of free public schools." We are in every ZIP code in Florida and we are speaking with one voice to say that, **after two decades of disinvestment in public schools, we are ushering in a decade of progress.**

We Believe:

Florida's neighborhood public school students deserve: to attend schools that are fully staffed with highly qualified and certified teachers; schools with small class sizes that allow for one-on-one attention; schools that are safe and healthy; schools with full-time registered nurses, counselors, and mental health professionals; schools that focus on real learning and authentic assessment; schools where students' unique needs are met and every student excels, no matter their race, income, ZIP code or ability.

We are calling on lawmakers to:

- » **Expand** the financial investments in our schools and allocate sufficient funds to fairly compensate all school employees. By investing just \$1,000 more per student each year into the Florida Education Finance Program, we can ensure our students have access to a world class public education and get one step closer to moving Florida's teacher salary ranking into the top 10 instead of the current #50 ranking.
- » **Fully fund** Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) so every school is free of mold, every water fountain is free of lead, and every school has working air-conditioning and proper ventilation.
- » **Ensure** that students and educators are kept safe and learning progress continues.
- » **Help** address our educator shortage by allowing qualified, experienced teachers to earn multi-year contracts.
- » **Protect** academic freedom for all students and teachers in PreK-12, state colleges and universities.
- » **Waive fees** for certification renewals, add-on certifications and certification tests for teachers and those in teacher preparation programs.
- » **Promote** and fund pathways to teacher licensure for current education staff professionals at no cost to the educator.
- » **Continue** extended DROP program to all educators.
- » **Restore** previous Cost of Living Adjustments for current and future retirees.
- » **Fund** a full-day PreK program in "opportunity zones" of high poverty.
- » **Revise** statutes related to Required Local Effort to maintain current taxation rates.
- » **Address** the housing and property insurance crisis in Florida that is keeping families, teachers and students priced out of living where they work or attend school.
- » **Prioritize** developmentally appropriate, teacher-led assessments and learning over mandated standardized tests.
- » **Respect** the rights of people to make decisions locally.
- » **Respect** the constitutionally protected right to collective bargaining.
- » **Safeguard families** from unaccountable private and charter schools that profit off our children.