



FLORIDA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION 2020 ACTION AGENDA

*Florida's abysmal record on education has resulted in over a decade of neglect for our schools and our children. After years of hurtful policies and neglect, we are calling for a **Decade of Progress** for Florida's Public Schools.*

FACTS:

- Florida ranks 43rd in the nation in per-student expenditures.
- Florida ranks 46th in the nation in teacher pay — more than **\$12,000 behind the national average**.
- Florida has nearly 50,000 education staff professionals who earn a wage below the national poverty level for a family of four.
- Florida's base student allocation (BSA) has only increased by \$116 or 2.8% since the 2007-08 school year.
- Florida's overall per-student funding has only increased by \$369 or 5% since the 2007-08 school year.
- The average cost of living has increased by 21.7% between 2008 and 2019.
- In 2014-15 the millage rate for the required local effort (RLE) was 5.183. In 2019-20 the millage rate for the required local effort is 3.927, handicapping school districts' ability to pay for educational needs.
- Florida began the 2019-2020 school year with more than 3,500 teacher vacancies. More than **300,000 students** started the school year without a full-time, certified teacher in the classroom.
- Florida spends **half the national average** on funding per full-time university student.
- Graduate assistants in our universities teach up to 30% of undergraduate courses but pay up to 25% of their teaching stipends on university fees.

VISION:

- Over the next decade, Florida will be in the **TOP 10** in the nation in per-student funding.
- Over the next decade, Florida will be in the **TOP 10** in the nation in teacher pay.
- Over the next decade, Florida will be in the **TOP 10** in the nation in education staff professional pay.
- Over the next decade, Florida will **lead the nation** in a system of higher education that recognizes and values faculty and graduate assistant contributions to the work of our colleges and universities.

THE 2020 LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

- The Decade of Progress is a 10-year investment of \$22 billion in education funding through 2030.
- Lawmakers must make a serious down payment in 2020. An investment of **\$2.4 billion represents a 10% increase in per-student funding**. While that sounds like a lot, it will only move Florida up four spots in the national rankings.
- This investment would **increase per-student funding by \$767, of which at least \$614 must go to base student allocation**, the flexible money under local district control.
- This investment would allow for **across-the-board pay increases of 10% for every public school employee in Florida** — teachers, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, secretaries, librarians, social workers, cafeteria workers, etc.
- This investment will restore electives including **art, music and drama**. It will provide additional funding for **lab materials**, so students don't just read about STEM, but also can engage in it.
- This investment will ensure students have **increased access to mental health services** — school counselors, social workers and school psychologists will be more readily available to assist struggling students and families.
- This investment would allow for Florida's districts to **better address struggling schools** that have suffered under decades of underfunding.



FLORIDA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION Legislative Policy Agenda

The Florida Education Association advocates for a Pre-K through 20 education system in Florida that prepares students for 21st century citizenship and the workplace, protects taxpayer investments, and treats educators and education staff professionals with respect and dignity. We believe the path to achieving a world-class education system is grounded in three principles: investment in our neighborhood public schools, student success, and recruitment and retention of educators. All three of these principles boil down to one underlying message: Fund Our Future.

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 wraparound 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

Investment in Public Schools

Fairness in Funding

- Prioritize competitive salaries, benefits and pay raises that count toward retirement to attract and retain the highest quality teachers and education staff professionals, and oppose bonus schemes such as Best & Brightest, which provide one-time awards that are taxed higher than salaries and do not count toward retirement.
- Capture increases in property value for all properties, not just new builds, through the required local effort and end the practice of rolling back the RLE that keeps the previous year's funding levels the same, putting 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 ensure every district has the ability to provide adequate school security for every campus.
- Increase state funding for higher education institutions to keep up with demand and fund actual enrollment.

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, parent 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.

Retain and Recruit

Staff Quality

- Incentivize retention in the teaching profession by restoring extended and multi-year contracts for staff who meet or exceed job performance 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 (regular class) 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.