

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2023 Legislative Session

May 5, 2023

A Brief Recap of the Week

If you are subscribed to Frontline, you are likely already registered to vote, but please take just a few moments to [confirm your voter registration status](#). Then, talk with your family, friends and colleagues and make sure they are registered to vote as well. We must hold legislators accountable for their actions this session and the best way to do that is at the ballot box.

- Thanks!
- Budget Update
- Policy Update

Read below to find out more.

Thanks!

For the past eight weeks, we ended the Frontline report by thanking the locals who sent members up to Tallahassee to engage with legislators and the legislative process. On the final Frontline of session, we want to start with offering our gratitude. Over these past nine weeks, FEA members have sent more than 200,000 emails to legislators, made nearly 1,000 phone calls and gone on countless in-person visits. This level of engagement is almost double that of the last legislative session.

The work to make sure every educator in Florida is treated with respect and paid fairly and that every child in Florida has the education they deserve must be year-round work. Even as the 2023 legislative session has come to a close, it is vital that educators and activists like you keep engaging your local legislators. If you aren't sure where to start, [reach out to your local president](#), and they will be glad to help you learn how you can be an education advocate all year long.

Budget Update

For PreK-12 public schools, the bottom line of the budget is that per pupil spending will be \$8,648.11 for the 2023-24 school year. This will keep Florida [near the bottom in the nation](#) in per-student funding. When adjusted for inflation, next year's funding is approximately \$350 less per student than the first budget Gov. DeSantis signed, in 2019.

You can find the complete Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) for 2023-24 [here](#). At first glance you might notice what seems like a very significant increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA). For years we have been fighting for money in the BSA because these are traditionally flexible dollars that can be used for things like salary and health insurance.

However, the increase in the BSA this year is largely smoke and mirrors. The increase is primarily due to the funding of several categoricals have been moved into the base student allocation. For example, [in the current school year FEFP](#) there is a categorical for the instructional materials allocation of roughly \$250 million. The new budget places that funding (along with five other categoricals) into the BSA. School districts, of course, still have to pay for instructional materials even if the funding has been shifted from a categorical to the BSA.

While the strings attached to the BSA increase mean that there is far less flexibility than is truly needed, we should not make a fatalistic assumption that there will be no flexibility. Instead, this is a great opportunity to remind our members and potential members of the importance of unions and collective bargaining. When negotiating over salary and benefits for the 2023-24 school year, we have an obligation to push school districts for maximum flexibility to ensure these funds are used in the best interest of students and educators.

We'll go into much more detail on the budget in the End of Session report that will be emailed to you and placed on our website within the next few weeks. But know that as you hear legislators come back home and brag about "historic budget increases," their rhetoric doesn't match reality.

Legislators chose to keep Florida's per-student funding near the bottom in the nation, they chose to make sure teacher pay stays near the bottom in the nation, and they made these choices while also placing \$10 billion in reserves. Florida's children deserve legislators who are committed to our state being top in the nation in per-student funding, and so do Florida's educators. So, we'll remind you again to [confirm your voter registration status](#) and ask your friends and colleagues to do the same.

Policy Update

Unlike the last few legislative sessions, much of the education policy was wrapped up early this year with just a few education bills to be voted upon in the last week of session. That being said, the bills that did pass this week continue the theme we've seen all session long of undermining public education and educators' freedom to teach along with students' freedom to learn and to see themselves in the books they read.

- SB 266 is the bill that attacks the freedom of Florida's higher education students to learn and faculty's rights to teach. The United Faculty of Florida says this bill "[will cause irreversible harm to Florida's higher education system.](#)" It passed the House this Wednesday on a vote of [81-34](#) and is ready for Gov. DeSantis' signature.
- [HB 1069](#) is the bill that makes it easier for anyone in Florida to ban books from schools and classrooms whether they have a child in school or not, restricts inclusive pronoun usage, and requires state approval for all sex ed materials. The bill passed the Senate this Wednesday on a vote of [28-12](#) and is ready for Gov. DeSantis' signature.
- [HB 1259](#) is the bill that funds capital expenses such as building repair and maintenance for privately owned charter schools, taking capital funding away from neighborhood public schools. The bill passed the Senate this Thursday on a final vote of [28-12](#) and is ready for Gov. DeSantis' signature.
- SB 256, as you likely already know, is the bill that bans payroll deductions for union dues, restricts your freedom to join your union, forces local unions to have costly audits and enshrines minority rule into law by requiring 60 percent union membership density. Despite having passed both chambers more than a week ago, the bill has not yet been sent to Gov. DeSantis for his signature. We'll let you know when he does sign it.

Be on the lookout for another email from us in the coming weeks where we'll share FEA's End of Session report, which will have a much more comprehensive look at policies that passed and failed to pass this legislative session.

How You Can Stay Involved Year-Round

Our advocacy doesn't end with the session! Visit the [FEA website](#) to stay current on the issues facing our unions and sign up for action alerts by texting “**edactivist**” to 22394.

Questions? Call PPA at 850-224-2078.

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