

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2025 Legislative Session

February 7, 2025

A quick review of the week

This week legislators and the governor were largely focused on the budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year. With only two committee weeks left before session begins, things are heating up—literally and metaphorically—in Tallahassee.

Read on to learn more about:

- Gov. DeSantis' desire to keep Florida teachers the worst paid in the country,
- Superintendents getting honest about funding and vouchers, and
- Ensuring safe and welcoming schools for every child, no exceptions.

Let Them Eat Cake

Gov. DeSantis channeled his inner Marie Antoinette this week when he unveiled his budget proposal. When adjusted for inflation, his proposal provides \$200 less per student than the first budget he signed into law as governor. His proposed salary increase for teachers doesn't move the needle. Instead, it will keep Florida's teachers among the worst paid in the nation while spending more than twice as much on private school vouchers than on raises for teachers. And, for no apparent reason other than sheer cruelty, his proposed budget reduces funding for special needs students by nearly \$170 million. For more details on his proposed budget, you can check out our [press release](#).

It is important to keep in mind that the proposed budget is just that, a proposal. It is legislators who ultimately craft the state's budget. We must hold them accountable for ensuring that our schools and communities have the resources they need to thrive. To help in those efforts, we're collecting stories from educators on what it means to live and work in the state that's #50 in the nation in average teacher pay. We'd love you to part of this initiative. You can [record your story here](#).

Superintendents Speak Out

In Sen. Albritton's (R-Bartow) first speech in his role as Senate President, he shared his desire to bring about a "rural renaissance." If Florida's counties are going to experience a renaissance, the public schools in those counties will be pivotal in bringing about that positive change. To that end, multiple committees this week heard stark testimony from rural superintendents on what they need from legislators.

Superintendents from DeSoto, Hendry, Holmes, Lafayette and Putnam Counties told the members of the Senate Education Committee they simply need more money. Among the concerns they voiced are:

- The teacher and staff shortage is a very real thing and must be addressed,
- Teachers in Florida's panhandle can (and do) cross state lines into Alabama and get significantly better pay,
- The legislature still has not provided enough funding to increase starting salaries to \$47,500 in every county,
- The little funding for salary increases that has been provided comes with too many strings attached,
- Private school and homeschool voucher funding is destroying public school budgets,
- Unfunded mandates from the Legislature take away money that could be used for raises,
- Steps must be taken to address Florida's housing and insurance affordability crisis, and
- Current levels of transportation funding are wholly inadequate.

In short, the superintendents told legislators that absent a good deal of new education funding there will be no rural renaissance. It's worth watching the superintendent panel for yourself; it [starts at the 58:10 mark in this video](#).

It wasn't just rural superintendents who advocated for more funding. In Wednesday's [meeting of the House PreK-12 Budget Committee](#), superintendents from small, medium and large counties asked legislators for transparency and accountability for private and homeschool voucher programs.

These superintendents all shared their stories of how Florida's lack of transparency around vouchers are draining much-needed resources from public schools. In particular, they voiced concern that Florida doesn't accurately keep track of where all students receiving state funding attend school. This has led to situations where school districts lose funding for students who receive vouchers even though those students are actually enrolled in and attending public schools. For all of the legislative talk about education funding "following the student," the state doesn't appear to have the infrastructure to track funding for the more than 3 million students who receive public funding for their education.

There are very real consequences to students, educators and school communities when the state dedicates billions of dollars to vouchers. Those consequences are compounded when the state can't (or won't) track where all that funding is going. We appreciate all the superintendents who spent this week advocating for more funding and transparency.

Immigration Update

Legislators have still not sent Gov. DeSantis the immigration bill that was passed during the special session a few weeks back. As a reminder DeSantis has pledged to veto this bill. At a press conference Friday morning, DeSantis announced he thinks he and legislative leadership are close to a deal on new legislation regarding immigration enforcement. His press conference Friday morning took place against the backdrop of [breaking news](#) about a teacher and member of the United Teachers of Dade who has been detained by federal immigration authorities.

Labor unions in the United States have a long history of standing up for racial and social justice and FEA remains committed to the idea that schools should be safe and welcoming places for all students, without exception. For more information, see our [full statement](#) on our commitment to stand with Florida's diverse immigrant community.

Questions? Call PPA at 850-224-2078.

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