



FROM THE COMMISSIONER'S DESK

March 2026

Teachers,

As we enter the final stretch of the 2025–2026 school year, I want to sincerely thank you for the dedication, professionalism, and care you bring to your classrooms each day.

With just two months remaining, this is our moment to stay focused and finish strong. Every lesson matters, every day counts, and every student deserves the opportunity to be fully prepared for the next grade level. I encourage you to continue prioritizing high-quality instruction, reinforcing the state academic standards, and supporting students as they build the knowledge and confidence they need for what comes next.

Let's close out the year with purpose, momentum, and a shared commitment to ensuring every student succeeds.

Sincerely,
Anastasios Kamoutsas

2026 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

2026 Legislative Update

Florida's 2026 Legislative Session delivered a strong focus on expanding student opportunity, strengthening school safety, enhancing accountability and supporting educators across the state.

Through **House Bill 757**, lawmakers reinforced Florida's nation-leading approach to school safety by expanding the state's Guardian Program, allowing trained personnel to provide additional layers of security not only in K-12 schools but also at postsecondary institutions.

The Legislature also passed **Senate Bill 1296**, a landmark reform to strengthen transparency and accountability in teacher unions. The bill:

- Ensures that unions demonstrate meaningful support from the educators they represent before being granted exclusive authority to negotiate pay, benefits and leave.
- Streamlines the process for providing salary increases funded by Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature, helping ensure teachers receive the salary increases more quickly and efficiently.

House Bill 1279 provides pivotal updates to education policy. The bill:

- Allows school districts to bypass collective bargaining and provide immediate pay increases to top-performing teachers working in persistently low-performing schools.
- Enhances parental rights by requiring districts to notify parents when a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) misses a scheduled service and to explain the interruption. Parents are also granted the right to request notes taken by service providers after delivering services to their children.
- Enables teachers to receive bonuses for students who complete Florida's Advanced Courses and successfully pass the associated assessments, ensuring these courses are on equal footing with other advanced coursework.

Additional legislation from the 2026 session:

- **House Bill 851** requires school districts to offer at least one annual, autism-focused professional learning opportunity for teachers to emphasize evidence-based strategies to support teaching students with autism spectrum disorders.
- **House Bill 453** allows students with disabilities to fulfill their high school physical education requirement through participation in Special Olympics programs, recognizing athletics as a meaningful alternative.
- **Senate Bill 538** provides significant changes to coach compensation, providing additional flexibility and ensuring coaches in Florida can be paid competitively.

Together, these initiatives reflect Governor Ron DeSantis and Florida's continued commitment to empowering educators, protecting students, and ensuring that education systems remain focused on outcomes.

VOLUNTARY PRAYER AND RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

This month, I sent a letter to all parents and district superintendents across the state regarding Florida's commitment to longstanding constitutional protections for voluntary prayer and religious expression in our public schools.

The U.S. Department of Education released updated guidance that replaces the guidance from the Biden administration. The updated guidance affirms that students, teachers and other school employees retain constitutional rights to religious expression, including individual prayer.

To help ensure that students and school staff in Florida's public schools are able to exercise their rights to religious expression consistent with the law, the Florida Department of Education has launched a dedicated process for individuals to submit complaints if the updated guidance from USED is not properly followed. I encourage you to stay informed and understand your rights and responsibilities as teachers, as well as the rights of your students to engage in prayer and religious expression in public schools.

LETTER TO PARENTS

LETTER TO SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS AND CHARTER SCHOOL LEADERS

FLORIDA'S NATIONAL SUMMIT ON SCHOOL SAFETY

This month, the Florida Education Foundation hosted the second annual National Summit on School Safety in Orlando. Education leaders, law enforcement officers, policymakers and school safety specialists from across the country convened at the Summit to learn about Florida's nationally recognized model for school safety and share best practices. Families of the victims from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting were also in attendance, bringing a deeply meaningful and powerful presence to the event.



Over the three days, Summit attendees explored Florida's evolving safety landscape, the importance of partnering with emergency management, and emerging school safety challenges at the national level. The Summit concluded on a powerful note with a student-led panel to bring forward the voices that matter most and reinforce the shared commitment to creating safer schools for every student.

FLORIDA'S NATIONAL SUMMIT ON SCHOOL SAFETY

SUNSHINE STATE SCHOLARS

The Florida Department of Education recognized 111 of the state's top 11th-grade students in science, technology, engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) at the 2026 Sunshine State Scholars event in Orlando. The two-day program celebrated students' academic achievements while connecting them with Florida's colleges, universities, and future career opportunities in high-demand STEM fields.



In partnership with the Florida Education Foundation and higher education institutions across the state, the event provided students and families with valuable information on college pathways, financial aid and workforce opportunities. Ten outstanding scholars were awarded one-year scholarships to support their continued education in Florida.

SUNSHINE STATE SCHOLARS

GREAT FLORIDA TEACH-IN

Save the date! The 2026 Great Florida Teach-In is scheduled from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 18, 2026, at the Hilton Orlando in Orlando, Florida.

The Great Florida Teach-In is the only statewide, annual job fair for teachers in Florida. It provides a great opportunity for educators seeking employment in Florida to obtain interviews with Florida school district and Florida charter school personnel.



GREAT FLORIDA TEACH-IN JOB FAIR

PURPLE UP! FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Florida celebrates April as the Month of the Military Family, providing an opportunity to honor the sacrifices of all service men and women as well as military children while their parents serve our nation.

Make plans to wear purple on Wednesday, April 15, as we celebrate the Month of the Military Family. Use the Purple Up toolkit to support and recognize military families in April.



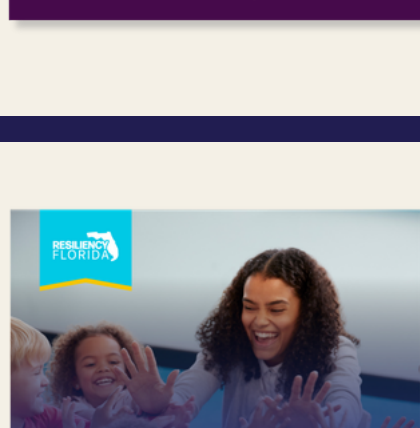
PURPLE UP! TOOLKIT

RESILIENCY

Are you or someone you know ready to empower the next generation? Become a Resiliency Coach!

Resiliency Coaches are trusted volunteers who are trained to support children as they build resiliency to face day-to-day challenges. When children build resiliency, they have better academic achievement, better attendance and a greater ability to set short- and long-term goals.

SIGN UP NOW!



SUGGESTED READING

Literacy skills developed during formative years are essential for students to succeed both academically and in life, and reading comprehension develops as students engage with interesting and meaningful books. Teachers and parents are encouraged to recommend these books to students.

You Can Do It, Sam by Amy Hest

You Can Do It, Sam is a story about a young bear who is discouraged to surprise his mother with a homemade cake. With encouragement from his older brother, Sam carefully gathers ingredients, measures and mixes – even when he feels unsure or makes small mistakes along the way.

Recommended for Prekindergarten



The Twenty-One Balloons By William Pène Du Bois

Professor William Waterman Sherman wanted to fly across the Pacific Ocean alone in a hot air balloon. During his journey, Professor Sherman landed on an island and discovered a world of unimaginable wealth, fascinating people and incredible balloon inventions.

Recommended for grades 6-8

