

## **2022 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM**

### **Student Achievement – Florida Students Succeed!**

Under the leadership of Florida’s superintendents, Florida ranks in the top 8 in 10 of the 18 metrics used to measure K-12 Achievement according to the 2021 Quality Counts Report by *Education Week*.

- Florida ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for K-12 Achievement according to the 2021 Quality Counts Report by *Education Week*.
- Florida is ranked 2nd for improving the high school graduation rate.
- Florida is ranked 3rd for improvement in grade 4 mathematics.
- Florida is ranked 4th for improvement in grade 8 reading.
- Florida is ranked 4th for improving the grade 4 poverty gap.
- Florida is ranked 6th for proficiency in grade 4 mathematics.
- Florida is ranked 6th in the nation for improving high advanced placement test scores
- Florida is ranked 7th for the size of its grade 4 reading poverty gap.
- Florida is ranked 7th for improving the grade 8 poverty gap.
- Florida is ranked 8th or improvement in grade 4 reading.
- Florida is ranked 8th in the nation for successful grade 11 and 12 advanced placement test scores.

### **Recommendations for Continued Success During and After COVID-19:**

#### **I. Provide Sufficient and Sustainable Funds to Meet the Educational Needs of Florida’s Public School Students**

- The Legislature should provide adequate Base Student Allocation (BSA) funding for districts to account for:
  - Minimum wage increasing to \$10 an hour in 2021 and by \$1 an hour per year through 2026 as required under the 2020 Amendment to the Florida Constitution.
  - Increased contributions to the Florida Retirement System (FRS).
  - Offsetting underfunded categoricals.
- The Legislature should allow district to have full and unrestricted access to federal funds appropriated for school districts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as required under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act; the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act; and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act.

## **II. Increase Efforts to Recruit and Retain Certified Teachers and Recognize Implications of Statewide Teacher Shortages**

- Florida school districts began the 2021-22 school year with approximately 5,000 teacher vacancies. The inability to find and hire certified teachers has a ripple effect throughout school districts. These effects include:
  - Difficulty meeting constitutional class size requirements.
  - Loss of FTE funding for students who have a non-certificated, long-term substitute as the teacher of record.
  - Negative impact on student performance.
- The colleges of education at Florida's public, private, and state colleges are not effectively producing a sufficient number of adequately prepared new teachers. The number of students enrolling in Florida's colleges of education and the training those students receive must be examined and addressed.
- The certification requirements for new teachers are a contributing factor hindering retention efforts. The Legislature should address the certification requirements to alleviate burdens for new teachers while they are learning to teach.
- The Legislature should consider providing incentives or training development funds for career changers new to teaching, particularly those who are content experts from other professions.
- The Legislature should continue to invest in teachers by funding the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation (TSIA) so that school districts can maintain salary increases, but it must recognize the impact of salary compression on school districts and veteran teachers.
- The Legislature should also consider additional measures that recognize and promote professionalism in education.

## **III. Authorize additional operational flexibility to school districts committed to providing parents with educational choice options**

- Education choice isn't just charter schools or private schools – it also includes open enrollment, magnet schools, articulated acceleration mechanisms, virtual education, career and professional academies, and more.
- Education choice is about giving parents a variety of options for their children. State law and school districts make numerous school choice options available to their students. Even with robust choice options available, most Florida parents choose to send their child to the traditional public school for which they are zoned.
- As such, traditional district schools and the programs they offer should be recognized as legitimate choice options, and school districts should be entitled to the corresponding statutory relief and operational flexibility that is afforded to other schools of choice.

#### **IV. Promote Professionalism and Stability in District Leadership**

- Florida faces significant barriers in attracting and retaining high quality district leaders, including the:
  - Lack of a clear delineation between the authority of a superintendent and the role of the school board.
  - Lack of decorum at school board meetings, increasingly becoming more disruptive and verbally abusive and sometimes resulting in physical altercations.
  - Lack of employment protections, such as contracts and severance pay, for appointed superintendents.
  - Statutorily prescribed pay scale for elected superintendents failing to adequately account for the scope of the superintendent's responsibilities.
- For Florida to attract and retain high-quality education leaders, superintendents should be recognized for their role as the CEO of what is often the largest employer in the county.

#### **V. Expand Access to Community School Model**

- Florida's public schools are asked to do more than educate – they are also expected to feed children, handle physical and mental health issues, address social issues, and more.
- As such, the Legislature should recognize the need for more services offered in public schools and incentivize expansion of the community school model.
- The community school model requires collaboration and commitment from the school district, community organizations, healthcare providers, and higher education entities. Now more than ever, this model is proving invaluable in serving the broad needs of students and communities as a whole.