



ISSUES THAT IMPACT YOU IN YOUR PROFESSION





BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION

What is the Base Student Allocation?

The base student allocation (BSA) is the amount of funding given to schools to cover real costs associated with educating a student — the BSA keeps the lights on and is money that can be spent flexibly by districts, such as for new programs or educator salaries. In theory, the BSA is based on the previous year's budget allocation plus an adjustment for inflation and increased costs. In practice, the Legislature often increases or decreases this amount based on a political agenda. The BSA is what the Legislature minimally spends on each student without all the other education categories where money is provided with a mandated purpose — with strings. The BSA is the best indication of their commitment to our students.

What's at stake?

- » Those closest to students know best how the money should be spent. By investing in the BSA, the Legislature would be investing in local control; similarly, the disinvestment in the BSA by legislators over the past decades has led to a significant encroachment of local control.
- » For several years now, the state has tried to recruit and retain teachers with bonuses; the evidence is clear that this is a failing strategy. Local school districts must be empowered to come up with their own recruitment and retention plans. This can only happen if they see a significant increase to the BSA — funds that are free from state mandates.

- » Students in 2019-20 are just as deserving of a high-quality public education as were students in 2007-08. However, the BSA now is \$656 less than it was then. This harms districts' abilities to recruit and retain highly effective teachers. The teacher shortage hurts students — especially students of color and who live in poverty. There is no better cure for this than giving districts additional money they can use to compensate educators as the professionals they are.

What can you do about it?

Stay informed and talk to people about what is happening in your school and how inadequate funding impacts your students.

Without a commitment by the Florida Legislature to significantly increase funding in the BSA, our students will not have the programs and adequate resources they need to be successful, and our school employees' salaries will continue to languish at the bottom in national rankings.

Here's what you could tell your legislators to do to help:

- » The Legislature should develop a plan to ensure the BSA is at least at inflation-adjusted 2007-08 levels by 2022.
- » The Legislature should provide districts with stability and predictability when it comes to budgeting; once the BSA is at inflation-adjusted 2007-08 levels, it should increase with the rate of inflation.



CHARTER SCHOOLS

What is a charter school?

Charter schools are privately managed, taxpayer-funded schools exempted from some rules applicable to all other taxpayer-funded schools. Often the management company is not located in the county and sometimes even the state where the school is located.

The charter school governing body is selected by the parent company. It is required to have two meetings "in district," and a parent liaison is required in district. Neighborhood public schools are governed by elected school boards, whereas charters have no direct taxpayer accountability.

Some other differences between charters and neighborhood public schools (NPS) are: Charters are not required to provide all student services, while neighborhood public schools are required by federal law to provide services. Charters may set enrollment requirements or use a lottery system and may deny continued enrollment, whereas NPS are required to enroll all students.

What's at stake?

- » Education reform should not mean de-funding neighborhood schools in order to promote for-profit organizations.
- » Whenever a school becomes unprofitable, the for-profit charter simply shuts down, leaving neighborhood public schools to absorb the students without the resources (tax dollars) provided to educate those students.
- » The most recent data shows there are currently 655

charter schools in Florida. Since the first charter opened, 399 have closed. This means 38 percent of all charter schools that have operated in Florida have closed. This instability is not good for students or communities.

- » Students in neighborhood public schools do as well or better than those in charter schools when student performance is compared fairly.
- » Charter schools spend more per student for administrative and overhead costs than neighborhood public schools. That means fewer of our public dollars are spent in the classroom. Taxpayers are funding a parallel system that is more wasteful and inefficient than a single school system.
- » Florida has provided instructional flexibility to charter schools while it has increased oversight and micromanagement in neighborhood schools. This is the opposite approach that high achieving countries and states have taken to improve their schools.

What can you do about it?

Talk to your friends and neighbors about what is happening in our schools. Ask everyone to help you talk to legislators and tell them to:

- » Restore local control so school districts have the final say over whether or not a new charter school opens.
- » Require charter schools to follow all of the same accountability standards and laws as neighborhood public schools.



EVALUATIONS

What's at stake?

- » Students have a right to timely, actionable feedback that will help them grow. Our teachers deserve the same. By not providing teachers with timely, actionable feedback, the current evaluation system fails both students and teachers.
- » We obviously recognize that test data can be useful, but it is important to use the data for its intended purpose — to help determine areas of strength and weaknesses — to guide instruction, and re-teaching. The current evaluation system doesn't take any of that into account.
- » The core purpose of teacher assessment and evaluation should be to strengthen the knowledge, skills and classroom practices of professional educators — not to categorize them, rank them and punish them.

What can you do about it?

Write a letter to the editor of your local paper. Talk to your friends and family about what is happening to our professional educators. Visit your legislator and tell him/her that:

- » The entire evaluation system must be reformed to ensure appropriate measures of student success are being used. Educators must have a significant voice in this reform.
- » Local school districts know best how to support their teachers to ensure student success. They must be freed from state mandates regarding tying evaluations to teacher compensation, transfers and retention.



SCHOOL SAFETY

What's at stake?

- » Student and staff safety is an issue of the utmost importance; we must address the underlying causes of bullying and violence on school campuses, including mental health issues and lack of respect for professional educators.
- » Every student deserves timely access to highly trained, certified mental health professionals who know them as a student and not just as a test score. Those mental health professionals must be allowed to do their job not be utilized as test administrators or for other such administrative tasks.
- » Each of Florida's 67 counties has unique needs, and each county knows best how to invest in ensuring student safety. The Legislature must support local control and allow for flexibility in how school safety money is spent.

What can you do about it?

Be the voice for your students and your school. Start a letter-writing campaign and tell your legislators that:

- » All instructional staff must be allowed to do their jobs full time without being pulled for non-instructional duties such as test proctoring.
- » Guidance counselor to student ratio must be addressed, with the goal of meeting the NASC recommendation of 250:1.
- » School psychologist to student ratio must be addressed, with the goal of meeting the NASP recommendation of 500-750:1.
- » School social worker to student ratio must be addressed, with the goal of meeting the NASW recommendation of 250:1.
- » School districts must be allowed local control in how to spend school safety dollars — including hiring counselors, psychologists and social workers to address mental health needs.



SALARIES NOT BONUSES

What's at stake?

- » Teacher pay has gone backwards in the past decade — decreasing by 12.2% in inflation-adjusted dollars from 2009 to 2018.
- » Low pay and benefits is one of the leading causes of the current teacher shortage.
- » Bonus programs have been in place for almost a decade and a half. The results are clear. Bonuses are no substitute for adequate salaries, and bonuses will not solve the recruitment and retention crisis.
- » When funds are diverted into bonus programs with rigid requirements from Tallahassee, local districts do not have the flexibility to meet their unique needs.
- » Far too many education staff professionals, the backbones of our schools, make the minimum wage or just barely above it. All public school employees deserve a living wage.
- » Salaries and benefits are the single greatest expense for school districts, yet the state is taking more and more control over how those dollars must be spent rather than allowing for local control.

What can you do about it?

- » Florida's per-pupil expenditures must be funded at least at inflation-adjusted pre-recession levels.
- » The Legislature must redirect funds for bonuses into the base student allocation.
- » The Legislature must respect the rights of school districts and unions to negotiate salary schedules that work for their communities.



VOUCHERS

What's at stake?

- » Vouchers take dollars from neighborhood public schools to fund private schools at taxpayer expense.
- » Vouchers do not create choice for parents, but rather choice for private schools — they can reject students based on economic status, academic achievement, disabilities, English proficiency, immigration status, sexual orientation or even gender.
- » Vouchers create a dual system in which taxpayers support one public, accountable system and a separate private, unaccountable system.
- » Taxpayers would be rightfully upset if religion were being taught in their neighborhood public schools, and they should be upset they are paying for vouchers for 84,000 students to attend religious private schools.

What can you do about it?

There are lots of ways to make a difference. For some people that means showing up at a rally, for others it means speaking up at a meeting or talking with friends and neighbors about a solution. Government is all of us, and our elected leaders must make decisions with us. True representation, so people have the power, requires civic engagement — which includes all communities voting, sharing their voices to advocate for change, participating in policy making and holding elected officials accountable. You can help by spreading the message that:

- » Public dollars should be used exclusively for public schools, so there can be transparency and accountability for taxpayers.
- » All schools that receives public funds should be held to the same accountability standards and laws regulating public schools.
- » No school that receives public money should be allowed to deny admission to students based on religious beliefs or sexual orientation/gender identity.