



everychild.one voice.

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2016 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Florida PTA believes in free, high-quality, and fair education for all children.

Funding

Florida PTA urges the Legislature to fully fund strategies and programs that ensure the health, safety, and education of the children of Florida.

Accountability and Assessments

Florida PTA believes that a valid assessment does not consist of only a single test score, and that at no time should a single test be considered the sole determinant of a student's academic or work future.

Florida PTA recommends that the Florida Department of Education and the state:

- Allow for proper field-testing and test development in areas with similar demographics to Florida's diverse demographics;
- Suspend the issuance of school letter grades until performance data has been deemed reliable;
- Allow additional testing and calculation flexibility to students with disabilities and students who speak limited English;
- Consider using multiple years of a new exam as a baseline for generating school grades and teacher evaluations.

Voucher Expansion

The Florida PTA urges the Legislature to impose strict eligibility requirements on private institutions and non-public K-12 schools receiving public dollars through any state funded voucher, grant, or scholarship programs, and at a minimum, require them to meet the same accountability standards at their cost as public schools, including, but not limited to:

- School-wide participation in any statewide assessment program, by mandating all current standardized tests, i.e., FCAT and Florida Writes;
- Assignment of an annual school performance grade category designation and improvement rating, to be published in the Commissioner of Education's annual statewide assessment report;
- Compliance with Florida Public Records Laws and requirements for independent audits to assess how taxpayer money is being spent;
- Regulations to ensure private institutions and non-public schools are adequately equipped to meet the educational needs of their students.

Early Childhood Education

Florida PTA urges the Legislature to support and fully fund high-quality child care and preschool programs that are affordable and accessible, coordinated at all levels (federal, state, and local), and characterized by high standards for teaching, training, health, and safety.

School Choice

PTA supports public school choice and supports the creation of public charter schools based on a set of principles that are designed to keep the integrity of public schools intact. Public charter schools, including full-time virtual schools, must:

- Establish a level playing field in areas of fiscal responsibility, accountability, and student enrollment.
- Require FEFP funding to follow the student when transferring between charter and the traditional public school during the school year.
- Ensure staff are certified for their positions.
- Involve parents in decision-making processes.

Physical Education/Reducing Childhood Obesity

Florida PTA urges the Legislature to support daily physical education programs taught by certified Physical Education teachers as an integral part of every child's education and to support efforts to improve the nutritional value of foods and beverages served and sold in schools throughout the state.

Child Trafficking

PTA supports the adoption and enforcement of laws that will deter the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. PTA further urges the Legislature to protect the rights of victims and support efforts to provide for the physical, psychological, and social recovery of victims of child trafficking; as well as to address those conditions and situations that contribute to child trafficking.

Bullying

PTA supports policies and programs that address the prevention, intervention, and elimination of bullying.

Sexual Harassment & Sexual Violence

PTA urges and supports the strengthening of Title IX and all other laws that identify, address the effects of, and prohibit sexual harassment and sexual violence impacting students, and compliance by recipients of federal funds with the provisions of Title IX.

PTA also urges collaboration with school administrations, institutions of higher learning, and community partners to ensure that every school provides support services for victims, and presents awareness and prevention programs that address sexual harassment and sexual violence affecting students, including training on the responsibilities of educational institutions, and the rights of sexual violence and sexual harassment victims under Title IX and other laws and regulations.

Juvenile Justice

PTA encourages collaboration between law enforcement, the judicial system, and child welfare agencies; promotes alternative dispute resolution techniques that provide a range of possible sanctions; urges the prevention of the incarceration of youth in adult facilities; and supports assisting youth leaving the juvenile justice system with programs that prevent recidivism.

REFORM OF SCHOOL POLICIES REGARDING ZERO TOLERANCE

Florida PTA urges the Florida Legislature and school boards to revise disciplinary policies known as "zero tolerance" that mandate either expulsion or referral of students to juvenile or criminal court, without regard to the circumstances or nature of the offense or the students' history.

About us: Florida PTA is the largest and oldest volunteer association, dedicated to advocating for every child with one voice. Florida PTA is made up of approximately 300,000 members in over 1400 local PTA units that represent the association's advocacy for Education and the Health and well-being of all children.

For more information about Florida PTA, please contact Florida PTA Executive Director, Jean Hovey at executive.director@floridapta.org