

Hillsborough County Council PTA/PTSA 2022 Legislative Platform

Florida Education Finance Program

Bring Florida's total per-pupil funding to at least the **median** in the U.S. Department of Education's Ranking of the States, which is \$11,732. *The United States average per pupil state per-pupil funding is \$12,624. Florida's current per pupil funding is \$7,795 per student, and ranks near the bottom of education funding in the United States.*

Overall Education Funding

HCC PTA finds that currently there are over 90 unfunded or underfunded mandates in Florida schools, despite very small increases in the level of per pupil spending, which is just \$700 more than it was 10 years ago. These mandates must be appropriately funded, separate and apart from per pupil spending.

HCC PTA advocates for:

- Adequate funding and the flexibility to implement programs, mitigate unfunded mandates and adopt spending plans that best meet their communities' needs.
- Equity in capital improvement funding using a formula which is based on district student enrollment rather than a standard millage rate for all districts.

Equity

Education is needed regarding the implications of all legislation on ESE, ELL, SLD and other exceptional students.

HCC PTA urges state and local policy makers to:

- Amend legislation to create pathways for our English Language Learners (ELL) to demonstrate their ability to meet requirements for graduation by providing assessments in their native languages or a waiver of assessment results based on the ELL committee. ELL students face unique challenges in Florida's mandated assessment process.
- Encourage legislation that requires pre-service and ongoing post-service training to include:
 - dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and other SLD.
 - the warning signs of dyslexia.
 - the appropriate instructional approaches.
 - the use of early screening for dyslexia.
 - successful approaches to communicating with parents
- Implement and fully fund the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act provisions in all Florida school districts and establish ample funding allocation for the Title 1, Part A set-aside and Title X, which are funding sources used to support the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

School to Prison Pipeline

HCC PTA finds that:

- Students from two groups, racial minorities and children with disabilities, are disproportionately represented in the school-to-prison pipeline
- Black students are suspended or expelled at a rate almost 3.5 times greater than White students
- Black students are most often disciplined for more subjective offenses, such as throwing food, cursing, disobeying a teacher, loitering, or making excessive noise, whereas their Caucasian schoolmates are less likely to be suspended for more concrete offenses that include smoking, skipping school, or vandalism.

HCC PTA:

- encourages collaboration between law enforcement, the judicial system, and child welfare agencies;
- promotes alternative dispute resolution techniques that are positive and instructive rather than punitive discipline.
- urges the prevention of the incarceration of youth in adult facilities;
- supports assisting youth leaving the juvenile justice system with programs that prevent recidivism.
- recommends the district develop and publish school discipline report cards on the district's website based on data collected through the school environmental safety incident reports. This data should be broken down by type of incident and the imposed discipline. This data should also be broken down by sex, race, English Language Learner status and disability.

Voucher Funded School Accountability

All educational institutions receiving public dollars, whether directly or indirectly, should be held to the same academic and accountability standards as traditional public schools.

- While continuing to oppose vouchers in all forms, the HCC PTA PTSA 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 as public schools.
- Our association believes that private school choice systems have detrimental effects on our public school systems. Public dollars must remain vested in public schools for the benefit of all students and the future of our nation.

COVID-19

HCC PTA supports:

- Following most updated CDC guidelines regarding COVID in schools

Assessment & Testing

- Eliminate the Florida Standards Assessments, but do not replace it with any other high-stakes statewide tests, assessments or computer-based progress monitoring
- Stop financially punishing low performing schools and school districts
- The HCC PTA/PTSA strongly advocates that the Legislature stop using the FSA for promotion, graduation, remediation, financial allocation, teacher evaluation, and school grades.
- Stop the use of state or nationally mandated standardized tests as the sole criterion for measuring student progress or school performance. We believe that student assessments should:
 - identify how instruction and learning can be improved.
 - be used to help parents and teachers determine specific academic needs of students.
 - Increase opportunities for student learning.
- Policy alternatives to social promotion and grade retention must be established.

Mental Health

HCC PTA urges state and local policy makers and school districts:

- to employ evidence-based best practice ratios of those most qualified to provide school-based mental health: school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses.
- to provide the necessary resources and support to ensure students have access to the proactive continuum of mental health services and they are incorporated with a strong family engagement component.
- to amend the statute to specify that excused absences from school include both physical and mental health (F.S. 1003.24(4)).
- to reduce the frequency of active shooter drills required by the Florida Legislature as recommended by the November 1, 2019 report by the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission.

School Safety

HCC PTA advocates for full funding for school safety initiatives that are mandated by the state by the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. The State of Florida currently underfunds school safety for Hillsborough County Public Schools by 50%.

Early Childhood Education

HCC PTA supports expanding and funding early childhood education offerings through Hillsborough County Government and local partnerships to include three and four year olds. When students enter kindergarten prepared to learn with previous classroom experience, there is a greater likelihood that they will be on grade level in reading in the 3rd grade, which is a direct correlation with on-time graduation.