



FROM THE COMMISSIONER'S DESK

January 2026

Teachers,

I am proud to share that Florida has achieved a historic milestone: our high school graduation rate for the 2024-25 school year reached 92.2%, the highest in the state's history. This achievement represents not just a number, but countless stories of students crossing the finish line ready for college and career success.

This accomplishment reflects the unwavering leadership and support of Governor Ron DeSantis as well as the tireless work you do in classrooms and communities across Florida every day.

Whether you are building foundational skills, guiding critical thinking or motivating a student to persevere, your work makes a difference that lasts a lifetime. On behalf of the Florida Department of Education, I want to extend my deepest gratitude for your dedication. Because of your passion and professionalism, Florida students are better prepared for the next chapter of their lives. Together, we will continue to raise expectations, support learners and ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed.



Sincerely,
Anastasios Kamoutsas

HIGHEST GRADUATION RATE IN STATE'S HISTORY

#1 IN EDUCATION FREEDOM

Florida has been ranked #1 in Education Freedom for the third consecutive year by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) in its 2026 *Index of State Education Freedom*. Florida was also ranked first for student-centered funding programs, charter schools, and homeschooling – and was the only state to earn an A+ rating nationwide.

The Index evaluates all 50 states across key measures of educational opportunity, including school choice, charter schools, homeschooling, virtual learning and open enrollment, and highlights Florida's leadership in expanding access and empowering families.

FLORIDA LEADS THE NATION FOR EDUCATION FREEDOM FOR THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR

2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

All students deserve the best education possible. Under the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, Florida remains the most student-centered state in the nation. I am proud of the many accomplishments made in 2025 and look forward to building on these achievements in 2026.

Florida continues to lead the nation in education, earning top rankings across K-12, higher education, workforce development and school choice. Florida also led the nation in talent attraction, job growth and parent empowerment, reinforcing its position as the best state for students and families.

Student achievement continued to rise statewide. Performance on the FAST Progress Monitoring and End-of-Course Assessments improved significantly in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. School grades strengthened across all school types, and graduation rates reached historic highs. More schools earned "A" and "B" grades, fewer schools earned "D" or "F" grades, and more students are graduating prepared for college and careers.

Florida remained steadfast in prioritizing school safety, with historic investments in Safe Schools initiatives, expansion of threat management tools, continued participation in the Guardian Program and national leadership through the first-ever National Summit on School Safety. Governor DeSantis has further recommended expanding the Guardian Program to higher education institutions to strengthen all campus safety statewide.

The state also made major investments in educators, with nearly \$6 billion dedicated to teacher pay since 2019, additional funding proposed for 2026-27, expanded teacher apprenticeship pathways, and a continued decline in teacher vacancies. At the same time, Florida's school choice programs reached new heights, serving more than half a million scholarship students and enrolling a record number of charter students.

2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CELEBRATE LITERACY WEEK, FLORIDA!

I had the privilege of reading to students at Madison County Central School for Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! This special week is dedicated to highlighting the importance of reading and inspiring students and families across Florida to make reading a part of their daily lives.



This year's theme, "Read, White, and Blue: Celebrating 250 Chapters of America," honors the upcoming 250th anniversary of our nation's founding. I hope you and your students joined in the celebration by reading patriotic texts together and sharing in the joy of literacy.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CELEBRATE LITERACY WEEK

FFEA EVENT

Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to welcome over 550 students to the 2026 Florida Future Educators of America (FFEA) State Conference! FFEA provides a forum for students to learn about career opportunities in education, nurture their interest in teaching as a career and network with peers and experienced educators.

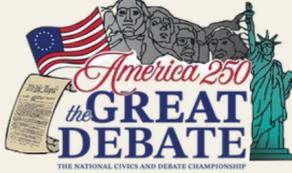
During the state conference, students had an action-packed weekend filled with motivating keynotes, breakout sessions emphasizing evidence-based classroom strategies and an opportunity to meet with Florida colleges and universities at College Night.

Florida's next generation of teachers is ready, and we're here to support them every step of the way.

LEARN MORE ABOUT FFEA

THE GREAT DEBATE

Nearly 600 students from Florida and across the nation gathered in Orlando this month to compete in the 5th annual Great Debate: Florida's National Civics and Debate Championship. Participation has nearly quadrupled since the championship's inaugural event five years ago.



Champions were named for both middle school and high school divisions in three events: Impromptu Speaking, Extemporaneous Debate and Legislative Debate. Additional awards were given to three inspiring coaches and one student who embodies what it means to be a great citizen.

Thanks to Governor DeSantis' leadership and efforts, Florida is setting a national example in civics education. Through the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative (FCDI) and the Florida Debate Initiative (FDI), students across all 67 school districts now have access to high-quality debate programming that strengthens civic knowledge, critical thinking, and communication skills. More than 3,400 students from over 400 schools participate in competitions statewide.

By investing in civics and debate, Florida is preparing the next generation of leaders while setting the national standard for civics education.

THE GREAT DEBATE

RESILIENCY

Schools and educators can now download Resiliency Characteristic Certificates to recognize students who demonstrate Florida's 11 Resiliency Characteristics. These printable certificates provide a simple, meaningful way to celebrate students and can be used as classroom awards to reinforce resilience.



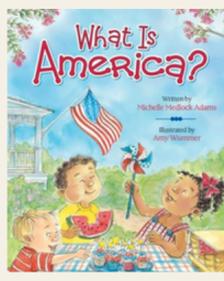
DOWNLOAD CERTIFICATES

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. In recognition of Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!, Teachers and parents are encouraged to recommend these books to students.

What is America? by Michelle Medlock Adams

This text introduces young children to the ideas and values that make the United States of America unique. It invites young learners to think about what America means by teaching some of our country's symbols. After reading this book, students will better understand that America is a place of freedom, dreams and traditions.



Recommended for Prekindergarten

F is for Flag by Wendy Cheyette Lewison

Wendy Cheyette Lewison's F is for Flag introduces young readers to the American flag, exploring its history, appearance and meaning. The text explains how the flag was created, why it is flown and how one powerful symbol can represent an entire nation. It also helps students understand why the flag holds special significance for many people in America.



Recommended for grades K-2