



# FROM THE COMMISSIONER'S DESK

November/December

Monthly Virtual Reflection Calendar - January-March

Teachers,

As we reach the halfway point of the school year, I want to thank you for everything you do to support our students. Being the proud product of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, I know firsthand that Florida's teachers work tirelessly every day to lay the foundation for student success. When teachers and parents work together with a shared purpose, students feel supported and motivated to excel and will benefit for a lifetime.

The Florida Department of Education is proud to provide parent resources for student success in mathematics, English Language Arts, and resiliency to support learning at home during winter break. I encourage you to share these resources with families to help solidify standards-based learning beyond the classroom setting.

Thank you for the many ways you support our students every day in the classroom. I appreciate your partnership and remain confident that by working together, we will help every student finish the year strong.

Sincerely,  
Anastasios Kamoutsas



MIDYEAR REFLECTION



## 2026-2027 PROPOSED BUDGET

Governor Ron DeSantis' Floridians First proposed budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year affirms Florida's commitment to prioritizing students, teachers, and school safety, strengthening our momentum as the nation's #1 state for education. There have been many false claims that Florida is defunding public schools, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Governor DeSantis' proposed budget includes record funding and significant increases in many critical area

Notable budget highlights included in Governor DeSantis' Floridians First proposed budget:

- A historic \$30.6 billion in funding for K-12 education.
- \$9,406 in per-student funding, an increase of nearly \$300 per student, providing the highest amount in Florida history.
- Nearly \$1.6 billion in funding for public school teacher salary increases, an increase of \$200 million from last year. Prior to Governor DeSantis taking office, Florida did not have an appropriation specifically for teacher salary increases.
- Governor DeSantis has continued to prioritize school safety, and this year's proposed budget includes funding for school safety at K-12 schools as well as Florida's public postsecondary institutions.
  - \$300 million in funding for Safe Schools is included to ensure that campuses across Florida remain safe and secure learning environments.
  - The proposed budget also includes \$12.5 million for the Guardian Program of which \$6 million is to establish the program at the state colleges and universities to ensure all of Florida's students are learning in a safe, secure environment.
  - \$106 million is provided for school hardening with \$42 million for K-12 campuses and a new investment of \$64 million for higher education.
- Governor DeSantis continues to champion civics education. His proposed budget enhances investments to civic literacy and debate initiatives, ensuring students develop the civic virtues that are essential to maintaining our constitutional republic.
  - The proposed budget includes \$3 million to support and expand the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative and the Florida Debate Initiative, which provide access to competitive civics and debate programs for all Florida students.
  - Additionally, an allocation of \$3 million, an increase of \$2 million, will be dedicated to support the improvement of civic literacy for Florida's students using regional civics literacy captains and coaches.
  - \$1.5 million, an increase of \$1 million, is included to support teachers by providing civics professional learning opportunities.
  - Also, \$10 million, an increase of \$6.5 million, has been allocated for the Florida Civics Seal of Excellence Endorsement Program that will allow more educators to receive a \$3,000 stipend for completing the coursework and receiving the endorsement.
- The budget also invests \$800 million in workforce education programs, including \$20 million specifically designated to create or expand apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, giving students more pathways to gain valuable hands-on experience and enter the workforce career-ready.

It is clear that Governor DeSantis remains deeply committed to supporting education by making direct, strategic investments where they matter most. Each of these investments plays a critical role in reinforcing and advancing Florida's public education system and will ensure Florida continues to lead the nation in educational excellence, opportunity, and school safety.

2026-2027 BUDGET



## PURPLE STAR SCHOOLS

Florida's veterans, service members and military families make daily sacrifices to defend our freedom. Florida's Purple Star Schools and Collegiate Purple Star Campuses remain steadfast in ensuring military families receive consistent, high-quality education no matter where they are stationed. On Veterans Day, I proudly announced that 451 schools earned the Purple Star School of Distinction designation.



The purpose of the Purple Star School of Distinction designation and Purple Star School District Program is to recognize schools that support the unique needs of military families, help military-connected students navigate critical challenges and provide resources for military-connected students when transitioning to a new school environment.

May we never forget the brave men and women of our armed forces who defend our freedoms every day. They deserve our support and access to the best education for their children.

PURPLE STAR SCHOOLS



## HISTORY OF COMMUNISM STANDARDS

In November, the State Board of Education approved the new History of Communism standards, marking a significant step to strengthen the already high-quality social studies standards provided to students. These new standards will ensure that students learn the truth about the brutal realities of life under communist rule and gain a deeper appreciation for the blessings of liberty that define our nation.

HISTORY OF COMMUNISM STANDARDS



## PHOENIX DECLARATION ADOPTION

The State Board of Education recently voted to ratify and adopt the Phoenix Declaration: An American Vision for Education as the guiding principles for education in Florida. Throughout Governor Ron DeSantis' tenure, education in Florida has been guided by many of the principles embodied in the Phoenix Declaration. By formally adopting this Declaration, we are reaffirming our commitment to an education system that pursues truth and virtue, empowers parents, and always prioritizes our students.

PHOENIX DECLARATION ADOPTION



## RESILIENCY

The Florida Department of Education is encouraging students to escape into a good book, where they can meet role models, find hope, witness grit and build their own personal strengths. On the Resiliency Reading List, you'll find a list of books tied to each of the 11 Resiliency Characteristics that can help increase resilience among students, from pre-kindergarten through grade twelve.



Did you know that each text on the Resiliency Reading List has a turn-key Resiliency Reading Guide that provides literacy tips and sample conversation starters? I encourage you to use the texts and reading guides in your classroom and share them with families to strengthen literacy skills at home!

RESILIENCY READING LIST



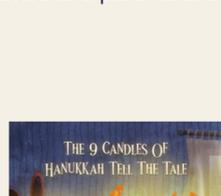
## SUGGESTED READING

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. Teachers and parents are encouraged to recommend these texts to students.

### The 9 Candles of Hanukkah Tell the Tale

by Noah Press

Noah Press' *The 9 Candles of Hanukkah Tell the Tale* brings the traditions of Hanukkah to life through a warm, engaging narrative that gives voice to each candle on the menorah. As the candles are lit one by one, they share the story of perseverance, faith, and the miracle of light lasting against all odds. Rich in meaning yet accessible to younger readers, this book blends history, values, and storytelling in a way that naturally invites reflection and discussion.



Recommended for grades Grades 3-5.

### The Nativity

by Henry Vaughan

Henry Vaughan's poem "The Nativity" offers students a beautiful and reflective look at the birth of Christ through vivid imagery and spiritual insight. It highlights how Christ's humble birth carries deep spiritual significance. The poem invites readers to see the Nativity not just as a historical moment but as a turning point that brings hope, renewal, and the promise of divine presence in everyday life.



Recommended for grades 9-12.