

Florida School Finance Council Budget Priorities & Recommendations

-Advisory Committee to Commissioner of Education

The Finance Council has reached a unanimous agreement on the top budget issues facing Florida's school districts. It is our hope that the Governor, Commissioner of Education, State Board of Education, and Florida Legislature will give the Council's priorities and recommendations serious consideration as the FY 2023-24 state budget is developed.

Our top priorities, all of which reflect recurring liabilities and thus not prudent uses of Federal Stimulus funds, are summarized below and supported by fact.

1. Minimize Teacher and Support Staff Shortages
2. Fund Cost Increases Due to Inflation
3. Fully Fund the Increase in Scholarship Students
4. Increase Funding to Address Safety & Security Measures

Recommendations:

1. Provide adequate funding to significantly increase mid-career teacher and support staff salaries on a recurring basis and minimize the negative impacts of the current employee retention crisis, including dealing with the compression resulting from recent legislative increases to minimum salary levels.
2. Minimize the vacancy crisis without the need for any additional monetary commitment by waiving or shortening the existing reemployment limitations for retirees and adjusting the DROP extension program.
3. Provide for an annual increase in the Base Student Allocation commensurate with inflation and cost of living increases, to ensure school systems can meet the rising costs in every aspect of their business.
4. Any proration for FY 2022-23 should be covered by the Florida Legislature in the 2023 Legislative Session
5. Ensure the full cost of the increases expected for the Voucher and Scholarship programs be accounted for during FY 2023-24 budget development, and that the FTE associated with that projection be transparent.
6. Create a more robust and transparent forecasting system to account for the growth in FES by district, including a better understanding of who the students accepting the FES scholarships are and what percentage of them were going to attend private schools even in the absence of a voucher program.
7. Change the funding process for vouchers to more accurately align to the School District's FEFP allocations after each calculation and ensure the integrity of categorical funds is maintained.
8. Allocate additional funding to help fulfill the legislative intent of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act by increasing the Safe Schools Categorical allocation by \$100 million to narrow the funding gap associated with the mandate to staff one "safe school officer" per school and ensure sustainable funding for school districts.