

From the Florida Educational Negotiator Officers and Area Directors

Welcome to the 46th Annual Florida Educational Negotiators Spring Conference

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Area Directors, we extend our sincere welcome to this year's Annual Spring Conference. We are pleased that you have joined us at what is, by any measure, a consequential time for Florida's school districts.

A Changed Landscape

The legislative restructuring of public-sector labor law will demand our expertise and attention in the months and years ahead. Where union representation is reduced or eliminated, the responsibility for managing employee relations, resolving workplace disputes, and maintaining consistent and equitable employment practices falls directly to district HR and labor relations professionals. Compounding this challenge is the fiscal environment facing districts statewide. The pressure to sustain high student achievement and contain costs while promoting effective workplaces will challenge us all.

The Purpose of FEN Has Never Been More Clear

It is against this backdrop that the work of our association takes on renewed importance. This year's conference program, and the meetings we are planning for the 2026–27 school year, have been designed with these realities in mind. We will be responsive to your needs, presenting topics and expert voices to address the legal, strategic, and practical dimensions of the current environment.

Your Involvement Matters

FEN's capacity to serve you depends on your active engagement. We encourage you to renew your membership and reengage with FEN for the 2026–27 year. We are your professional community committed to sharing knowledge, developing solutions, and supporting one another through a period of substantial change. We thank you for your dedication to your districts, your colleagues, and the students and communities you serve.

President:

Dr. Adrienne McElroy, Charlotte County

Secretary:

Tim Kubrick, Palm Beach County

President Elect:

LeighAnn Blackmore, Orange County

Past President:

Dr. Dawn M. Baglos, Miami-Dade County

Area I Director:

Candy Bodie, Walton County

Area IV Director:

Dawn Bontz, Seminole County

Area II Director:

Lori Sangren, Wakulla County

Area V Director:

Danielle Shotwell, Hillsborough County

Area III Director:

Kim Lake, Levy County

Area VI Director:

Kim Lucas, Miami-Dade County

***Thank you for coming to the 46th Annual Spring Conference.
We are glad you are here!***

Agenda

* Conference Wi-Fi password – FEN2026

Tuesday, May 5		
6:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Hotel Breakfast	
7:30 AM - 5:00 PM	Conference Registration/Information	
8:30 AM - 10:30 AM	<p>General Session 1 Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Adrienne McElroy, FEN President. <p>Superintendent's Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Mark Shannoff, Superintendent, Osceola County School District. <p>Plenary Speaker/Thought Leader Leveling the Playing Field: Ensuring Fair Competition for Public Schools. This keynote will address the challenges public schools face in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, focusing on innovative strategies to recruit and retain students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brian J. Stephens, CEO, Caissa K-12. 	Magnolia
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	Break	
10:45 AM – 11:45 AM	<p>General Session 2 District FTE Marketing: Telling Your Story to Attract and Retain Families Participants will explore how targeted communications, branding, and data-driven outreach can help attract and retain students while supporting enrollment and community trust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sean Cooley, Chief of Strategic Communications & Engagement, Palm Beach County School District. ▪ Farrah Wilson, Director of Marketing and Strategic Communications, Broward County School District. 	Magnolia
11:50 AM - 1:00 PM	Lunch Buffet	
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	<p>General Session 3 CFO Panel. Hear from district chief finance officers in this popular session as they share insights and take questions on current budget challenges, district finance priorities, and how financial realities are shaping the landscape for future negotiations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kim Lake, Chief Finance Officer, Levy County School District. ▪ Sarah Graber, Chief Business & Finance Officer, Osceola County School District. ▪ Scott Ward, Chief Finance Officer, Lake County School District. 	Magnolia
2:00 PM - 2:15 PM	Break	
2:15 PM - 3:45 PM	<p>General Session 4 The Bills. Join us in this participant-driven session to review the key bills that passed during the legislative session, explore resulting district responsibilities, and unpack the bargaining implications for labor relations and human resources.</p>	Magnolia
3:45 PM - 4:45 PM	<p>General Session 5 The Scope of Bargaining. This session will provide a practical overview of what must be negotiated, what may be negotiated, and what is off-limits, and how these distinctions shape collective bargaining strategy, legal obligations, and negotiation limits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marc A. Sugerman, Esq., Ford Harrison. 	Magnolia
5:30 PM - 6:15 PM	Networking Reception	Oasis

Wednesday, May 6		
6:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Hotel Breakfast	
7:30 AM - 5:00 PM	Conference Registration/Information	
8:30 AM - 9:30 AM	<p>General Session 6 Impasse. This session explores the impasse process and what it means for labor negotiations in an era of tight budgets and high expectations. Attendees will learn why early preparation is critical, and how to position their districts for stronger outcomes when bargaining reaches impasse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leonard Dietzen, Esq., Rumberger Kirk. 	Magnolia
9:30 AM - 9:45 AM	Break	
9:45 AM -10:45 AM	<p>General Session 7 Best Practices for Strengthening Employee Voice Post-Union Decertification. Explore practical strategies districts can use to strengthen employee voice and engagement after union decertification, focusing on clear communication, inclusive forums, and systems that support ongoing two-way dialogue between staff and leadership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ John Boyd, Executive Director of Government and Labor Relations/Chief Negotiator, Osceola County School District. ▪ Mark West, Chief Human Resource Officer (Retired). 	Magnolia
10:50 AM -11:50 AM	<p>General Session 8 Employer Responsibilities and expedited impasse/SB 1296. This session walks participants through the key provisions of SB 1296, including employer responsibilities, the expedited impasse framework, and implications for union activities. The session also includes interactive time to examine the practical questions raised by the law.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kevin Watson, Executive Director, FEN. 	Magnolia
Noon - 1:00 PM	Lunch Buffet	
1:10 PM - 2:10 PM	<p>Concurrent Session 1 AI in HR: From Everyday Tasks to Strategic Leadership. Artificial intelligence is already shaping how HR professionals communicate, comply, and lead. This session offers HR practitioners practical, responsible ways to use AI in daily tasks—from clear communications and simplified policies to board-ready materials and strategic decision-making—while preserving professional judgment, ethics, and the human side of HR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tonya Whithurst, Assistant Superintendent, Business Operations, Putnam County School District. <p>RIF Readiness: Contracts, Law, and Practice. This concurrent session explores common school district reduction-in-force (RIF) practices, with a focus on reviewing relevant contract language and key legal requirements. Participants will gain a clearer understanding of how statutes and collective bargaining agreements shape RIF decisions and implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Adrienne McElroy, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, Employee Relations, Charlotte County School District. ▪ LeighAnn Blackmore, Director, Labor Relations, Orange County School District. 	Cypress 1, 2 Cypress 3
2:15 PM - 2:30 PM	Break	

Wednesday, May 6 (cont.)		
2:30 PM- 3:30 PM	<p>Concurrent Session 2 AI in HR: From Everyday Tasks to Strategic Leadership. Artificial intelligence is already shaping how HR professionals communicate, comply, and lead. This session offers HR practitioners practical, responsible ways to use AI in daily tasks—from clear communications and simplified policies to board-ready materials and strategic decision-making—while preserving professional judgment, ethics, and the human side of HR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tonya Whithurst, Assistant Superintendent, Business Operations, Putnam County School District. <p>RIF Readiness: Contracts, Law, and Practice. This concurrent session explores common school district reduction-in-force (RIF) practices, with a focus on reviewing relevant contract language and key legal requirements. Participants will gain a clearer understanding of how statutes and collective bargaining agreements shape RIF decisions and implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Adrienne McElroy, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, Employee Relations, Charlotte County School District. ▪ LeighAnn Blackmore, Director, Labor Relations, Orange County School District. 	<p>Cypress 1, 2</p> <p>Cypress 3</p>
5:30 PM - 6:15 PM	Networking Reception – we encourage conference attendees to connect with their Area Directors for an informal conversation about what’s happening in their region and how it may impact their districts	Oasis

Thursday, May 7		
6:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Hotel Breakfast	
8:30 AM – 8:50 AM	FEN Annual Business Meeting. This session includes the association’s annual business meeting, featuring officer elections, membership announcements, and key updates for the year ahead. It is an opportunity for attendees to stay informed and participate in the organization’s governance.	Magnolia
8:50 AM – 9:50 AM	General Session 9 Bargaining whip-around - Share Your Wins and Challenges This session invites participants to share their recent bargaining successes, tough challenges, and practical lessons learned. It is designed to spark ideas, build confidence, and strengthen labor relations and HR practice across districts.	Magnolia

Mark Your Calendars
 IN-PERSON EVENTS AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Sep 25, 2026 DoubleTree Hotel · St. Augustine	Jan 29, 2027 Rosen Centre · Orlando
Oct 30, 2026 Hotel Alba · Tampa	Feb 26, 2027 Aloft Hotel · Tallahassee

May 4-6 2027 | 47th Annual FEN Spring Conference
 Embassy Suites Lake Buena Vista South
 Kissimmee, Florida