

Legislative Bill Summaries

Implementation considerations and compliance questions are included for discussion. Bills appear in numerical order.

CS/CS/SB 178 *Athletics in Public K–12 Schools (“Teddy Bridgewater Bill”)*

Under existing FHSAA bylaws, no school employee, athletic department staff member, or third party may provide impermissible benefits to student-athletes or their families for the purpose of participating in interscholastic athletics.

Background: In July 2025, Teddy Bridgewater, then head football coach at Miami Northwestern Senior High School, disclosed that he was personally providing Uber rides and meals to team members, practices that triggered FHSAA compliance concerns.

Key provisions:

- Requires the FHSAA to adopt bylaws expressly permitting head coaches to use personal funds to support student welfare.
- Allowable assistance includes food, transportation, and recovery services, provided in good faith.
- Caps personal fund use at \$15,000 per athletic team per year.
- Requires coaches to report any such assistance to the FHSAA in the manner the FHSAA specifies by bylaw.

Last Action: 03/11/2026 — Senate Enrolled Text (ER) Filed

SB 182 *School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program*

This bill addresses multiple areas of K–12 policy. Key provisions:

- Prohibits charter schools from dismissing students based on academic performance while under improvement or corrective-action plans.
- Revises how unused Florida Tax Credit Scholarship funds revert and are reported.
- Requires cursive writing instruction in grades 3–5, with demonstrated proficiency by the end of grade 5.
- Mandates, subject to available funding, the display of portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln alongside the Florida state motto in each public school.
- Establishes the School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program to strengthen teaching effectiveness through mentor stipends and targeted support for teachers needing assistance.

Implementation Considerations

Florida’s B.E.S.T. ELA standards already incorporate cursive expectations for grades 3–5, so the new requirement formalizes what many districts are already doing. The Department of Education will need to adopt proficiency standards tied to the new statutory mandate.

For the mentoring program, districts that elect to participate will need to identify how mentors are selected for stipends, who manages compliance and reporting, and whether participation affects other uses of educational enrichment funds under the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), since the bill authorizes drawing from that allocation.

Last Action: 04/20/2026 — Approved by Governor; Chapter No. 2026-33

CS/HB 453 Requirements for a Standard High School Diploma

This bill modifies high school graduation requirements as follows:

- Authorizes a student with a disability to substitute one school year of participation in the Special Olympics for the physical education credit required for a standard diploma, where the student's IEP team determines this is appropriate.
- Specifies that completion of two years of marching band satisfies both the one-credit physical education requirement and the one-credit performing arts requirement.

Last Action: 03/05/2026 — House Enrolled Text (ER) Filed

CS/CS/CS/SB 538 Extracurricular Activities

This bill revises eligibility, compensation, and governance rules for interscholastic and intrascholastic extracurricular activities. Key provisions:

- Allows public schools to charge activity fees to homeschool students seeking to participate in school-sponsored activities.
- Restricts students from competing at more than one school within the same school year, with limited exceptions.
- Permits school districts to reclassify athletic coaches and activity sponsors as administrative personnel and to negotiate their compensation, up to the salary of the district's highest-paid administrator.

Implementation Considerations

The bill raises three categories of concern for district administrators:

Booster club oversight. The bill authorizes school boards to adopt a policy governing the use of voluntary donations and booster club revenues to supplement coach compensation. However, it prohibits using such funds for severance pay or compensation defined under s. 1012.22, F.S. Key questions include:

- Does this provision authorize districts to regulate independent booster clubs' internal finances?
- How are booster funds delivered through payroll or direct payment—and what mechanisms ensure those arrangements are auditable?
- If direct compensation is excluded, what supplemental payments remain permissible under the statute?

Title IX and equity implications. The statute limits meaningful district oversight of booster fund distribution. Disparities in booster capacity, for example, a baseball program raising \$20,000 while softball raises \$2,000, could trigger Title IX liability regardless of whether the district controls the outcome. Well-resourced schools with stronger booster networks may also attract a disproportionate share of high-quality coaches, compounding equity concerns across the district.

Coach reclassification as administrators. Selectively reclassifying certain coaches as administrators creates immediate Title IX and equal-treatment exposure. The bill does not address how instructional duties or collective bargaining placement will be managed for reclassified coaches, nor does it cover coaches who are not district employees and receive only a stipend.

Discussion Questions

1. *Booster clubs are independent entities. If a district assumes control over its activities, does it also assume liability for its actions? How should districts manage this governance risk?*
2. *If boosters are permitted to supplement coach compensation, what mechanisms will ensure equitable support across all sports, particularly women's programs, in compliance with Title IX?*
3. *Where wealth disparities exist between schools, does booster-funded compensation create an unfair competitive advantage in attracting coaches and athletes?*
4. *If a coach is reclassified as an administrator, will they retain instructional responsibilities? If not, how will those duties be redistributed?*
5. *If a coaching role is reclassified as administrative without a substantive change in duties, what legal risks does the district face?*
6. *If a male sports coach is elevated to an administrative role, what obligation does the district have to offer the same opportunity to the corresponding female sports coach, and what are the Title IX consequences if it does not?*
7. *What safeguards exist to prevent outside interests from channeling funds through booster clubs to gain undue influence over coaching staff, particularly considering the Teddy Bridgewater bill?*

Last Action: 03/12/2026 — Senate Enrolled Text (ER) Filed

CS/HB 753 *School Counselors*

This bill exempts school counselor applicants from the requirement to demonstrate mastery of general knowledge and professional preparation as part of state educator certification, provided they hold a master's degree or higher in school counseling or general counseling with school experience, plus required fieldwork. Districts retain the authority to require that demonstration as a condition of local employment.

The bill also requires that school counselors be evaluated using performance indicators aligned with the Florida School Counseling Standards adopted by the State Board of Education.

Implementation Considerations

- Determine whether to require general-knowledge and professional-preparation assessments as a condition of local hiring, notwithstanding the state certification exemption.
- Review and update school counselor evaluation rubrics to ensure clear alignment with the Florida School Counseling Standards.
- Aligning professional development offerings with those same standards so that evaluation criteria and growth plans are mutually reinforcing.

Last Action: 03/06/2026 — House Enrolled Text (ER) Filed

CS/SB 824 *School District Unimproved Real Property*

This bill requires each school district to submit an annual inventory, as of June 30, of all unimproved real property it owns, using criteria specified by the Department of Education (DOE). The DOE must compile all submissions into a single statewide report and transmit it to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House. The report must include a district-by-district breakdown and may include DOE recommendations on how the land could be used for long-range facilities planning.

During the legislative process, charter school operators and school-choice advocates sought language that would have required districts to give charter schools priority access when selling or leasing vacant parcels. That language was not included in the enrolled bill.

Last Action: 03/11/2026 — Senate Enrolled Text (ER) Filed

CS/HB 1073 *District School Board Members' Bill of Rights*

This bill establishes a District School Board Members' Bill of Rights. Key provisions:

- Requires districts to provide each board member, upon request, free and timely access to all school district documents necessary to fulfill their constitutional and statutory duties. Any document provided to one board member must be offered to all members.
- Defines "good cause" for rejecting a nominated employee as: (1) fabrication or material exaggeration of credentials or background; (2) failure to meet minimum position requirements; or (3) revocation of the employee's educator certificate by another state.
- Prohibits requiring or incentivizing any school district employee to sign a nondisclosure or confidentiality agreement.

Implementation considerations could include adopting a protocol specifying how document requests are submitted, tracked, and fulfilled, including responsible parties (e.g., clerk, records office, general counsel) and applicable timelines and exceptions under state public records and personnel records law.

Last Action: 03/13/2026 — House Enrolled Text (ER) Filed

CS/CS/HB 1279 *Education (Omnibus)*

This broad omnibus bill amends a wide range of PreK–20 education statutes, including university performance funding, higher education accreditation, transfer-degree procedures, licensure and consumer protections, school health and safety, student scholarship and tuition rules, VPK accountability, literacy support, course and graduation requirements, instructional delivery, and school funding. It also makes targeted changes to special education, school safety, grading, dual enrollment, and bonus funding for advanced coursework.

Education Emergencies. Notably, the bill defines an “educational emergency” as existing whenever one or more schools in a district receive a “D” or “F” grade, or are identified as persistently low-performing. Under this authority, districts may recruit, place, and compensate teachers at struggling schools using flexible management strategies, including salary incentives and adjusted placement procedures, without being constrained by collective bargaining provisions on salary and assignment. Effects or impact bargaining may be requested.

Last Action: 03/16/2026 — House Enrolled Text (ER) Filed

CS/CS/SB 1296 *Public Employees Relations Commission*

This bill substantially revises Chapter 447, Florida Statutes, which governs public employee labor relations—including union recognition, operations, and collective bargaining dispute resolution. Key changes:

- Updates the Public Employee Relations Commission’s registration, certification, and recertification processes, affecting how unions are formally recognized and maintained as exclusive bargaining representatives.
- Requires a showing-of-interest form, signed by a bargaining-unit employee within the preceding 12 months, to accompany any application for certification or recertification, ensuring organizing efforts reflect current employee support.
- Authorizes the Commission to re-determine bargaining unit composition following a change in case law or statute.
- Introduces a two-part election threshold for certification and recertification: (1) at least 50% of all eligible unit employees must participate (turnout threshold), and (2) at least 50% of those voting must support the union (support threshold). These requirements are in addition to the existing 60% dues-paying membership requirement and the 30% showing-of-interest threshold needed to trigger an election.
- Narrows paid union leave for non-public-safety employees to situations where the union fully reimburses the employer for time spent on collective bargaining, grievance handling, or representing employees in disciplinary proceedings.
- Requires public employers to provide equal access to all employee organizations for communal spaces and communications systems, if similar access is granted to any other employee organization or affiliate.
- Establishes a fast-track impasse process for local government salary increases specifically appropriated by the Legislature that require changes to an existing bargaining agreement. This process does not apply to public safety bargaining units.
- Aligns various hearing procedures and timelines with the Administrative Procedure Act (ss. 120.569 and 120.57, F.S.).

Last Action: 03/17/2026 — Senate Enrolled Text (ER) Filed