

2015/2016 Florida PTA Action Platform – Current Position Statements

ARTS IN EDUCATION ESSENTIAL CURRICULA (2004) (2014) The Florida PTA recommends every school district place greater emphasis on arts education and increase opportunities for student participation in the arts incorporating the Florida Sunshine Standard approved by the State Board of Education, and

The Florida PTA urges that unless a teacher has specialized skills in the arts or is a recognized professional in their arts specialty, the arts be taught by teachers certified in their specific arts subject area and be aligned with the National Standards (No Child Left Behind) and the Sunshine State Standards, and

The Florida PTA urges the State Legislature to include and fully fund Arts instruction without cutting funding from existing programs as part of the PreK - 12 curriculum at all schools.

ASSESSMENT AND TESTING (2006) National PTA believes that valid assessment does not consist of only a single test score, and that at no time should a single test be considered the sole determinant of a student's academic or work future.

- Policy alternatives to social promotion and grade retention must be established.
- Standardized multiple-choice tests and school readiness tests should never be used with preschool and early elementary children for any purpose.

CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDING (1991) (2012) The Florida PTA encourages the Legislature to develop a comprehensive long range plan for funding the capital outlay needs of education. (1985) The Florida PTA believes that the needs of public school districts should be the first priority of PECO funding.

CASINO GAMBLING (1981) (2012) Florida PTA believes that the intrusion of casino gambling into the community would not benefit children and youth. Claims of the monetary benefits to education to be derived from proceeds of casino gambling are not factually substantiated. Florida PTA opposed the legalization of casino gambling in Florida at their 1978 convention and continues to do so.

CHARTER SCHOOLS (1996) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the Legislature to ensure that any legislative proposals regarding publicly funded Charter Schools include the following specific criteria:

- Charter schools must not be operated for profit nor be affiliated with private, religious or home schools.
- Charter schools must be open to all students regardless of race, sex, religion, physical, mental, emotional or learning exceptionalities.
- Charter schools must provide transportation as required by Chapter 234 Florida Statutes.
- Charter schools must be subject to all state and federal health, safety and antidiscrimination laws and be subject to the Florida Public Records Act (Chapter 119, FS).
- Charter schools must fall under the authority of and be accountable to the local school board
- Charter school teachers must be state certified.
- Charter school plans must provide for the maximum involvement of parents/guardians and provide clear information to all parents/guardians through public hearings.
- Charter schools must not deplete funding from existing public schools.
- Charter schools must continue the educational philosophies of School Improvement under Blueprint 2000.

CHILD PROTECTION (1996) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the legislature to maintain, improve and fully fund the current system that gives first priority to the protection and well-being of children.

CHILDRENS MENTAL HEALTH (1992) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the Legislature to fully fund a statewide comprehensive system of children's substance abuse and mental health services that must include:

- a. prevention programs which serve children in preschool programs and earlier;
- b. in-school student assistance programs to provide short-term intervention;
- c. access to individual, family and group counseling in convenient settings and times;
- d. intensive home-based services which address the needs of families in their natural environment; and
- e. Residential treatment, including crisis stabilization, inpatient facilities, therapeutic group and foster homes and post-treatment services.

CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO LEGAL COUNSEL (2007) The Florida PTA urges that the legislature require qualified legal counsel for all children in all proceedings governed by Chapter 39, Florida Statutes.*

*Judicial proceedings that deal with the care, safety and protection of children.

CLASS SIZE REDUCTION (1994) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the legislature to phase in maximum class size standards lower than those mandated by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) by the year 1999 and to establish class size standards for Exceptional Student Education classes; and

The Florida PTA urges the legislature to fully fund the capital, personnel and operational cost necessary to decrease or maintain class sizes under these levels.

National PTA supports class size reduction proposals that consider actual class size, meaning the number of students in a

teacher's room for whom that teacher is accountable, rather than pupil/teacher ratios, which do not accurately reflect teacher contacts with children. National PTA recognizes that class size reduction efforts will require a significant financial commitment for recruiting, hiring, and training qualified teachers, and increased school facilities. However, this investment will be offset in the long term by the money saved when the economic and social costs associated with grade retention and dropping out of school are reduced.

National PTA supports parents, school administrators and faculty, community members, and government officials working together to assure that research-based, successful education practices to reduce class size are replicated in their communities until all public schools in the country are effective schools.

CLINIC ATTENDANTS (1991) (2012) The Florida PTA supports the full funding through public funds of a paid, trained clinic attendant or health aide in each public elementary school during student hours.

COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLANS (1991) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the Legislature to include public schools in the infrastructure, as it is designated in the concurrency section of FS163 dealing with Comprehensive Land Use Plans.

DISTRACTED DRIVING (2012)

PTA supports the adoption and enforcement of laws that restrict the manipulation of handheld and portable communication devices while driving. In addition, PTA and its constituent associations shall collaborate with school districts, the state and federal departments of education, the state and federal departments of transportation and other organizations to promote education and awareness of the dangers and consequences of distracted driving. PTA also urges their members, adults and students, to refrain from distracted driving and serve as a positive example for the safety of our youth.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: Readiness to Start School (1998) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the Legislature to ensure that early child care and education programs are safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate by establishing licensing requirements based on statewide standards that reflect current research. These programs should be affordable, available, and accessible with assistance for parents with inadequate income, and

The Florida PTA opposes using a standardized testing tool as the basis for major decisions regarding early childhood placement or progress, or to deny entry to public education, and

The Florida PTA urges its PTA and county councils to work within their communities to make available to parents the materials, resources, and education needed to foster optimal early childhood development.

EDUCATION FUNDING AWARENESS (1996) (2012)

The Florida PTA directs its board of directors to provide information and training to its PTAs and county councils on the history, current status and processes surrounding education funding, and

The Florida PTA urges its PTAs and county to work within their communities to facilitate understanding of education funding issues at the state and local levels.

FLORIDA GUARDIAN AD LITEM SUPPORT (2007) The Florida PTA supports the expansion of the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program to ensure that every child in dependency court has a Guardian ad Litem (GAL).

FLORIDA TAX STRUCTURE (1997) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the legislature to increase tax revenue through tax structure reform and order to adequately fund services necessary to meet the educational, health, safety, recreational and other basic needs of Florida's children, and

The Florida PTA urges immediate reform of Florida's system of sales and use taxes. Exemptions for products and services should be retained only where they meet an overriding public policy interest, and

The Florida PTA supports amendments to the Florida Constitution that enhance the ability to the state to fully fund service to meet the needs of Florida's children.

FUNDING (1989) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the Legislature to place priority on the basic education programs and ensure that the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) be adequately funded to guarantee an equal educational opportunity for all children. Funding formulas must assure equalization of funding for all school districts.

FUNDING CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS (1991) (2012) Florida PTA urges the Legislature to take whatever action is necessary to fully fund strategies and programs that ensure the health, safety and education of the children of Florida.

GUIDANCE PERSONNEL (Counselors and Occupational Specialists) (1980) (2012) Recognizing the importance of early detection and treatment of small problems before they become major, and realizing that any learning problem, including an emotional one, is a deterrent to a child's educational progress, the Florida PTA strongly supports the continued expansion of the elementary guidance program in Florida schools, and

The Florida PTA supports the full implementation of a guidance and occupational specialist program utilized to provide prompt, academic, and personal counseling to students in all secondary Florida schools.

HAZARDOUS WALKING CONDITIONS (2000) (2012) We must work to eliminate hazardous conditions that threaten the health or safety of pupils who walk or are transported to their schools, including every reasonable safeguard for the students waiting, boarding and leaving school buses.

NEWBORN CONGENITAL HEART SCREENING (2008) The State of Florida should require that every baby born in a hospital in the state shall receive, prior to being discharged from the hospital, a pulse oximetry test for screening of Congenital Heart Defect with parental option to decline testing.

PARENTAL CHOICE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS (1993) (2012) Florida PTA urges the legislature to provide state funds only to publicly operated and tax supported schools thus preserving the concept of public education. Any proposal for parental choice must:

1. Provide funding for transportation;
2. Be based on equal access and equal educational opportunities for all students;
3. Provide clear information to all parents; and
4. Provide increased opportunity for parental involvement in the education of their children.

PREVENTION (2001) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the legislature to fully fund an array of coordinated and integrated prevention services to help build strong families that raise their children to be healthy, productive adults.

PTA REPRESENTATION ON FLORIDA BOARD OF EDUCATION AND RELATED ADVISORY GROUPS (2013)

The Florida PTA urges the legislature, governor and the State Board of Education to include Florida PTA representation on state commissions, committees and task forces; and The Florida PTA urges the governor and/or the legislature to include Florida PTA representation on the Florida Board of Education.

PUBLIC EDUCATION CAPITAL OUTLAY (PECO) (1995) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the Legislature to increase the rate and expand the application of the Gross Receipts Utilities Tax, and also identify additional revenue sources to adequately and equitably fund the capital outlay needs of Florida's public schools to be applied and designated for the sole purpose of providing additional revenue and not as a replacement for existing revenues.

REFORM OF SCHOOL POLICIES REGARDING ZERO TOLERANCE (2015) Florida PTA

- urges the Florida Legislature and school boards to revise disciplinary policies known as "zero tolerance" that mandate either suspension, expulsion or referral of students to juvenile or criminal court, without regard to the circumstances or nature of the offense or the students' history;
- urges school officials to exercise sound discretion that is consistent with principles of due process and considers the individual student and the particular circumstances of misconduct, and urge the state and school districts to adopt policies and procedures that enable such due process;
- supports the development of prevention programs and alternatives to suspension, expulsion or referral that will improve student behavior and school climate without making schools dangerous.

REGISTERED NURSES FOR SCHOOLS (2001) (2012) The Florida PTA encourage and support complete funding to supply a registered professional nurse to every 1,500 Florida public school students, a trained school health aide in every Florida public school, and to include future allocation formulas to increase nursing staff to keep pace with student enrollment.

RESPONSE TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT & SEXUAL VIOLENCE AFFECTING STUDENTS (2015) National PTA urges and supports the strengthening of Title IX and other federal, state and local laws that identify, address the effects of, and prohibit sexual harassment and sexual violence impacting students; and compliance by recipients of federal funds with the provisions of Title IX; and that

PTA collaborates with school administrations, institutions of higher learning, and community partners to ensure that every school:

- Provides support services for victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and
- Presents awareness and prevention programs that address sexual harassment and sexual violence affecting students, and
- Includes training on the responsibilities of educational institutions, as well as the rights of sexual violence and sexual harassment victims under Title IX and other laws and regulations.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY (1991) (2012) Florida PTA supports the efforts of the Legislature in creating a systematic approach to school improvement and education accountability, that actively seeks the input and support of parents, students and the community.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES (1999) (2012) The Florida PTA urges that the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the State Board of Education and the Legislature ensure criteria for grading public schools establishing a fair and accurate method of assessing student achievement and school performance which qualifies reliance on test score data and includes other mitigating factors such as mobility, poverty, immigration, first language and significant student improvement in calculating school performance grades. Input and suggestions made at the Department of Education public hearings, legislative committee meetings and other public venues should be considered when designing and implementing the school grading system.

SCHOOL RECESS (2015) PTA supports at least one period of recess for at least 20 minutes for each elementary student every school day; opposes denial of school recess as a disciplinary measure for academic reasons or inappropriate classroom behavior; recommends that school districts develop and implement policies for school recess that include unstructured outdoor play and unstructured indoor play for inclement weather days, educates students on safe playground rules, ensures the safety of playground equipment and develops an adequate adult to student ratio; and supports both adequate recess and physical education classes.

<p>SCHOOL TURNAROUND (2015) Florida PTA believes that school turnaround options should improve communities by focusing on the whole child and include high quality academics, supports and interventions, health and wellness, co-curricular activities, and parent/community engagement . Programs should address the needs of every child. Decisions on school turnaround must be made at the local level by school boards with the input of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, and community members, and school advisory councils. Florida PTA supports the open and transparent operation of the public school system. Public property and resources paid for by taxpayers must be protected. Turnaround schools must be operated in a manner that is fiscally accountable to the school district and the community.</p>
<p>SERVICE LEARNING (2008) Supports the funding of grants for service learning in K-12 as well as rules or legislation that allow students in appropriate grade levels to include service learning activity hours towards meeting community service requirements for graduation and for participation in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.</p>
<p>STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE (2011) The Florida PTA urges all school district superintendents and school boards to include student representation on district advisory committees; and The Florida PTA urges all school boards to establish and maintain a program consisting of student advisors to the school board; and The Florida PTA urges the Legislature and the State Board of Education to establish and maintain a program consisting of student representatives or advisors to the State Board of Education.</p>
<p>SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS (1987) (2012) Substitute teachers should have at least two years of college.</p>
<p>SUMMER LEARNING LOSS (2014) Florida PTA and its constituent associations shall educate parents, administrators, school board members, teachers and communities about the impact of summer learning loss and the advantages of summer learning and enrichment programs. In addition, Florida PTA urges policy makers at federal, state and local levels to create policies and legislation that support and fund summer learning programs with emphasis on reading and math for disadvantaged youth. Florida PTA shall also encourage collaboration and partnerships between school districts, park and recreation departments, libraries, youth-serving organizations, community and faith-based organizations, businesses, and nonprofits to provide children and youth with summer learning activities and enrichment programs.</p>
<p>SUPPORT OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS TO REDUCE CHILDHOOD OBESITY POLICY (2013) The Florida PTA will encourage members to participate in their local school Health and Wellness committees to assist in the development and implementation of district and local School Wellness Policies; and The Florida PTA will promote and encourage the use of healthy fundraisers by its constituent organizations; and The Florida PTA is dedicated to the reduction and prevention of childhood obesity in Florida. Florida PTA will continue to advocate in favor of regular physical activity and physical education in schools and support efforts to improve the nutritional value of foods and beverages served and sold in schools throughout the state.</p>
<p>SUPPORTING FLORIDA'S HOMELESS STUDENTS (2014) Florida PTA and its constituent associations shall educate their communities about of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act which is designed to aid in the education of homeless children by providing comprehensive services necessary to guarantee equal educational opportunities. In addition, Florida PTA urges policymakers to implement and full fund the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provisions in all Florida school districts. Florida PTA also urges policymakers to establish an ample funding allocation for the Title 1, Part A set-aside and Title X, which are funding sources used to support the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.</p>
<p>TAX LIMITATION (1984) (2012) The Florida PTA opposes any tax limitation by constitutional amendment which would limit the progress being made in attaining the state's goal for education and for programs that promote the welfare of children and youth.</p>
<p>TAX ON SERVICES (1988) (2012) The Florida PTA supports a tax on services, with revisions, and a full replacement of funding reduced by revision to establish a more equitable tax base to provide funds for education.</p>
<p>TAXES — COMPREHENSIVE REVENUE RESTRUCTURING (1991) (2012) The Florida PTA urges the Legislature to implement a comprehensive restructuring of Florida s tax system with the goals of guaranteeing stable and adequate funding of public schools and necessary services for children.</p>
<p>TEACHER - CAREER ADVANCEMENTS (1989) (2012) Florida PTA urges the Legislature to provide adequate funding to bring Florida's teachers' salaries up to the national average and encourage experienced teachers to stay in the classroom by fully funding a system to provide career teachers with periodic advancement and salary increases without supplanting current funding to dollars.</p>
<p>TEACHERS — CERTIFICATION FIELD (1987) (2012) The Florida PTA encourages school districts to make every effort to avoid assigning teachers to classes outside their fields of certification.</p>
<p>VOUCHER FUNDED SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY (2003) (2013) While continuing to oppose vouchers in all forms, that Florida PTA urges the Legislature to impose strict eligibility requirements on private institutions and nonpublic K-12 schools receiving public dollars through any state funded voucher, grant or scholarship programs, and at a minimum, require them to meet the same accountability standards at their cost as public schools, including, but not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School wide participation in any statewide assessment program, by mandating all current standardized tests, i.e., FCAT and Florida Writes;

2. Assignment of an annual school performance grade category designation and improvement rating, to be published in the Commissioner of Education's annual statewide assessment report;
3. Compliance with Florida Public Records Laws and requirement for independent audits to assess how taxpayer money is being spent.
4. Regulations to ensure private institutions and nonpublic schools are adequately equipped to meet the educational needs of their students.

*In accordance with Florida PTA Policies and Procedures adopted in January 2012, position statements older than 10 years will be moved to archive status unless reaffirmed as active positions of the Florida PTA. Justification for moving items to historical status sooner than 10 years includes: desired action accomplished, item no longer timely or relevant, or item replaced by more current State or National item on the subject