

**By Howard G. Burke, EdD, DRE
FACCS Executive Director**

Capital Update: 2025 Legislative Session And A Historical Review
FACCS Capital Office of Legislative Services
February 20,2025

FACCS Founders

- Dr. Al C. Janney- Dade Christian Schools
- Dr. Verle Ackerman-Hollywood Christian School
- Dr. Jerry Williamson- Gold Coast Christian Schools
- Dr. Arlin Horton- Pensacola Christian Academy
- Dr. John Kager- Trinity Christian Academy
- Dr. Jim Pound- North Florida Christian School
- Dr. Dayton Hobbs- Santa Rosa Christian School
- Mr. Howard Woods- Santa Rosa Christian School
- Dr. John McCart- Panama City Christian School

Abbreviated Primary Purposes

- To establish Christ-Centered Christian Schools; guided by a common Statement of Faith & Practice; providing a Christian/Biblical world view to students unencumbered by secular/government or parochial educational establishments.
- To hold fast maintaining Constitutionally guaranteed Freedom & Liberty under the 1st Amendment.
- To develop such services and activities as desired to carry out the individually desired affiliating ministry objectives.

Key Historical FACCS Affiliations Over Five & One-Half Decades

- The Florida Association of Christian Schools (FACS)
- The American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS)
- The Christian Legal Defense Foundation (CLDF)
- The Christian Educators Convention (CEA) (until late 1970's at Curtis Hixon)
- **FACCS Christian Educators Convention** (1977 to present at Twin Towers)
- The Florida Association of Academic Nonpublic Schools (FAANS)
- The Florida Association of Christian Colleges & Schools, Inc. (FACCS)
- The National Council of Private Schools Accreditation (NCPSA)
(Chuck O'Malley, Gil Plubell, Charlene Luna, Derick Keenan, AC Janney/Howard Burke, etc.)

- The International Association of Christian Colleges & Schools (IACCS)
- The International Alliance for School Accreditation (IACS/NCPSA)
- The Florida High School Athletics & Activities (FHSAA)
- Florida Citizens for Choice (FCC) Initial Name but today Florida School Choice Program
- Council for American Private Education (CAPE)

Ministry Autonomy

- FACCS in 1972 successfully led united efforts **to stop the legislation to license private & nonpublic schools whether non-profit or for-profit corporations**. **SB170** By **Ralph Poston** (William F. Daniels) Assistance by Reps. Art Rude, Walter Sims & Senators Jim Glisson, Dempsey Barron, WD Childers, Danny Webster)
- FACCS wrote key protective language to preserve **the autonomy of private** schools in Florida under the Governance statutes. Thus, **the Office of Independent Education & Parental Choice** has no control of your school curriculum or program. Later we assisted in writing the established with Dr. George Youstra CHOICE Accountability Standards & continue to review the **"Agreed Upon Procedures."**

Professional Credentialing, Certification, Athletics, ADA Victories

- FACCS led in nonpublic schools' accessibility to participation in the *Professional Educator Competency Demonstration Program (PECD)* for State Teacher Certification & *Master In-Service* opportunities with continuous FDOE Plan approval since the initial “Beginning Teacher Program,” & reauthorized every five-years.
- FACCS is a recognized accrediting body for schools desiring to *qualify for participation in the FHSA*. (Initially under Floyd Christian)
- FACCS clarified by amendment the Florida *Americans with Disabilities Implementation Act* that provides buildings, structures and facilities which were in existence on October 1, 1993, are exempt unless they are being converted from residential to non-residential or mixed use from massive, costly construction features.

Unemployment Compensation & Tax Liberty

- FACCS is listed in Florida Statutes F.S. 212 (7) to provide an *umbrella of protection to schools* desiring *sales tax exemption* by the Department of Revenue.
- FACCS led successful lawsuits against *the Department of Labor* eliminating the necessity of church-related schools to pay *unemployment compensation*? That is a savings of 2.7% of your annual compensation package.

Religious Exemption & Liberty Initiatives

FACCS wrote the original and continuing language granting **RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION** under F.S. 402.316 & **SCHOOL EXCLUSION** in F.S. 402.3025.

FACCS wrote legislation in 1985 that led to the opportunity of **Christian colleges** and universities to **grant degrees** in Florida.

FACCS advocated for and assisted in writing & passage of **Statutory language** for multiple ways a Christian or other form of Nonpublic school could satisfy education law, attendance requirements, **and criteria for transferable High School credits.**

FACCS wrote the language in Rule that defines **high school diploma** for DCF and related departments to allow for recognition of nonpublic school students academic attainment.

Additional Statutory & Rule Victories

- FACCS Co-labored with the Volusia County State Attorney's Office to pass and implement *an acceptable fingerprint process for private school CEOs*, and allow for full staff participation.
- FACCS assisted in multiple rewrites under "sunset rules" of sections *402.301 - 402.319, F.S.* to continue the *exclusion and exemption of schools*, and ministries with preschool, daycare, before/after care, early childhood, Kindergarten programs, and summer school.
- FACCS joint efforts allow private schools to purchase buses through *the "State Pool" purchase* system.
- FACCS amendments to the *CDL law* allows bus drivers for your school to become licensed commercial drivers at the same cost as public-school drivers.

A Few More Victories over Time

- FACCS joint efforts allow private school students to *participate equally in scholarship* funding for **the "Bright Future - Florida Academic Scholars Program" and other awards.**
- FACCS advocated for and assisted in writing & passage of the option of *home schooling in Florida* and the ultimate package of ways to satisfy education law, attendance requirements, and criteria for transferable credits assisting in the ultimate passing of the **Craig Dickinson Home School Act. (Under Commission of Ed Ralph Turlington)**
- FACCS collaborated on victorious efforts to limit the impact of *environmental inspections* and fees for **asbestos & radon inspections**, burdensome **construction mandates** under the **ADA**.

Equal Opportunity Dual Enrollment

FACCS and a consortium of FAANS agencies (FACCS, FCC, FCIS) have successfully advocated and gained “**equal access & equitable services**” to Christian, private and home school students to regain non-discriminatory access to **dual enrollment options** without a required reimbursement of tuitions by the students, tax-paying parents, or private school of attendance. This was achieved in **HB 52** during the 2021 & **SB 2524** in the 2022 Legislative Session. Since the *2023-2024 school year the allocation under specific “Articulation Agreements” between the desiring private school & a Florida postsecondary institution has been included as a specified budget allocation.*

Educational CHOICE & Accreditation

FACCS on a national level, worked to establish a recognized *Consortium of State and National Accrediting bodies*. In 1994 FACCS was awarded national recognition by the National Council for Private School Accreditation and is in the process of being *re-authorized through 2029 with dual and multiple Co-Accreditation partners*.

FACCS authored the original and revised language passed by the Florida Legislature to recognize the umbrella state & regional agencies of

The National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA)

The Regional Agencies: Middle State Association of Elementary & Middle Schools (MSA), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), New England Association; North Central, Western Association, etc. & separately: The Florida Association of Academic Nonpublic Schools (FAANS).

Bottom line.....

***FACCS is the only Christian
school accrediting association
representing you at the State
Capitol.***

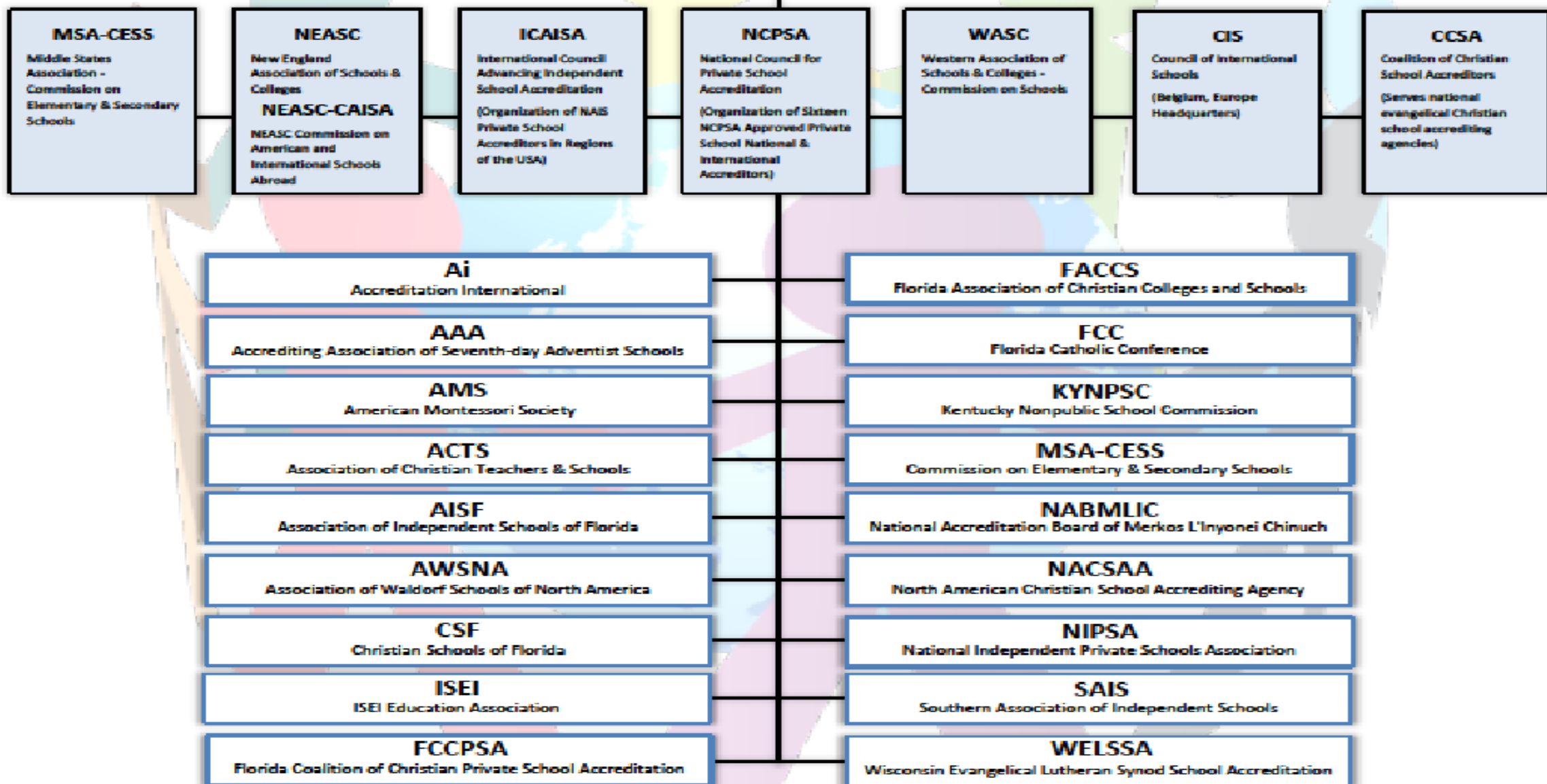
FACCS/IACCS National & International Accreditation Opportunities

Crosswalk
Relationships That
Make a Difference

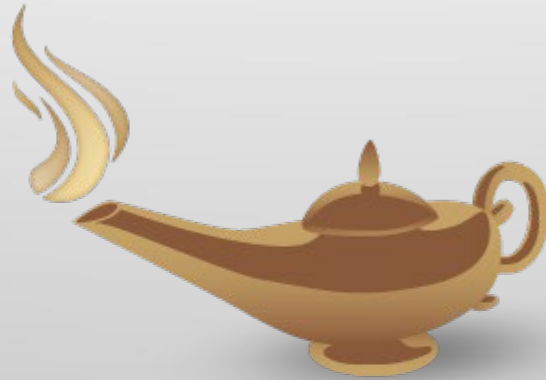
The International Alliance



The International Alliance for School Accreditation



National Council for Private School Accreditation



NCPSA

Synchronized Traditional Co-Accreditation Educational Partnerships

...Middle States Association of Elementary & Secondary Schools (MSA)*

...New England Association of Elementary and Secondary Schools

...Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools
(SACS) *AdvancED/Cognia*

...North Central Association (NCA)

...Northwest Association Accredited Schools

...Western Association of Schools & Colleges (WASC) is a current applicant to membership with NCPSEA.

** Recommended Partner for FACCS Ministries*

International Affairs Office, U.S. Department of Education (SEVIS)

Accreditation and Quality Assurance: School-Level Accreditation

- There are no specific federal laws or regulations governing the recognition of associations that accredit primary and secondary schools, and the U.S. Department of Education has no oversight role with respect to school accreditation. Most states have laws requiring or encouraging accreditation for public schools and state-chartered private schools.
- Schools that possess accreditation and state approval by authorities recognized at the state level are considered to be recognized schools in the U.S. education system. In addition, private schools that are accredited by other associations recognized by the federal Departments of Defense, Homeland Security and State are also considered to be recognized.

FEDERAL RESOURCES

- While the federal government has no control over school-level education, it does recognize and support overseas U.S. public and private schools as well as approve domestic schools that seek to admit international students.
- [SEVIS Approved Schools Map](#) is the Department of Homeland Security's interactive directory of schools approved to admit international students. It includes both secondary and postsecondary entries. **(Note: Hyperlink is desired per Maureen Dowling USDOE: maureen.dowling@ed.gov)**
- [Office of Overseas Schools](#) is the Department of State's agency assisting international private schools offering U.S.-style education. It includes links to recognized schools and associations.
- [Department of Defense Education Activity \(DODEA\)](#) provides information and links to overseas U.S. public schools recognized and operated by the federal government to serve the children of U.S. personnel stationed abroad
- <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/accrad-school.doc>

STATE RESOURCES & ACCREDITING AGENCIES for Foreign Student Process

- States approve or license, and in some cases accredit, public and private schools operating within their jurisdictions.
- [ECS Guide to State School Accreditation Standards](#) provides information on state regulations and references to relevant state laws. Compiled in 1998.
- [ECS Guide to Recent State Activities in Accreditation](#) provides update information on changes in state accreditation policies since 1998.
- [CCSSO Interactive Map of State Education Agency Websites](#) provides links to state websites, where information on school accreditation can be found.
- Schools are accredited by various agencies, including the school commissions of the regional accrediting agencies (public and many private schools) plus other national agencies.
- Each of the recognized regional accrediting agencies for postsecondary institutions also has one or more commissions for the accreditation of schools. These include:
 - [Middle States Association Commission on Elementary Schools \(MES-CES\)](#)
 - [Middle States Association Commission on Secondary Schools \(MES-CSS\)](#)
 - [Middle States Association Commission on Institution-Wide Accreditation \(MES-CIWA\)](#)
 - [New England Association Commission on American and International Schools Abroad \(NEASC-CAISA\)](#)
 - [New England Association Commission on Independent Schools \(NEASC-CIS\)](#)
 - [New England Association Commission on Public Elementary and Middle Schools \(NEASC-CPEMS\)](#)
 - [New England Association Commission on Public Secondary Schools \(NEASC-CPSS\)](#)
 - [North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement \(NCACASI\)](#)
 - [Northwest Association of Accredited Schools \(NAAS\)](#)
 - [Southern Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement \(SACSCASI\)](#)
 - [Western Association Accrediting Commission for Schools \(ACSWASC\)](#)
 - [Commission on International and Transregional Accreditation \(CITA\)](#) is an organization of 6 recognized school accreditation agencies, providing information on standards, procedures, and accredited schools in the United States and elsewhere.

Continued Listing of Recognized Agencies

- [National Association of Independent Schools \(NAIS\)](#) provides information on private school accreditation and links to recognized state accrediting agencies and accredited schools.
- [National Council for Private School Accreditation \(NCPSA\)](#) is an organization of 15 state and national accrediting agencies for private schools that adhere to similar standards. The site provides links to associations and accredited schools.
- [NCPSA Member Associations include:](#)
 - Accreditation International
 - Accrediting Association of Seventh-Day Adventist Schools
 - American Montessori Society
 - Association of Christian Teachers and Schools
 - Association of Independent Schools of Florida
 - Association of Waldorf Schools of North America
 - Christian Schools of Florida
 - Council on Occupational Education
 - [Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools](#)
 - Florida Catholic Conference
 - Kentucky Nonpublic School Commission
 - National Accreditation Board of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch
 - National Independent Private Schools Association
 - North American Christian School Accrediting Agency
 - Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation

Approved agencies must have accreditation standards provided on their web site.

“Monday Morning FACCS” & 2024-2025 Documents

- FACCS condenses, combines, and releases information to administrators from relevant agencies including legislative updates via the Capital Updates, Step Up For Students, the Florida Department of Education, and the Florida High School Athletic Association, among others.
- A detailed breakdown of all information released in the previous 10 months is available in the Administrators' Conference documents.
- A complete record of all administrative emails released is available to administrators in the FACCS Portal under Email Record.

Disclaimer

The following is provided for basic informational purposes and is not intended for publication, use for legal initiatives, and cannot be guaranteed to be accurate since there is a lapse in time between data accumulation and the seminar presentation.

***The presenter is not an attorney** and makes no claim as to originality or ownership of documentary information provided.*

2025 SESSION

FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

Note: The following information is subject to change at any time during the Florida 2025 Legislative Session set to begin March 4th & conclude May 25, 2025 is accurate as of February 20, 2025. House & Senate Bills filed this date 968+. By the end of the Session between 1850 & 3000 bills are the average considerations from 2022-2024. This is not inclusive of amendments, "Strike-Alls," and Committee Bills typically presented in concluding weeks of the Session.

Legislature Filing, Moving Bills at Exceptionally Slow Pace

As of the start of this week, lawmakers have filed 678 bills for the upcoming regular session. They have taken only two committee votes on those bills, behind the pace of other recent sessions during which legislators have pushed high profile bills forward early to make a splash with floor passage in the first week of the session. By this point in the legislative calendar in 2021 and 2023, lawmakers had already moved major legislation on participating in riots and on universal school choice through their first committees in route to early passage. Lawmakers typically file over 3,000 bills for the regular session though the last two sessions they've filed far fewer. Last session there were just 1,957 bills filed, and in 2023, 1,873 measures were filed. In 2022, lawmakers were busier, filing 3,735 bills, in 2021 they filed 3,140 and in 2020 3,578 bills were filed. Legislators have lost time this winter due to an unusual winter storm that brought a rare snowfall. But I believe the slowdown is more related to tension that has emerged between legislative leaders and Gov. Ron DeSantis as he is in his final two Sessions. Lawmakers balked at the governor's earlier special session immigration proposal, sending him instead a more measured piece of legislation that DeSantis has said was too weak. They also overrode a budget veto from last year and created workgroups that are set to start Feb 20th and beyond until the Session. The power struggle between with the Governor Vs the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate is a strong signal of the ambivalence the current legislative leadership holds in opposition to the Governor's agenda when compared to previous years.

HB 17 - Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

by Hinson, Edmonds CoSponsors: Woodson Similar HB 167 by Bracy

Davis CoSponsors: Hunschofsky, López (J), Woodson & Similar SB 338 by Arrington

Expands the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program to include additional eligibility requirements and support programs.

- Identifies Florida College System institutions and state universities to develop secondary education courses aligned with specified requirements.
- Mandates public middle schools to administer the PSAT/NMSQT to 8th grade minority and underrepresented students with a GPA of 3.5 or higher, with an option for parental exemption.
- Provides eligible students scoring 1000 or higher on the PSAT/NMSQT with SAT/ACT preparation resources and information on Bright Futures Scholarship Program requirements until they have the opportunity to take the SAT, ACT, or Classical Learning Test in 11th grade.
- Requires students to maintain a 3.5 GPA to retain access to test preparation resources.
- Allocates lottery funds to cover costs associated with the administration of the PSAT/NMSQT and related resources.
- Updates the recognition criteria for the Florida Academic Scholars and Florida Medallion Scholars awards to include students recognized by the College Board National Recognition Programs.
- Specifies requirements for volunteer service or paid work, documenting the hours, and evaluating the experiences for eligibility in both the Florida Academic Scholars and Florida Medallion Scholars awards.

HB 37 - Educator Certifications and Training by Daley & Similar HB 204 By Jones

- Revamps the training and certification requirements for Florida educators to include preparedness for mass casualty incidents.
- Amends existing core curricula for teacher preparation programs to incorporate strategies for identifying, preventing, responding to, and preparing for mass casualty incidents.
- Requires postsecondary educator preparation programs to include similar training on mass casualty incidents.
- Specifies that individuals seeking certification must complete training that includes mass casualty incident preparedness as a criterion for eligibility.
- Obligates adjunct teachers to receive training in mass casualty incidents for their certifications.
- Directs the Department of Education to develop and integrate approved mass casualty incident trainings into the continuing education and inservice training for instructional personnel, without increasing total required training hours.

SB 46 - Nonpublic Religious Postsecondary Educational Institutions by Rodriguez & Companion HB125 by Temple

- Establishes regulations and oversight for nonpublic religious postsecondary educational institutions to ensure the legitimacy of their educational credentials and advertising.
- Removes nonpublic religious postsecondary educational institutions from the list of entities exempt from the purview of the Commission for Independent Education.
- Requires such institutions to provide annual sworn affidavits to the commission with specific information including the institution's name with a religious modifier and a list of offered degree programs tailored to religious vocations.
- Mandates that each degree issued includes a religious modifier to ensure distinction from secular degrees.
- Stipulates that institutions operate consistent with commission standards and maintain fair consumer practices as per s. 1005.04.
- Commands the commission to issue annual notices to compliant institutions certifying their exemption from licensure and observance of the requirements.
- Introduces verification methods for compliance through self-reporting or third-party reviews by a designated religious nongovernmental education association.

HB 47 - Child Care and Early Learning Providers by McFarland

- Exempts public and private preschools from certain special assessments by municipalities and defines the term "preschool."
- Sets revised licensing standards for child care facilities to include various health, safety, and developmental considerations, enabling the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to classify violations based on severity.
- Implements new minimum standards and training requirements for child care personnel, including a requirement for the Department to conduct criminal and employment checks within three business days; failing this, a provisional 45-day approval is granted under supervision.
- Requires child care personnel to complete certain training programs, including mandatory introductory courses and continuing education components, utilizing both in-person and online platforms for competency evaluations.
- Stipulates exemption criteria for preschools conducting scheduled educational programs, which integrate with church or parochial schools, from certain regulatory and licensing requirements, provided they meet local health and safety mandates.
- Mandates annual reviews by county commissions to verify decisions regarding the designation of local licensing agencies for child care facilities.
- Expands the range of providers considered for the implementation of plans to eliminate redundant inspections and lays out criteria for abbreviated inspections of qualifying child care facilities.

SB 52 - School Buses by García

- Expands the definition of "school bus" within various Florida statutes to include vehicles used for transporting students to and from charter schools, as well as public and private schools.
- **Traffic Control Definitions:** Clarifies that any motor vehicle conforming to specific color and identification requirements, and used for student transport related to school activities, falls under the school bus category.
- **Driver Licenses Definitions:** Specifies that motor vehicles designed to carry more than 15 persons, including the driver, and used for student transportation, are categorized as school buses.
- **School Bus Definitions and Specifications:** Updates the legal definition to include vehicles regularly used for transporting students from private, public, and charter schools. Establishes that these vehicles must meet federal safety standards and state education board rules.
- **Safety and Standards Compliance:** Ensures that school buses meet certain occupant protection systems requirements and other operational standards for leasing and signage during non-school transport.

Personal Elaboration on SB 52

The bill changes the definition of school bus in section [1006.25](#) to include:

1. Buses that are owned by a district school board that transport private school students; or
2. Buses purchased by a private school under section [1002.42\(15\)](#).
 - The bill allows local governments to fund school buses for private schools via impact fees and discretionary sales surtax.
 - This means that private school transportation could be provided (Note: not a mandate) via local funding by:
 1. Providing funding to districts who would then provide transportation for private school students; or
 2. Reimburse private schools for the cost of purchasing (or providing funding to the private school for the purpose of purchasing) buses via the process laid out in section [1002.42\(15\)](#).

SB 70 - Instructional Hours for the VPK Education Program

by Berman CoSponsors: Smith & Companion HB 191 by Edmonds

- The bill revises the required instructional hours in Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program for both school-year and summer sessions.
- Increases required instructional hours in school-year programs delivered by private prekindergarten providers from 540 to 1,440 hours.
- Increases required instructional hours in summer programs delivered by both public schools and private providers from 300 to 480 hours, mandates these programs not start before May 1, and restricts them to the summer immediately before eligibility for kindergarten.
- Sets the same increased instructional hours of 1,440 for school-year programs delivered by public schools.
- Adjusts the calculation for a full-time equivalent student in both school-year and summer programs to match the increased instructional hours.

SB 102 - Exceptional Student Education

by Gaetz & Companion HB 127 by Kendall

- Mandates the development and implementation of a workforce credential program for students with autism spectrum disorder by the Department of Education.
- Mandates the Department of Education to develop and implement a workforce credential program by January 31, 2026, specifically designed for students with autism spectrum disorder to aid in securing employment upon graduation.
- Requires the program to allow students to earn badges that demonstrate acquisition of skills needed by employers, with each badge representing five discrete skills, including workplace safety.
- Specifies that the validation of each badge must be done by two members of the instructional staff who specialize in exceptional student education.
- Directs the Department of Education to produce an annual report from 2026 through 2030, which includes details on the badges offered, data on post-graduation employment, student participation rates, and other relevant outcome data.

HB 151 - Private School Student Participation In Interscholastic and Intrасcholastic Extracurricular Sports by Abbott CoSponsors: Plasencia CS Sponsors: Student Academic Success Subcommittee & **Companion SB248 By Simon**

- Revises criteria for private school students' participation in sports at Florida High School Athletic Association member schools.
- Mandates FHSAA collaboration with district school boards and member private schools to facilitate sports participation programs for private school students at appropriate public or member private schools if the private school does not offer the sport.
- Requires private schools with interested students to provide all student records to FHSAA upon request.
- Eliminates prior restrictions that limited eligibility to private schools with 200 or fewer students.

HB 151 Continued with comment on first Committee of Assignment

The [House Student Academic Success Subcommittee](#) unanimously advanced the first bill of the 2025 regular legislative session, aiming to address a loophole in state law regarding high school athletics. Sponsored by Marianna Republican Rep. [Shane Abbott](#), the legislation ([HB 151](#)) would allow private school students to compete in sports at other schools if their institution does not offer that sport — a change from current rules that prohibit them from playing elsewhere if their school is part of the Florida High School Athletic Association ([FHSAA](#)), which is the nonprofit governing organization in charge of regulating interscholastic extracurricular sports statewide. The bill [was amended](#) to refine and clarify its language & now has only one more committee stop in the House before it's ready for the floor, heading next to the [House Education & Employment Committee](#). Meanwhile, the Senate companion measure ([SB 248](#)), filed by Tallahassee Republican Sen. [Corey Simon](#), has yet to be heard in committee.

HB 159 - Statewide, Standardized Assessments

by Harris CoSponsors: Campbell, Eskamani & Companion SB 260 by
by Arrington

- Mandates development of multilingual versions of statewide, standardized assessments and portions of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system to better accommodate English language learners by the 2027-2028 school year.
- Stipulates that the Florida Department of Education must create these assessments and monitoring systems in the top three languages of the state's English language learner population.
- Directs the department to set criteria for appropriate circumstances to administer assessments and system components in languages other than English.
- Allows parents of English language learners to opt out of having their child assessed in a non-English language.
- Requires the department to establish a timetable and action plan for the development and implementation of these multilingual assessments and system components.

FLORIDA READING SCORES DROPPED

It should be noted, Florida Education Commissioner Manny Diaz is calling on the Trump administration to make changes to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, following [the release of results this year that showed Florida got some of its lowest scores in decades](#). Diaz, expressed surprise and dismay at Florida's steep declines in reading, and said the problem wasn't Florida's schools, but that the test is no longer a useful measure. Florida has touted its scores in the past when they've been higher. *"It is evident that the Biden Department of Education's administration of what was the previously gold standard exam has major flaws in methodology."* Florida has long touted the fact that it has done better on the NAEP than most states in elementary reading. It continued to do so in fourth-grade reading this year, though its scores dropped from 2022. Still, only Massachusetts scored higher than Florida in fourth-grade reading this time. But Florida's eighth-grade scores in 2024 were worse than 27 other states and the state's score dropped below the national average for the first time since 2015. Diaz said in his letter to federal education officials that the 2024 test focused solely on public schools and thus failed to account for Florida's "educational landscape," where thousands of students attend private schools on state scholarships, or vouchers. He also said the test likely had sampling problems and that Florida students suffered from internet access problems.

FLORIDA SAT SCORES DECLINE

Florida's SAT scores declined again this year, continuing **a three-year drop** that some experts attribute to the ongoing academic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. The average SAT score among Florida students fell to 948 out of 1600, down 18 points from 2023, following a national trend. The decline is part of a larger pattern, with the state average falling from 1017 in 2017, the last comparable year before a scoring scale adjustment by the [College Board](#). In 2024, 95% of Florida's graduating seniors — approximately 230,000 students — took the SAT, up from 90% the year prior. Typically, as the pool of test-takers broadens, average scores tend to drop. This year, Florida's reading score average dropped ten points to 493, while the math score fell eight points to 455, one of the lowest among states where over 90% of seniors take the test. Only 26% of Florida students met the math college-readiness benchmark, while 53% met it for reading and writing. The College Board cited the lingering effects of the pandemic, including disrupted learning and high absentee rates, as contributing factors. But some other education experts said **higher enrollment in private schools** and the ongoing teacher shortage also may **have played a part in the declining test scores**. Additionally, Florida's average ACT score, now at 19 on a 36-point scale, has fallen a full point since 2018, and nearly half of ACT test-takers failed to meet any college-readiness benchmarks.

HB 219 - Health Screenings For K-12 Students

by Skidmore & Companion SB 370 by Sharief

- Introduces requirements for health screenings and mental, emotional, or physical wellbeing notifications for K-12 students, ensuring parental involvement and rights.
- Requires school districts to notify parents about changes in a student's mental, emotional, or physical health services, emphasizing parental rights to control their child's upbringing.
- Prohibits school district policies that prevent staff from informing parents about their child's wellbeing or any changes to services provided.
- Bars classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity in grades prekindergarten through 8, with specific provisions for instruction in grades 9 through 12.
- Mandates school districts to inform parents annually about available health care services at school and allows parents to withhold consent for these services.
- Outlines procedures for obtaining parent's permission before administering health questionnaires or screenings to students in kindergarten through grade 3.
- Establishes a process for parents to address unresolved concerns regarding their child's wellbeing directly with school officials, potentially escalating to a special magistrate or court.
- Updates the provisions surrounding parental consent for performing health care services or screenings on minor children, detailing that written parental notification and the opportunity to opt out must be provided.

HB 261 - Middle School and High School Start Times

by Gerwig CoSponsors: Mooney, Jr., Weinberger/ Similar to HB343 By Brannan & Companion
SB 296 by Bradley CoSponsors: Davis, Yarborough

- Amends existing legislation regarding school start times for middle schools and high schools.
- Removes the previous requirement that middle schools start no earlier than 8 a.m. and high schools no earlier than 8:30 a.m. by July 1, 2026.
- Mandates district school boards to inform their communities about the health, safety, and academic impacts of sleep deprivation on students.
- Requires district school boards to consider the benefits of later start times when setting middle and high school start times.

SB 270 - Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

by Burgess

- Revises eligibility criteria for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship for students graduating from non-Florida high schools under specific circumstances.
- Requires all students to earn a standard Florida high school diploma or its equivalency unless meeting certain exceptions.
- Allows eligibility for students who complete a home education program according to specific state regulations.
- Permits students who graduate from a non-Florida high school to qualify if they lived with a parent or guardian who is or was on a military or public service assignment outside of Florida—expanding to include those who have retired from service within 12 months prior to the student's graduation.
- Maintains eligibility for students who graduate from Florida private schools compliant with certain statutes.

HB 293 - Office of Faith and Community by Bankson

- Creates the Office of Faith and Community within the Executive Office of the Governor to connect and support Florida's faith-based and community organizations and enhance their collaboration with state resources.
- Establishes legislative findings recognizing the integral role of faith and community networks in serving vulnerable populations and emphasizing the benefits of reduced bureaucracy and improved government connections to these networks.
- Defines the purpose of the Office of Faith and Community, focusing on enhancing connections and providing resources to faith-based and community-based organizations.
- Details the establishment of the Office, including the appointment of a liaison or director, and outlines its primary goals and responsibilities such as advocating for these organizations with state agencies, establishing communication lines, and identifying and reducing bureaucratic burdens.
- Specifies the responsibilities of the liaison for faith and community, including serving as a senior advisor on related issues, leading the office, and engaging with executive agencies to implement initiatives.
- Amends section 14.31, F.S., to provide that the Florida Faith-based and Community-based Advisory Council receives administrative support from the newly established Office of Faith and Community.

SB 340 - International Health Organization Policies by Gruters

- Prohibits governmental entities and educational institutions from adopting, implementing, or enforcing international health organization's public health policies or guidelines.
- Bars governmental entities and educational institutions from following any public health policies or guidelines from international health organizations, removing previous exceptions granted by state law, rules, or executive orders.

HB 387 - Prohibited Discrimination Based on Hairstyle by Bracy Davis & Companion SB 476 by Jones

- Extends protections against discrimination based on hairstyle in Florida's K-20 education system and for private schools participating in state school choice scholarship programs.
- Defines "protected hairstyle" as hairstyles historically associated with race, including hair texture and styles such as afros, braids, locks, and twists.
- Prohibits discrimination based on protected hairstyles in public K-20 education, ensuring students are not excluded from participating in or denied benefits of any program or activity based on their hairstyle.
- Amends existing nondiscrimination provisions to include protected hairstyles under the definition of race, both for public K-12 education and private schools in scholarship programs.
- Ensures all educational and activity opportunities at public educational institutions are available without discrimination based on race, including traits historically associated with race such as hair texture and type.
- Requires private schools participating in state scholarship programs to comply with antidiscrimination provisions that include protected hairstyles. **FYI: THIS IS THE SIXTH ATTEMPT TO PASS THIS LEGISLATION.**

HB 423 - Family Empowerment Scholarship Program

by Bartleman CoSponsors: Campbell & Companion SB 508 By Jones

- Amends requirements for private schools in the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program to provide specific information to parents prior to student enrollment.
- Requires private schools to provide written information to parents about the school's academic programs, policies, code of conduct, attendance policies, and specialized services and therapies.
- Mandates that parents of students with Individualized Education Plans, Education Plans, English Language Learner Plans, or 504 Plans are informed about the accommodations and therapies their child will receive.
- Stipulates that non-compliance may lead to a private school's ineligibility to participate in the scholarship program.

As Noted in FACCS Capital Update

There is a **Record Demand for K-12 School Choice Scholarships**: Applications for Florida's K-12 scholarship programs opened the first of February, setting a new record for demand. [Step Up For Students](#) (SUFS), the nonprofit administering 98% of the state's scholarships, reported that within two days, more than 120,000 students had applied for aid ahead of the 2025-26 school year, marking the highest number of applications in the program's annual enrollment. Among the applicants, 63,400 students applied for scholarships covering private school tuition and educational expenses, 33,900 students applied for Unique Abilities scholarships, which help students with special needs customize their education, and 25,700 students applied for Personalized Education Program (PEP) scholarships, designed for families guiding their children's education outside of traditional schools. Currently, more than 500,000 students in Florida use K-12 scholarships. Scholarship renewals are open until April 30, while new applications for Private School and Unique Abilities Scholarships will be accepted through November 15, 2025.

HB 431 - Background Screening of Athletic Coaches

by [Trabulsy](#)

- Revises the required date for independent sanctioning authorities to conduct a level 2 background screening for all current and prospective athletic coaches.
- Moves the effective date for mandatory background screenings to July 1, 2026, from the previously set date of January 1, 2025.
- Mandates that the background screenings cannot be delegated to individual teams, ensuring a centralized approach to screening.
- Clarifies that individuals cannot serve as athletic coaches unless they pass the level 2 background screenings without disqualification.

HB 467 - Dual Enrollment Student Eligibility By Mayfield & Companion 644 By Wright

- Expands eligibility for dual enrollment programs to include certain students from adult education programs.
- Defines an eligible student for dual enrollment as one in grades 6-12 at compliant Florida public or private schools, or students aged 16-18 in adult education programs working towards a standard high school diploma.
- Specifies dual enrollment courses may be taken during school hours, after school, or during the summer.
- States students projected to graduate high school before the postsecondary course ends cannot enroll through dual enrollment but may apply directly to the postsecondary institution.
- Exempts dual enrollment students from registration, tuition, and laboratory fees.
- Excludes applied academics, developmental education, and certain physical education courses from dual enrollment eligibility.

SB 500 - Spectrum Alert By Ávila & Similar Bills HB 345 Eskamani, & SB 460 by Arrington

- Mandates the establishment and implementation of the Spectrum Alert to address the unique challenges and safety risks faced by children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), notably their propensity to wander.
- Directs the Department of Law Enforcement, in coordination with other state departments and local agencies, to develop and implement a training program and alert system specifically tailored for locating missing children with ASD.
- Specifies that the alert system must be compatible with existing alert systems.
- Requires the training program to include crisis intervention team training for law enforcement officers to help them recognize ASD characteristics, de-escalate crises, handle interactions with children having ASD, and respond effectively to missing child reports.
- Mandates the establishment of specific policies and procedures focusing on immediate dissemination of information and enhancing the emergency response for ASD-related incidents.
- Stipulates enhancement of public awareness and understanding of autism-related elopement and community support mechanisms for children with ASD.
- Grants the Department of Law Enforcement authority to adopt rules necessary to implement and administer these provisions.

SB 500 Continued

The Bill would create a new alert and awareness program to find missing children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The proposed "Spectrum Alert System" is intended to reduce the chances of children with autism running away from a secure place or caregivers, called "elopement," or "wandering," by autism experts. "Children with ASD are prone to wander from safe environments at a higher rate than their non-autistic peers," the bill says, noting that traffic deaths and drownings often result. Drowning is the leading cause of death of children with ASD and Florida ranks fifth in the country for autistic drowning deaths, according to the bill. Under the measure, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement would coordinate with other state and local law enforcement agencies to develop and implement the new alert program. Law enforcement crisis intervention team training would also be required to help officers recognize ASD characteristics and to de-escalate crises. Training would focus on appropriate and effective response and intervention. While Ávila's bill deals with law enforcement responses and an information dissemination program when a child wanders, Democratic lawmakers Rep. Eskamani and Sen. Arrington have filed similar legislation (HB 345, SB 460) requiring public schools to create teams that would develop plans for how to deal with children with autism or other disabilities who wander off. Neither Ávila's bill, nor either of the two Democratic proposals, has received a committee assignment so far.

HB 531 - Child Care Facility and Program Background Screening Requirements

by [Hunschofsky](#)

- Revises child care facility and program background screening requirements and establishes a public awareness campaign for these screenings.
- Redefines "personnel" in child care settings, clarifying those who must undergo screenings and excluding certain volunteers from mandatory screenings.
- Defines "recreational enrichment program" as an organization providing ongoing, predominantly indoor enrichment activities for children, and exempts these programs from child care licensing requirements.
- Updates the remedies and penalties the department may pursue for noncompliance with background screening requirements, ensuring both stricter enforcement and clearer guidelines for compliance.
- Mandates the department, along with the Agency for Health Care Administration and the Department of Law Enforcement, to develop a statewide background screening public awareness campaign, utilizing diverse media outlets to inform about the screening requirements.

HB 571 - Career Planning Opportunities for Students **By Kendall**

- Enhances career planning opportunities and integration of apprenticeships into educational credits for students.
- Mandates work-based learning opportunities to be scheduled to maximize student access and participation.
- Requires high schools to provide career fairs that offer interviews with employers having registered preapprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.
- Demands that students' personalized academic and career plans be annually reviewed and updated throughout their high school years, with necessary signatures from the student, a guardian, and a counselor.
- Instructs the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education to adopt regulations for awarding postsecondary credit and career education clock hours for apprenticeship and preapprenticeship training.
- Establishes a workgroup under the Articulation Coordinating Committee to develop postsecondary course equivalencies for apprenticeship programs, with a deadline for recommendations by March 1, 2026.
- Specifies that state universities, Florida College System institutions, and career centers must award credit or clock hours based on these equivalencies, with guarantees for statewide transfer.

HB 609 - Public Postsecondary Academic Freedom **By Hinson**

- Enhances academic freedom in Florida's public postsecondary education by amending multiple statutes concerning intellectual freedom, student rights, and faculty assignments.
- Amends sections to ensure State Board of Education and Board of Governors protect Florida College System institutions and state universities from political influences in academic affairs like curriculum design and faculty appointments.
- Removes provisions that allowed these boards to shield students and staff from certain types of speech.
- Establishes a new section affirming students' rights to pursue education without governmental or institutional interference based on political or ideological grounds.
- Deletes previously authorized abilities for students to record class lectures and removes associated legal actions concerning such recordings.
- Introduces regulations allowing faculty members at state universities and college system institutions to negotiate their academic assignments without interference from governing bodies, with potential rulemaking by the Board of Governors and State Board of Education to administer this section.

HB 611 - Artificial Food Dyes in K-12 Schools By Weinberger

- Prohibits the use of specified artificial food dyes in K-12 school food programs.
- Creates Section 595.411 in the Florida Statutes, prohibiting specified artificial dyes in school programs, such as the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program.
- Lists prohibited dyes including Allura Red AC, Tartrazine, Sunset Yellow FCF, Brilliant Blue FCF, Indigo Carmine, and Fast Green FCF.
- Amends Section 1001.42, requiring district school boards to adopt policies that prohibit these dyes in food available through vending machines on school property during school hours and in multiple school food programs.
- Specifies exemptions where the dye ban does not apply, including food sold outside of school hours, at classroom parties, and food sold by other organizations like parent-teacher associations.

SB 614 - Child Care Facility and Program Background Screening Requirements by Polsky

- Expands child care facility and program background screening requirements and revises relevant definitions.
- Revises the definition of "personnel" to include employees and volunteers of recreational enrichment programs for screening purposes.
- Excludes recreational enrichment programs from the definition of "residential child-caring agencies."
- Defines "recreational enrichment program" as an entity providing child enrichment activities like dance or music instruction, but not licensed as child care under certain statutes.
- Exempts recreational enrichment programs from some licensing requirements of the Department of Children and Families.

Continuation of SB 614 Summary

- Authorizes the Department to pursue remedies against recreational enrichment programs failing to comply with screening requirements.
- Prohibits recreational enrichment programs from using or releasing certain criminal and juvenile record information outside of employment screening.
- Establishes criminal penalties for the misuse of criminal or juvenile record information by recreational enrichment programs.
- Mandates the development and maintenance of a statewide background screening public awareness campaign by the Department, in conjunction with other agencies.
- Affirms the exclusion of recreational enrichment programs from the licensing requirements and specifies the non-applicability of the license requirement to certain entities.

SB 670 - Instructional Personnel and School Administrator Salaries By Berman

- Increases the minimum base salary for full-time classroom teachers in Florida to \$65,000, and mandates adjustments to salary structures for instructional personnel and school administrators.
- Allocates funds through the Florida Education Finance Program for raising teacher base salaries and addressing salary compression.
- Establishes that the term "minimum base salary" will consider regional economic conditions and progression for experienced teachers.
- Mandates school districts and charter schools to maintain the new minimum salary without reduction in subsequent years.
- Requires school districts and charter schools to annually submit salary distribution plans and reports on fund use, including details on pay compression and district-specific progress.
- Introduces provisions for localized salary adjustment plans from 2026, to address disparities and promote equitable compensation.
- Specifies step-based salary increases and compression relief supplements in performance salary schedules, establishing clear salary progression based on experience.
- Assigns additional academic responsibilities such as coaching or mentoring roles as qualifying duties for performance-based schedules.
- Implements state teacher compensation grants to assist smaller and financially constrained districts.
- Collaborative measures to address regional salary disparities through stakeholder involvement are required in setting performance salary schedules.

SB 738 - Child Care and Early Learning Providers **By Burton**

- Amends child care and early learning regulations, focusing on licensing standards, personnel screening, and sanitation.
- Exempts public and private preschools from certain municipal special assessments, defining "preschool" as a child care facility licensed under s. 402.305.
- Revises licensing standards for child care facilities to include health, nutrition, safety, developmental needs, and sanitary conditions.
- Requires the Department of Children and Families to screen child care personnel within 3 business days, with a provisional approval system under certain circumstances.
- Revises training requirements for child care personnel to include a mandatory 40-hour introductory course and annual continuing education.
- Updates procedures for abbreviated inspections for facilities meeting specific conditions, requiring periodic review and updates of key inspection elements.
- Defines the term "large family child care home" and specifies insurance provisions applicable to these homes.
- Removed specific parent and children education provisions on viral transmission and preventive leave actions.
- **Provides exemptions from certain requirements for facilities part of religious institutions or providing exclusively to certain children while maintaining health and safety standards.**

SB 814 - Weapons or Firearms at School-sponsored Events or on School Property **By Fine**

- Amends Florida Statute 790.115 regarding weapon possession at school events and properties.
- Prohibits storing, rather than possessing, firearms or weapons at school-sponsored events or on school property.
- Authorizes the carrying of firearms on college or university properties.
- Revises the definition of "school" to include any public or private preschool, elementary school, middle school, junior high school, secondary school, or career center.
- Empowers the Department of Law Enforcement to allow colleges or universities to designate specific campus areas as sensitive locations where concealed weapons are prohibited during sporting or athletic events, contingent on the submission and approval of a security plan.
- Mandates the Department of Law Enforcement to create an electronic form on its website for colleges or universities to submit security plans for such designations.
- Amends other related statutes and reenacts multiple sections to conform with these changes, supporting background screening processes and enforcing laws against criminal offenses in various contexts.

Social Media Use by Minors HB 743 By Salzman & Companion SB 868 by Ingoglia

- Amends Florida statutes to mandate social media platforms to implement stricter controls on minor accounts and disable certain encryption features.
- Requires platforms to terminate accounts of users under 14, with a 90-day dispute period, and delete their personal information permanently if the account remains terminated.
- Mandates platforms allow both minors under 14 and their guardians to request account terminations, effective within 5 and 10 business days respectively.
- Requires social media services to disable end-to-end encryption for minors' accounts to allow parental and law enforcement access to messages.
- Imposes similar requirements on accounts held by minors aged 14 and 15, including termination procedures with parental consent and data deletion.
- Specifies that certain encryption features be disabled to enable message viewing by guardians and law enforcement in cases involving felony investigations concerning minors.
- States that if provisions for users aged 14 and 15 are legally challenged and enjoined, the same rules apply as in other sections regarding account termination and encryption disabling.

GOP Lawmakers Seek to Bar Encryption on Minors' Social Media Accounts ([SB 868](#) By Ingoglia & Companion [HB 743](#))

Today Republicans filed legislation ([SB 868](#), [HB 743](#)) that would prohibit social media accounts to have encryption features that keep law enforcement from being able to see material on the accounts during a criminal investigation involving minors. "With advances in technology and end-to-end encryption becoming more widespread, we have unintentionally created a dark space for bad guys to roam freely," Senate bill sponsor Sen. [Blaise Ingoglia](#), R-Spring Hill, said in a press release. "By banning end-to-end encryption ONLY for minors on social media platforms, it allows law enforcement to have the tools necessary to go after some of these scumbags who think it's okay to groom young children."

HB 5001- General Appropriations Act is released by Governor DeSantis

Unveiling \$115.6 Billion Dollar 'Focus on Fiscal Responsibility' Budget Recommendation

The ultimate General Appropriations Act is yet to be established. However, Gov. DeSantis gave lawmakers [a budget](#) blueprint totaling \$115.6 billion for the coming year that he said focuses on fiscal responsibility, tax relief and debt reduction. [State law](#) requires the governor to submit his budget recommendations at least 30 days before the regular legislative session. DeSantis' plan would slash \$3 billion from the current budget ([HB 5001](#)) while maintaining \$14.6 billion in reserves and eliminating 741 government positions "to operate a lean and streamlined government that maximizes taxpayer resources," [according to the governor's budget highlights](#). It would allocate \$830 million for debt reduction, aiming to pay down 50% of tax-supported debt by FY 2027-28, including \$230 million to pay off all outstanding Florida Forever and Everglades bonds. The budget proposal also includes \$2.2 billion in tax relief, proposing a permanent repeal of the Business Rent Tax over the next two years, with a 1% reduction effective Jan. 1, 2026, and another 1% reduction effective Jan. 1, 2027. The governor also recommends the creation of a \$100 million venture capital tax credit, with the "corporate income tax credit incentivizing investments in new ventures in research, innovation, science and engineering." His proposal also includes a permanent extension of the sales tax exemption for Data Center Property in an effort to incentivize artificial intelligence infrastructure growth, totaling \$3 million. The governor's budget would also provide a one-year tax break on residential mortgages, removing the intangibles tax on the first \$500,000 of a mortgage for a primary home, and various tax-free holidays (see below). Additionally, it would increase law enforcement salaries, recommending \$118.3 million in pay increases for over 4,700 state sworn law enforcement officers and more than 730 state firefighters, including a 20% increase in pay for entry level sworn officers, a 25% pay increase for veteran officers, and a 25% pay increase for state firefighters. DeSantis also proposes a \$246.7 million increase for teacher pay, funding for combatting antisemitism in Florida schools, and an increase of \$20 million for mental health and school safety, along with increased support for foster and adoptive families, including \$38.6 million to implement a new Community Based Care (CBC) funding model that "aims to incentivize efficiency and enhance the effectiveness of CBC operations while focusing on prevention, family preservation, and achieving permanency."

HB 6011 - International Health Organization Policies

By [Chamberlin](#), [Miller](#)

- Introduces restrictions on the adoption of international health organization policies by Florida governmental and educational entities.
- Prohibits governmental entities and educational institutions from adopting, implementing, or enforcing international health organization's public health policies or guidelines unless explicitly authorized by state law.
- Repeals previous provisions allowing adoption based on rules or executive orders issued by the Governor.

Federal Court Rejects Rehearing in High School Prayer Case

A federal appeals court has declined to reconsider its ruling in favor of the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) in a long-running dispute over prayer at a high school football championship game. The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta last week (February 10-14) rejected a request from Cambridge Christian School for an en banc hearing, meaning the full court will not review the case. In September, a three-judge panel of the court [unanimously upheld](#) a 2022 district court ruling, which determined that the FHSAA did not violate First Amendment rights when it blocked the school from offering a prayer over the stadium loudspeaker before a 2015 championship game at Camping World Stadium in Orlando. The court found that announcements over the loudspeaker were considered "government speech," as they were scripted and controlled by the association. While players and coaches from Cambridge Christian and Jacksonville's University Christian School prayed on the field before and after the game, those prayers were not amplified for the crowd. **Additionally, the question of preventing similar situations going forward is now moot because of a change to the law. In 2023, Florida lawmakers passed and Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law a measure ([HB 225](#)) that specifically allows pregame messages at sporting events to include religious messages as long as they are under two minutes long and are not derogatory, and the FHSAA changed its rules in accordance with that law.** The appeals panel proceeded with the First Amendment challenge because Cambridge Christian sought nominal damages.

FACCS

Religious

Exemption

Religious Exemption & Inspection Updates

***FACCS IS THE OLDEST & ONLY
RECOGNIZED RELIGIOUS EXEMPTING
ASSOCIATION IN FLORIDA STATUTE***

Historical Purpose of Religious Exemption

F.S. 402.316 & F.S. 402.3026 School Exclusion

In 1973-74 FACCS wrote the statute referred to as FS. 402.316 & later FS. 402.3025.

Integral church relation (Federal term)

Single corporation under the Church with a school

No desired government funding

Inspections were by multiple agencies (Environmental, DOH, DCF, Local)

Definition over time has changed (DCF collaboration)

Additional groups recognized (No relation to schools)

Single point of services (Clear mission of the church school; no multiple affiliations)

Same enrolled students as school day/ No add-in students

Separation of before/aftercare/extended school day

Historical Review...

Only additional exemption VBS (Mom's Day Out, Summer Camps, Latch- Key, etc. not included)

Owner Operator requirements (Clearinghouse Screening)

Training expectations (Developmentally Appropriate Practices & annual CEU achievement 10-40)

Name Changes (Originally the church, school, changes over time)

Original inspection process (Environmental, DOH, DCF, Local)

Court Class Actions (1st District Court & subsequent in counties)

Curriculum & Autonomy (Open if licensed or exempt)

Chapter 65C-22 (See **Manual for Minimum Standards for Licensing** on DCF website)

School Readiness (Federal Childcare Development Block Grant)

VPK (State funded moving from DCF/OEL to Division of FDOE under Pre-K-20) **Could be clouded by addition of Federal Monies in current session.**

Annual Required Safety Drills & More?

- “Emergency preparedness drills shall be conducted when children are in care. Each drill outlined in the emergency preparedness plan must be practiced a minimum of one time per year, and may substitute for up to three monthly fire drills as referenced in paragraph 65C-22.002(7)(e).”
- For example, a facility operating 10 months a year must conduct 8 fire drills, 1 lockdown drill and 1 inclement weather drill plus emergency drills. 10 documented drills in total are required.
- Child Care & School Safety expectations requires staff to be trained annually in the proper use of fire extinguishers.

453.7.3 Location of Fire Extinguishers and Blankets

The following is provided to show complete expectations in Florida Statute that address virtually every aspect of School Facilities, Safety, Fencing & so much more. For instance, Fire extinguishers may be located inside student-occupied spaces provided they are placed adjacent to the primary [exit](#) door, and the room door remains unlocked when the [facility](#) is occupied, and a permanently affixed sign, with a red background and white letters, reading "FIRE EXTINGUISHER INSIDE" is placed on the outside adjacent to the door. Fire extinguisher cabinets shall not be locked. Fire blankets shall be located in each laboratory and each shop where a fire hazard may exist. Fire extinguishers and fire blankets shall be readily accessible and suitable for the hazard present and shall not be obstructed or obscured from view. Extinguishers and blankets shall be on hangers or brackets, shelves or cabinets so that the top of the extinguisher or blanket is not more than 48 inches (1220 mm) above finish floor (AFF) and complies with state and federal accessibility requirements. All extinguishers shall be installed and maintained in accordance with NFPA. Extinguishers shall remain fully charged and operable at all times and have a current tag to indicate compliance.

Religious Exempt or NOT: Summer Camp Programs

REGISTRATION FOR PERMIT IS REQUIRED.

Summer day camps" and "Summer 24-hour camps" are defined in Section 409.175 F.S. "Summer day camps" are recreational, educational, and other enrichment programs operated during summer vacations for children who are 5 years of age on or before September 1 and older. "Summer 24-hour camps" are recreational, educational, and other enrichment programs operated on a 24-hour basis during summer vacations for children who are 5 years of age on or before September 1 and older, that are not exclusively educational. This is a Promulgated Rule not statute.

Administrative Related Resources

► Background Screening website:

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/background-screening/>

► Here you can:

- Log into your Clearinghouse Portal account
- View Clearinghouse user guides and videos
- View FAQs
- See a listing of National Criminal and Abuse Registry contacts

DCF
Background
Screening
Website

DCF Background Screening Contacts

Background Screening Helpdesk:

(888)352-2849

CHOICE Resource on FACCS Website



•Are you thinking about starting a private school in Florida? Know someone who is? Our sister organization, ExcelinEd, just released a new policy guide to help you get started.

What you'll find inside: Private school requirements under Florida state law

- Contact info for state officials who can assist private schools
- Information about accepting Florida private school choice scholarships
- How private school choice scholarships are administered
- Helpful links and websites
- A checklist to get you started!

Step-Up for Students Funding Information

- <https://go.stepupforstudents.org/hubfs/Scholarship%20Info/FES-UA-Scholarship-Award-Amounts.pdf>

These are the UA scholarship amounts

- <https://go.stepupforstudents.org/hubfs/Scholarship%20Info/FTC-FES-EO-PEP-Award-Amounts.pdf>

These are the regular private school chart

A comprehensive listing of all CHOICE Scholarships & multiple programs may be found at:

<https://www.stepupforstudents.org/>

Funding levels \$8000 FES-EO

Funding Levels \$10,000+ FES-UA

Funding Levels \$8000 PEP

Step-Up for Students also provides: VPK and K-5 Florida public school students who struggle with reading and/or math CHOICE Scholarships & Education Savings Account options for part-time tutoring, summer and after-school literacy programs, instructional materials, curriculum and more.

What Should Be in Student Records

There is not a specific list as such (provided by the State but may be within your district) beyond the following:

- Notarized or certified copy of birth certificate (Optional)
- Grade and academic information/progression
- Annual SAT assessment scores
- Required Health Forms for entry and continuance (birth, immunization)
- Visa's or other INS information if a foreign student
- Enrollment Data
- Athletic Forms if applicable (physical)
- Student attendance
- Spiritual/social/emotional as determined by the school
- Court decrees for custodial parent or guardian
- Any specific communication/paper trail of a legal nature between the administration & parent/students
- Ancillary notes or non-professional comments by those that may not have a clinical background are not recommended due to liability.

Annual Data Base Survey

The Private School Annual Survey for 2024-2025 was available September 1, 2024.

A private school is defined in **Section 1002.01(2) & 1002.42(2)(b), Florida Statutes**, as “an individual, association, co-partnership, or corporation or department, division, or section of such organizations, that designates itself as an educational center that **includes kindergarten or a higher grade**” and is below the college level. **However, take note if you are a VPK Program with a Kindergarten or higher grades register!**

The law further provides, “ *Each private school shall annually execute and file a database survey form on a date designated by the DOE.*”

Survey site: <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice>www.floridaschoolchoice.org/ or call 800-447-1636

Annual FDOE Survey Benefits

A school is listed in the **DOE Directory** of Private Schools

The **first step** in application to participate in Step-Up-for-Students & ALL other CHOICE scholarship programs

To receive **updates on initiatives**, changes, & issues affecting private schools from DOE, USOE, IDEA, Title 1 & 2, attendance requirements, record retention, and student immunizations

To allow eligible students in your school to **participate in Bright Future Scholarship**

The absence of such satisfactions opens a school to consequences specified in Section 775.082 & 775.083 Florida Statutes

Defunct School Records Law

- All private schools that become **defunct** (close) shall under Section 1002.42(3)(b) *"transfer all permanent information contained in student records to the district school superintendent of the public school district in which the private school was located."* The Department acts as a clearinghouse and maintains a registry of transfers of students.
- This must be in the Articles of Incorporation under the process of **"dissolution"** or a specified By-Laws of all church-related or independent or schools.

THE UNIFORM TRANSFER OF HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS

F.S.1003.25(3) Rule: (6A-1.09941)

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION UNIFORM TRANSFER OF HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS

SBER 6A-1.0994¹ The purpose of this rule is to establish **uniform procedures relating to the acceptance of transfer work** and credit for students entering Florida's public schools.

The procedures shall be as follows:

A Designed Procedure: Step One

(1) Credits and grades earned and offered for acceptance shall be based on official transcripts and shall be accepted at face value **subject to validation if required by the receiving school's accreditation**. If validation of the official transcript is deemed necessary, or if the student does not possess an official transcript or is a home education student, credits shall be validated through performance during the first grading period as outlined in paragraph (2).

If at first you don't succeed...

(2) Validation of credits shall be based on performance in classes at the receiving school. A student transferring into a school shall be placed at the appropriate sequential course level and should have a minimum grade point average of 2.0 at the end of the first grading period. Students who do not meet this requirement shall have credits validated using **the Alternative Validation Procedure, as outlined in paragraph (3).**

Try this final alternative series

(3) Alternative Validation Procedure. If validation based on performance as described above is not satisfactory, then any one of the following alternatives shall be used for validation purposes as determined by the teacher, principal, and parent:

- a. Portfolio evaluation by the superintendent or designee;
- b. Written recommendation by a Florida certified teacher selected by the parent and approved by the principal;
- c. Demonstrated performance in courses taken through dual enrollment or at other public or private accredited schools;

After this get creative!

- d. Demonstrated proficiencies on nationally-normed standardized subject area assessments;
- e. Demonstrated proficiencies on the FSA; or
- f. Written review of the criteria utilized for a given subject provided by the former school.

Students must be provided at least ninety (90) days from date of transfer to prepare for assessments outlined in paragraphs (3) (d) and (3) (e) if required.

The State Board of Education annually reviews & minimally modifies this policy.

Specific Authority 1003.25(3) FS. Law Implemented 1003.25(3) FS. History—New 8-28-00, Formerly 6-1.099, Amended 9-22-03.

Student Absence/Compulsory Attendance

Student absences, by district policy, are uniformly to be set at a maximum of 15-18 days per year, which calculates from 7.5 to 9 days per semester. Students absent more than 7.5 to 9 days in a semester should not receive credit for the subject they are absent from as they fail to achieve even the minimum clock hour equivalent required for the granting of a credit based on a daily reduction of the letter grade.

Net Instructional Hours

In simple for **K-4 & K5** the program includes a minimum of three (3) “net” hours of directed instruction or 540 hours for 180 days. The program includes a minimum of four (4) “net” hours of directed instruction for **grades 1-3**, and five (5) “net” hours of directed instruction for **grades 4-8** or 720 hours. The secondary **grades 9-12**: 1050 hours or 7 classes of 50 minutes of directed instruction for 180 days. This equals to 150 clock hours.

Florida High School Athletic Association

“FACCS Monday Mailings,” will help you to stay up-to-date on actions of the **FHSAA “Weekly Update”** on activities/actions & opportunities of the FHSAA. FHSAA Updates usually go out on Fridays via email offering multiple types of information valuable to all members and are generated from the FHSAA Gainesville Office. If you are not receiving these regularly you need to contact:

Director for Eligibility and Compliance Services FHSAA at 1801 NW 80th Blvd,
Gainesville, Florida 32606 or call 352-372-9551 x 340.

<http://www.fhsaa.org/sports/eligibility-compliance>

THAT IS ALL FOLKS!

