

## **Florida Education at a Crossroads: A Warning - for Students, Families, and Communities**

Florida's 2026 legislative session continues a multi-year effort by Governor Ron DeSantis and the Republican-led legislature to fundamentally reshape the state's education system. While many proposals introduced this year did not become law, the overall direction is clear—and concerning.

**The trend points toward increased state control over public education, reduced local decision-making, and a steady shift of support toward private and charter school alternatives.** This evolving policy landscape carries serious implications for students, families, and educators across Florida.

### **A Pattern Years in the Making**

Since 2019, GOP state leadership has enacted sweeping changes, including:

- Expanding school choice and private school funding, to the detriment of public schools
- Limiting how race, gender, and history are taught in classrooms
- Rolling back diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs in higher education
- Influencing local school board elections to align with state priorities

These actions have reshaped both K–12 and higher education, often under the banner of “parental rights” and curriculum transparency.

### **Key Laws Driving Change**

#### **Parental Rights in Education (2022)**

Often referred to by critics as the “Don’t Say Gay” law, this legislation restricts classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity. Later expansions added limits on pronoun usage and accelerated the removal of challenged books from schools.

#### **Stop WOKE Act (2022)**

This law restricts how topics such as race, privilege, and systemic inequality can be discussed in classrooms and workplaces. Critics argue it limits honest teaching of history and social issues.

#### **Higher Education Reforms**

State policies have eliminated DEI programs in public colleges and universities and

required reviews of academic courses, significantly altering campus environments and academic freedom.

## 2026 Legislative Session: Signals of What's Next

New proposals in 2026 aimed to:

- Restrict international and undocumented student access
- Regulate political activity on college campuses
- Expand state authority over student organizations

**Important:** Most of these measures **were not enacted into law this session**. However, they clearly signal future legislative priorities.

At the K–12 level, a broad education bill advanced, increasing state oversight of instructional materials and school programs. Additional proposals targeting books and classroom content fueled ongoing controversy, though not all were adopted.

### Why This Matters

Florida's public education system is at a tipping point. The cumulative effect of these policies is:

- **Reduced academic freedom for teachers and students**
- **Increased political influence over curriculum and school governance**
- **Growing pressure on public schools amid rising support for privatized alternatives**

This is not a one-time shift; it is a sustained transformation.

### A Clear Warning

Public education has long been a cornerstone of opportunity, economic growth, and democratic stability. The current trajectory raises serious concerns about its future in Florida.

If these trends continue unchecked, the result could be:

- A weakened public school system
- Greater inequality in access to quality education
- Reduced ability for students to think critically and engage openly

### Call to Action Now

The future of Florida's education system is being decided today.

- **Stay informed** about state and local education policies
- **Engage with school boards and community leaders**

- **Advocate for strong, well-funded public schools**
- **Vote in every election—local and statewide**

Your voice is essential. The stakes are too high to remain on the sidelines.

**Speak Out, Register to Vote by Mail and VOTE Blue this Election Year.**

April 2026