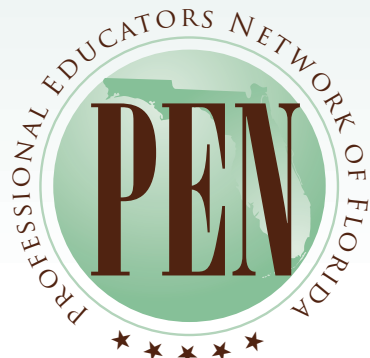


PEN Lines

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS NETWORK OF FLORIDA, INC.

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Changes in the Horizon for Florida Educators

Written by Lindsey Cole

The month of March marks an active time for the Capitol with the Legislative committees in session.

This means that there are changes on the horizon for educators, particularly in Florida where there are scores of bills up for review that has a potential direct impact on educators. This article highlights some of these bills and outlines the general premise for each.

The most scrutinized bill is the Special Teachers Are Rewarded program, known as STAR. The STAR program would allow a 5% bonus to a quarter of the schools district's instructors based in some measure on a student's test such as Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). These bonuses would be negotiated based upon student performances and would be rewarded to all faculty and staff of high-performing schools under this program. The essential role would be trying to attain the primary goal of the school as well as the improvements made by all of the students. This bill is currently in the School and Learning Council committee at the time of printing.

Other significant bills are HB 0575 and SB 0114 regarding bullying and harassment in schools. There is a great deal of disturbing personal testimony relating to this bill. The bill entitled "Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act" prohibits bullying or harassment during any education programs and activities. This also includes any bullying or harassment through any computer software. This bill just passed favorably from the Criminal Justice Committee and is now in Education Pre-K-12 Appropriations for review.

Finally, the Sales Tax/Schools Supplies & Clothing Bill is another initiative that will



particularly interest Florida educators. The idea for this bill is to exempt certain supplies in relation to school from taxes for a specific amount of days. Such items would include bound published books along with pens and pencils. It has passed in K-12 and is now in School and Learning Council.

Attending each of these meetings is an opportunity to learn more about what it means to be a teacher and the struggles they face daily. Being informed about potential bills to be passed is critical for educators to be armed with the most current information and have the ability to take part in the legislative process. Please log on to the PEN website under Florida Legislature for updates on what is happening in this session. You may also send an e-mail to admin@penfl.org requesting to be added to the Legislative Update Email News Blast.

Lindsey Cole is a legislative assistant for Bob Boyd, the General Counsel for PEN. A recent graduate from Florida State University, she is currently following many issues in relation to PEN at the Capitol. She looks forward to learning more about PEN as well as continuing to work on more legislative issues relating to PEN.

BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE BILLS THAT HAVE BEEN FILED WHICH MAY DIRECTLY IMPACT EDUCATORS:

Senate Committee Bills Filed

1. S104 Schools/Child Release Policy [SPCC]

requires school boards, private schools, and certain child care facilities to adopt policies on release of children from that facility. The policies must include a requirement for the person attempting to retrieve a child from that facility must provide picture identification. Copies of policies must be provided to DOE. In addition, copies of such policies must be available on premises of schools or child care facilities.

2. S108 (Identical to H 0403) Minority/Underrepresented Students [SPCC] creates Minority or Underrepresented Student Achievement Council

provides for appointment & qualifications of members and requires Commissioner of Education to organize initial meeting of council and the council to submit annual report to Governor & Legislature regarding students eligible to take advanced-placement courses. The DOE must provide administrative support.

3. S114 (Similar to H 0575) Bullying/Harassment/Schools [SPCC] cites act as "Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act"

prohibits bullying or harassment during education programs or activities, on school buses, or through use of data or computer software accessed through computer systems of certain educational institutions. The DOE must approve the school district's policy & its compliance with reporting procedures as prerequisites to receipt of safe schools funds, etc. This bill also establishes guidelines what each school board's bullying policy must include.

4. S162 (Identical to H 0663) Schools/Abstinence-only Instruction [SPCC]

provides parental right to know that their child will receive abstinence-only instruction. In addition, it requires that certain school principals to mail notice to parents re provision of abstinence-only instruction & right to review abstinence-only curriculum. The bill authorizes parents to have their child excused from such instruction under certain conditions; the bill provides a process for parental comment on curriculum and for filing of complaints, appeals, investigation, and corrective action regarding abstinence-only instruction.

5. H263 Public Schools/Career Education

provides for pilot projects in Broward and Duval counties designed to blend into middle school curriculum elements of career education beginning in the 2007-2008 school year. The bill provides goals of said projects, requires evaluation components and requires Council for Education Policy Research & Improvement to review said projects and provide recommendations.

6. H277 (Compare to S 0360) Students/School Attendance

revises eligibility requirements for driving privileges in that a student must show proof that he or she is regularly attending school; it also revises age for compulsory school attendance from 16 to 18 years of age. In addition, it requires that school district comprehensive programs for student progression to include use of mentors & to encourage career education curriculum for certain students. Amends 322.091, 1002.20, 1003.21,.51, 1008.25.

7. S290 High School Graduation Requirements [SPCC]

provides that the completion of a course in electricity, as specified, counts as one substitution credit in science which has laboratory component. Amends 1003.43.

8. S302 (Identical to H 0581) Student Voter Education/HS Seniors [SPCC]

encourages district school boards and nonpublic high schools to join with county supervisors of elections to provide a program of voter education for high school seniors. The bill provides guidelines for the content of educational program and requires that program of voter education be conducted during school hours.

9. S332 Public School Student Progression [SPCC]

revises components of school district student progression programs. It eliminates mandatory retention requirements for certain students in grade 3, midyear promotion. The bill also revises parental notification requirements and guidelines for remedial reading instruction and intervention strategies, and purpose of Reading Enhancement and Acceleration Development Initiative, etc. Amends 1002.20,.23, 1008.25.

10. S334 (Compare to H 0941, H 1131) School Grading System [SPCC]

removes letter grades from performance grade categories by which schools must be identified in Commissioner of Education's annual report of results of statewide assessment program. Amends 1001.42, 1002.33, .38, .415, 1003.62, 1008.33, .34, .345, 1011.62.

11. S336 (Similar to H 0447, Compare to S 0416) 9th-grade Students/Required Info. [SPCC]

requires that 9th-grade students receive instruction about the value of high school education and available postsecondary options by the second semester of a student's ninth grade year.

12. S356 Teachers/Cost-of-living Increase [SPCC]

requires Legislature to fund a cost-of-living increase in General Appropriations Act for teachers who teach pre-kindergarten through grade 12 in public school system.

13. S406 Schools/Nutrition/Health Services [SPCC]

requires nutritional standards for food that is available to school children on school campuses and requires State Board of Education to adopt rules. The bill requires that the nutritional value of meals be shown to students and parents. It also mandates that vending machines selling carbonated beverages must be replaced with vending machines that sell vegetable juice, fruit juice, and water. Additionally, if a school serves fried foods, it must use oils low in trans fatty acids. Finally, it requires school districts to provide medical screening for type II diabetes for certain students.

14. H0461 (Linked to H 0463, Similar to S 2200, Compare to S 2202) High School Athletics/Drug Testing:

requires Florida High School Athletic Assoc. to facilitate 1-year drug testing program to randomly test students participating in football, baseball or weightlifting for anabolic steroid use. It also requires schools to consent to provisions of program as prerequisite for membership in organization. Additionally students & their parents must consent to provisions of program as prerequisite for eligibility to participate in interscholastic athletics. Amends 1006.20.

15. H823 Fla. Virtual School/SEARCH Program

establishes the Students Earning Additional Recovery Credits & Honors (SEARCH) Program to provide opportunities for students to recover credits needed for graduation or to earn honors course credit or other course credit; provides for payment for additional full-time equivalent student credit to extent funded in General Appropriations Act; provides limitation on school district funding, etc. Amends 1002.37.

16. H1131 (Similar to H0941, Compare to S0334) Public School Education

provides that public school choice options include academy programs in the school district; it also requires DOE to develop a plan for establishment of said programs in public schools. It includes changes to the school grading system using letter grades to a school performance system using “Improving”, “Maintaining”, and “Declining,” along with specifying school performance

categories and a basis for designating such categories. Additionally, it changes Florida School Recognition Program to be named Every Child Matters Program. Amends Chs. 1002, 1003, 1008, 1011, 1001.42, 1012.2315.

17. S2092 Charter Schools/Pilot Program

postpones termination of academic performance-based charter school pilot program in Volusia, Hillsborough, Orange and Palm Beach counties. Amends 1003.62.

Relational Aggression Poses Risk to Students

While it may be common for educators to be concerned about students being bullied, many overlook a common form of bullying called relational aggression that pose a significant risk to students.

Relational aggression, unlike physical aggression, is the act of using relationships to hurt another individual. This form of aggression is much more difficult to identify than students who use physical violence to hurt each other yet relational aggression can be more emotionally and psychologically damaging, leading to declining student achievement and other more serious risks. Studies have shown that relational aggression, or RA, can lead to frequent school absences, depression, low self esteem, risky behavior, sexual promiscuity, drug use, and even suicide. Educators have in recent years given more attention to this form of bullying, yet the problem proliferates with many classroom teachers uninformed as to how to recognize or reduce this problem among students.

Relational aggression is:

- malicious gossip
- exclusion
- name calling and taunting
- covert physical aggression
- cyberbullying, or the use of the Internet to harm others. Websites such as MySpace and Instant Messaging are common places where RA can take place.
- any social relationship designed to hurt a peer

Some educators and parents may assert that relational aggression, like other forms of bullying is simply a rite of passage and therefore an essential part of growing up as an adolescent. However, if one looks at the affects of RA, it is clear that the social climate of adolescents can be quite harmful and must

be changed. A recent survey by the Ophelia Project revealed that 27% of students surveyed claimed that they did not feel emotionally safe in their schools. Furthermore, a study by the U.S. Secret Service showed that nearly two-thirds of the students involved in school shootings did what they did because they felt persecuted by their fellow students. RA can affect any student, regardless of age or gender, but it seems to be more prevalent among girls in middle and high school.

It can be quite discouraging for educators to see students clearly suffering from relational aggression, especially when it is seemingly impossible at times to discipline the perpetrators and help the victims deal with their situations. However, there are some practical measures that educators can take to help prevent and/or stop RA in their schools:

- model healthy communication and conflict management in the classroom
- educate students about RA and how to walk away from conflicts that result in relational aggression
- investigate the reasons that a student may be missing school or acting out in violence—it may be the result of relational aggression
- be armed with information about RA by reading books, articles and web sites devoted to the subject
- encourage administration to adopt policies about bullying that include RA
- recognize what RA can entail to stop it happening in the classroom

The good news is that many states are adopting legislative bills to fight against bullying and including relational aggression in the definition of bullying. In fact, Florida Legislature is proposing a bill called “Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act” that prohibits bullying and harassment during education programs and activities, including on busses

Pen of Florida Teacher Scholarship/ Classroom Mini-Grant/ New Classroom Startup Grants

Professional Educators Network of Florida provides Teacher Scholarships and Classroom Mini-Grants up to \$500 per award as well as \$250 New Classroom Start-Up Grants for teachers new to their school districts. The application process is simple and brief! Each teacher submits a short application describing the continuing education opportunity or class project, an itemized budget, and the academic benefit for students. All awards are competitive.

For information on the application process and to download an application, please visit our website, www.penfl.org, and click on “Scholarships and Mini-Grants”.

or through the use of computers on education campuses. The hope is that this bill will be broad enough to cover all types of harassment for all students. Educators need not wait until this proposal becomes law—they can make it the law in their own classrooms and schools.

There are many resources available for educators to become informed and effective opponents of RA, including workshops and seminars on the subject. The below are some resources for one to begin with:

- *Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and Other Realities of Adolescence* by Rosalind Wiseman
- *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* by Rachel Simmons
- *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* by Mary Pipher
- The Ophelia Project: www.opheliaproject.org
- Relational Aggression informational site: www.realationalaggression.com
- Relational Aggression national conference: www.meangirlsconf.com

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NAME _____

SOCIAL SECURITY # _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY ZIP _____

HOME PHONE _____

SCHOOL NAME _____

CHARTER SCHOOL _____

COUNTY _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Type of Membership (please check one)

- Professional (\$150 annually)
- Husband/Wife Discount (\$225)
- First Year Teacher (\$75 annually)
- Associate (\$117 annually) Non-instructional personnel
- Associate Husband/Wife Discount (\$162)
- Student (\$20 annually); cash payment only

Methods of Pay (Please check one)

- Cash (Check enclosed; payable to PEN of FL)
- Credit Card _____
Exp Date _____

Payroll Deduction:

I authorize my employer, the _____ County School Board, to deduct from my salary and transmit to the Professional Educators Network of Florida (PEN) dues annually certified by PEN in _____ (total # of your district's pay periods) equal deductions. I hereby waive all rights and claims to said monies so deducted and transmitted in accordance with this authorization and relieve the school board and all its officers from any liability thereof. This authority shall remain in effect until revoked by me in writing upon thirty (30) days written notice to the school board and to PEN.

(SIGNATURE REQUIRED)

DATE

National Endowment for the Humanities Gives Teachers Engaging Lesson Plans

For teachers looking for engaging, informative lesson plans and units, EDSITEment, an educational website (<http://edsitement.neh.gov>) from the National Endowment for the Humanities, may be just the resource teachers are searching for. This website brings online humanities resources from some of the world's great museums, libraries, cultural institutions, and universities directly to the classroom. The site has articles, lesson plans, activities, and more for use in the arts, humanities, language arts, literature, social studies, and history classrooms. Students in virtually every grade level and subject area will find the lesson plans both useful and interesting.

A quick tour around this website reveals lesson plans ranging from comparing Beatrix Potter's animal tales to modern-day

works to exploring cave art to researching foreign language web sites to finding out the cultural significance of tribal masks in Africa. There are simply too many fascinating lesson plans to fit into one year, or ten for that matter. EDSITEment is possibly one of the most comprehensive teacher resources on the web, complementing a wide range of curriculums.

In addition to offering high-quality teacher resources, the National Endowment for the Humanities gives teachers opportunities for professional development through summer institutes and seminars. The summer institutes and seminars are held across the country and abroad and offer teachers opportunities to study a wide range of topics. Best of all, these opportunities are grant-funded, meaning that teachers receive a stipend should they be selected to participate.

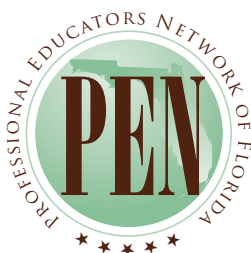
Flocabulary Uses Hip-Hop to Get Students Excited About Learning

Perhaps one of the most daunting challenges for a classroom teacher is to keep lesson plans fresh and interesting while still being effective for student learning. While there are scores of methods available for teachers to use to accomplish this, some teaching strategies stand out among the rest. Flocabulary (www.flocabulary.com/hiphopushistory) is one of these types of methods.

An innovative way to teach history, vocabulary, and just about any other subject, Flocabulary is a teaching method that uses hip-hop to increase a student's knowledge of vocabulary and important facts while making it interesting and engaging. While many educators may bemoan the prevalence of hip-hop music and its

controversial place in pop culture, Flocabulary channels young people's enthusiasm for the music genre and makes it a learning opportunity. One only needs to listen to the song "Let Freedom Ring!", a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, to understand the power of hip-hop coupled with historical facts. While this song is an example of professionals taking on hip-hop in an educational manner, the site includes downloadable books for purchase, teacher plans, and samples of Flocabulary music so teachers may also use hip-hop for student learning.

Flocabulary also offers a newsletter which offers tips on how to use the method in the classroom, tours by the creators of Flocabulary, and news on new products.



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