

# Our teachers need support from state officials — and from you

Our public education system is in crisis.

The workload has dramatically increased and it's more difficult every year to pay bills on a teacher salary. Teachers are leaving the profession in droves and many who remain have second and third jobs. Teachers also flee because of the constant attacks against their character, being called groomers, indoctrinators and "woke."

State laws regulating teacher pay have caused teachers with many years of experience to be paid nearly the same as brand-new teachers. These conditions also severely drive down recruitment. Many don't want to start a career where people are treated this way.

And this crisis is fixable.

- Our state legislators and governor need to simplify laws regulating teacher pay. In 2010, there was one law that governed teacher pay. There are now over 20. This burden needs to end and Florida needs to adequately fund public education. Why isn't our governor embarrassed that Florida ranks 48th in the nation in average public school teacher pay? He claims to have been an advocate for teachers, but the data contradicts him.

- Our School Board must find a way to pay teachers better with what is available. The shortages are hurting other teachers and hurting students. New teachers desperately need experienced teachers to mentor and guide them in this difficult career. Our board must follow through on their promise last year to find money in the budget to help experienced teachers.

- Our School Board must guard against all hate speech at public meetings. One of the consequences of the ongoing culture wars in this country is that some people have become radicalized by the lies being spread. Every time someone is allowed to use hate speech in public meetings and isn't corrected, it adds up. People hear it, extremists are emboldened, and our entire community suffers from hate and violence against the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities.

- Our district in Orange County must reduce the workload. It isn't sustainable. Ask the teachers who have left. They will tell you. The job has become impossible.

- Our district needs to adequately staff schools. Those who are working there are overwhelmed. Huge class sizes hurt student learning and teacher retention.

- The increased student behavior issues must be managed. They affect school



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safety, student learning, and teacher morale and retention.

- Principals and other district administrators must own the environment they create for educators. Micromanaging destroys trust and steals joy. Some administrators treat their employees with respect and nurture innovation. Others create an atmosphere that is oppressive and filled with

such distrust that teachers dread going to work. Where administrators value and collaborate with union members to ensure the contract is followed, educators feel respected, and students have a better learning environment. Those who disparage the union and thwart efforts to work collaboratively — who threaten retaliation for organizing for a better workplace — drive good teachers away from education.

- Our educators must stand up against hate and ignorance and show up to vote. Reasonable people far outnumber extremists, but if they don't show up when we need them, we all suffer. Talk to your friends and family and explain to them what is happening in education. Help them understand the truth — that public education is a foundation of a strong democracy; that teachers aren't the villain, ignorance is.

- Educators should be involved in their professional association. This is your advocate and it provides many opportunities to engage in making the future better. Your voice is amplified through collective efforts and working together for change.

- Parents and the community need to continue to stand with teachers. Your children are our priority and we can't serve them well in this environment. Our working conditions affect your child's learning conditions.

This crisis is affecting you even if you aren't a teacher or don't have children in schools. Low-paid and overworked teachers negatively affect our economy. It affects whether companies want to expand in Central Florida, whether teachers can afford to buy a home, or even start a family. Our democracy depends on a strong public education system. Our teachers need you. Our students need you. Stand and fight with us.

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