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## FEA: While the governor seeks to divide, we seek to unite

TALLAHASSEE — Gov. DeSantis continues to show that anyone who is not in lockstep with him will face his ire. Whether the target is Disney, an elected state attorney, school board members, school district superintendents or now our caring teachers and staff, his M.O. has been ‘do what I say, or else.’ At the Florida Education Association, we stand united to make sure every child’s education is full of excitement and love of learning that prepares them for college or the workforce. Attacks will not deter us.

“While Gov. DeSantis seeks to punish and divide, we seek to unite,” said Florida Education Association President Andrew Spar. “We respect the voices of parents, teachers, school boards, administrators and students. All have a crucial role in providing our students with the best possible education, and students’ needs must be our focus. Our schools don’t need to go back to 1950; we need to move forward toward 2050. Florida’s students deserve strong public schools.”

No matter what school or grade level they work in, every teacher in Florida deserves to have a voice in their curriculum, be supported and have the resources they need to provide meaningful lessons, and be paid a professional salary that allows them to live in the community where they work. More than 150,000 teachers, staff and professors in Florida have found their voice by joining their local, state and national unions.

While the governor touts “empowerment” and funding for teacher salary increases, Florida remains stuck near the bottom in national rankings for average teacher pay. Due to a tangled web of laws and rules governing pay, teachers with years in the classroom continue to face an “experience penalty” that can leave them making little more than new hires.

“Teachers and staff in our public schools struggle to pay rent, homeowners insurance and other bills because their pay is so low, just like so many Floridians,” Spar said. “Teachers and staff are leaving at an alarming rate, in large part due to the policies implemented under Gov. DeSantis.”

FEA and the overwhelming majority of Florida’s parents remain focused on ensuring that every child — regardless of race, background, gender identity, sexual orientation, ZIP code or ability — gets the education that he or she deserves and needs at fully resourced and staffed public schools.

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*The Florida Education Association is the state’s largest association of professional employees, with 150,000 members. FEA represents PreK-12 teachers, higher education faculty, educational staff professionals, students at our colleges and universities preparing to become teachers and retired education employees. Connect with FEA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and at <https://feaweb.org>.*