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2026 Regular Session, Week 3 Report

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Week #3 Legislative Session Update: 2026 BCPS State Legislative Priorities

Executive Summary

The third week of the 2026 Legislative Session reinforced a clear policy focus. Lawmakers are advancing measures that expand enforcement and safety frameworks, tighten governance and transparency expectations, and elevate parent-driven oversight in both instructional materials and student services. For Broward County Public Schools (BCPS), the most immediate operational signal is that several proposals would increase compliance workload, documentation expectations, and interagency coordination, while a smaller set introduces potential equity and access concerns if implementation requirements move forward without dedicated funding.

Alongside legislative activity, Week 3 also underscored the strength of BCPS advocacy and student voice in Tallahassee. Nearly 120 BCPS students and staff traveled to participate in Capitol Days (Rally to Tally), meeting directly with legislators and legislative staff to discuss initiatives important to them and to the District. BCPS also participated alongside partner organizations during Broward Days in Tallahassee and Florida School Boards Association Days, reinforcing shared priorities for public education; several School Board Members attended and observed the thoughtfulness, compassion, and leadership students brought to these conversations. On the safety and enforcement front, [SB 654](#) advanced unanimously and focuses on standardizing and tightening processes around school-zone and school-bus traffic enforcement, with repeated member emphasis on fairness, accuracy standards, and privacy protections. In parallel, [HB 757](#) moved unanimously and extends school safety requirements into the postsecondary space through guardian-program participation and new offenses tied to firearm discharge near schools, reflecting continued legislative appetite for uniform safety standards across education settings.

Week 3 also featured significant activity in parental rights and instructional oversight. [HB 1119](#) advanced after extensive debate and would strengthen processes for objecting to and removing instructional materials deemed harmful to minors, with supporters framing the bill as age-appropriateness and opponents raising constitutional and implementation concerns. [HB 173](#) also advanced and would strengthen parental consent requirements for minors seeking certain health, mental health, and educational services, with debate centered on crisis access, emergency exceptions, and safeguards for vulnerable students. Governance and transparency measures continued to move as well. [HB 1073](#) advanced and would expand school board members' access to district documents, increase transparency of meeting records and budgets, and prohibit mandatory nondisclosure agreements, while SB 380 would expand and modernize legal notice publication requirements by emphasizing continuous website posting under specified conditions. Additional measures advanced that affect educator pipeline and student supports ([HB 157](#); [HB 753](#); [SB 1718](#); [SB 206](#)), assessment and public records protections ([HB 7021](#)), special education process timelines and monitoring ([HB 615](#); [HB 859](#)), and facilities planning and funding methodology ([SB 1646](#)).

Separately, the Florida Department of Education released a Notice of Proposed Rule related to Schools of Hope. The proposed rule would establish requirements for Schools of Hope operators and for the operation of Schools of Hope within local district facilities, and it seeks to clarify criteria for operator designation and expansion, including potential co-location in underused, vacant, or surplus district facilities. This development warrants close monitoring for operational, facilities, and governance implications. Collectively, these proposals and policy signals reflect a continued shift toward more prescriptive statewide expectations for documentation, transparency, and parent-facing processes, underscoring the importance of BCPS monitoring fiscal notes, implementation timelines, and any amendments that shift responsibilities without funding.

Key highlights:

- Nearly 120 BCPS students and staff participated in Capitol Days (Rally to Tally), meeting directly with legislators and legislative staff; BCPS also engaged alongside partners during Broward Days in Tallahassee and Florida School Boards Association Days, with School Board Member participation.
- Multiple bills advanced affecting school safety enforcement, postsecondary safety standards, instructional materials challenges, and parental consent requirements.
- Governance and transparency proposals continued to move, including expanded board access to district documents and modernization of legal notice publication.
- Workforce pipeline and student-support measures advanced, including teacher mentoring, counselor evaluation/certification flexibility, educator preparation pathways, and autism micro-credential incentives.
- Special education process and monitoring proposals advanced, including IEP timelines and expanded classroom camera access upon parent request, with funding and privacy considerations raised in debate.
- The Florida Department of Education issued a Notice of Proposed Rule on Schools of Hope that would set operator requirements and clarify expansion/co-location criteria, including potential use of underused, vacant, or surplus district facilities.

Major Week 3 Legislative Actions:

Safety, Transportation, and Enforcement

- **SB 654 (Traffic Infraction Enforcement)**: Expands and refines traffic infraction enforcement tools and procedures, particularly for school zones and school bus violations, while revising fine distributions and privacy protections. Member debate emphasized no expansion of camera locations, the need for accuracy standards, maintaining checks and balances, and the intent to require flashing beacons when enforcing 15 mph school-zone limits. Vote: Reported favorably, 14-0.
- **HB 757 (School Safety)**: Authorizes public postsecondary institutions to participate in guardian programs, creates a new firearm discharge offense near schools, and strengthens school safety requirements. Minimal debate; broad bipartisan support. Vote: Reported favorably, 20-0.

Instructional Materials, Parental Rights, and Student Services

- **HB 1119 (Materials Harmful to Minors)**: Defines “harmful to minors” and strengthens processes for objecting to and removing objectionable instructional materials. Debate centered on age-appropriateness and parental rights versus First Amendment/Miller test concerns and implementation strain on teachers and media specialists. Vote: Reported favorably, 16-5.
- **HB 173 (Parental Rights)**: Strengthens parental consent requirements for minors seeking certain health, mental health, and educational services. Debate focused on crisis hotlines (including whether 211/988 are covered), emergency exceptions, STI treatment access, and safeguards for students in unsafe home situations. Vote: Reported favorably, 19-7.

Governance, Transparency, and Public Accountability

- **HB 1073 (School Districts):** Enhances school board members' access to district documents (free and timely), increases transparency of meeting records and budgets, and prohibits mandatory nondisclosure agreements. Debate addressed chain-of-command concerns, scope of "nonpublic" documents, and whether a statewide solution is appropriate. Vote: Reported favorably, 15-3.
- **SB 380 (Legal Notices):** Expands "governmental agency," revises "publicly accessible website," and requires continuous website publication of certain legal notices under specified conditions; framed as flexibility and cost savings as notices shift to digital. Vote: Reported favorably with CS, 8-0.
- **SB 620 (Candidate Qualifying):** Requires candidates seeking public office to disclose dual citizenship. Vote: Reported favorably, 10-0.
- **HB 4027 (Hillsborough County Public Schools): Transitions** Hillsborough superintendent from appointed to elected partisan position pending voter approval via referendum. Vote: Reported favorably, 20-5.

Workforce, Preparation, and Student Opportunity

- **HB 157 (School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program):** Establishes a mentoring program to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student achievement, including a \$3,000 stipend per mentee (particularly for retired-teacher mentors). Members raised questions about workload, guardrails to prevent over-claiming mentees, and expansion beyond D/F schools. Vote: Reported favorably, 18-0.
- **HB 753 (School Counselors):** Establishes new evaluation criteria for certified school counselors and removes two educator certificate requirements as barriers to entry while maintaining advanced degree requirements. Discussion highlighted high counselor-to-student ratios. Vote: Reported favorably with CS, 18-0.
- **SB 1718 (Educator Preparation and Certification):** Expands educator preparation institute enrollment and creates pathways for temporary certification for those with expired certificates, while strengthening professional learning access and reinstatement processes. Vote: Reported favorably, 6-0.
- **SB 206 (Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder):** Requires an autism micro-credential and provides expanded incentives for teachers of students with autism; members discussed DOE implementation capacity and broader supports. Vote: Reported favorably, 10-0.
- **SB 564 (Student Volunteers at Polling Locations):** Clarifies eligible high school students may volunteer at polling locations for community service hours without violating restrictions on private support for election activities; discussion clarified volunteer versus paid roles and scholarship-hour rules. Vote: Reported favorably with CS, 6-0.
- **SB 1062 (Speech and Debate):** Creates statewide infrastructure and support for speech and debate education from K through postsecondary; discussion referenced a recurring \$500,000 appropriation to support teacher endorsement and program expansion. Vote: Reported favorably with CS, 6-0.

Student Supports, Exceptional Student Education, and Records

- **HB 615 (Individual Education Plans):** Requires timely evaluations, notifications, and orientations for students qualifying for and receiving IEPs; framed as reinforcing federal requirements with local accountability timelines; members raised resource questions and noted no fiscal note. Applies to public and charter schools. Vote: Reported favorably with CS, 14-0.

- **HB 859 (Exceptional Students and Video Cameras in Public Schools):** Expands video and audio in eligible self-contained classrooms upon parent request where $\geq 50\%$ of students are ESE; includes privacy protections (blurring) and storage expectations; appropriation language removed while separate funding is pursued; debate referenced a Broward pilot and an estimate of ~\$2.7M statewide. Vote: Reported favorably, 17-0.
- **HB 7021 (OGSR/Examination and Assessment Instruments):** Extends the repeal date of the public records exemption for certain examination and assessment instruments from Oct. 2, 2026 to Oct. 2, 2031. Vote: Reported favorably, 18-0.

Facilities, Early Learning, and Health

- **SB 1646 (Educational Facilities):** Revises the formula for facility funds and requires specific processes for constructing educational facilities tied to safety, design, and selection standards. Vote: Reported favorably, 6-0.
- **HB 765 (Childcare and Early Learning Services):** Revises childcare definitions, licensing requirements, and exemptions and creates a dedicated early learning endowment fund intended to blend philanthropic and taxpayer dollars to support childcare affordability and scholarships. Vote: Reported favorably with CS, 15-0.
- **HB 1201 (Student Health and Safety):** Expands the Department of Health's epilepsy education program and revises school requirements to support students with seizure disorders; members emphasized staff training and response readiness. Vote: Reported favorably, 17-0.

Alignment with BCPS Priorities:

- **Funding & fiscal exposure:** Several proposals add process requirements (timelines, documentation, monitoring, posting) that could increase workload and costs; BCPS should track fiscal notes and any unfunded mandate risk.
- **Workforce:** Mentoring, counselor pipeline changes, educator preparation pathways, and autism micro-credential incentives align with recruitment and retention priorities but may require implementation planning and sustainable funding.
- **Safety & well-being:** Enforcement and safety measures continue to advance with strong support; operational impacts will hinge on privacy safeguards, local coordination, and implementation timelines.
- **Technology & data protection:** Assessment public-records exemptions and emerging digital notice requirements reinforce a statewide push toward tighter information governance and standardized transparency mechanisms.
- **Academic equity:** Bills affecting access to services and instructional materials may create uneven impacts across student populations depending on implementation, family circumstances, and resource availability.

Next Steps:

The Legislative Affairs team will keep tracking education bills as they move through committees and floor votes, focusing on proposals that add new district requirements, limit local oversight, or raise equity concerns.

- Monitor bill movement, amendments, fiscal notes, and any bill substitutions.
- Draft clear, short talking points for leadership on high-visibility issues that may prompt community questions.