



Legislative Affairs Department
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2026 Regular Session, Week 7 Report
February 23 – February 27, 2026

Week #7 Legislative Session Update: 2026 BCPS State Legislative Priorities

Executive Summary

Week 7 activity showed continued acceleration of K–12 and cross-cutting measures with direct operational implications for school districts, with multiple education, safety, ethics, and early learning proposals advancing on strong votes. Committee debate this week frequently centered on implementation mechanics—traffic flow and safety standards near schools, oversight and accountability structures, and how new requirements would be operationalized without creating unmanageable compliance burdens. Floor action in the House advanced several high-impact K–12 measures, including a broad education package and school safety expansion, alongside ESE-related proposals that continue to increase documentation and parent-facing process expectations.

For BCPS, the dominant signals this week are (1) expanding safety and threat-assessment record sharing requirements that extend into postsecondary settings, (2) continued movement on ESE compliance and student safety measures (elopement planning and classroom cameras), (3) governance and ethics protections that reinforce transparency and whistleblower safeguards, and (4) sustained momentum on educator preparation/certification and student support staffing (counselors). Early learning proposals also advanced with a focus on streamlining regulatory requirements while maintaining oversight of direct-support organizations.

House and Senate leadership have appointed budget conferees to negotiate the approximately \$1.4 billion difference between their respective spending plans, including a roughly \$300 million gap in proposed K–12 education funding (with the House higher). Senate Appropriations Chair Ed Hooper will lead budget conference negotiations for the Senate, and House Appropriations Chair Lawrence McClure will lead for the House. For Pre-K–12 education, Senator Danny Burgess will chair the Senate conference committee, and Representative Jenna Persons-Mulicka will lead House Pre-K–12 conference negotiations.

Key Highlights

- **[HB 129 \(Florida Virtual School\)](#)** was reported favorably in House Education & Employment (15–0), revising admissions priorities, board powers, reporting obligations, and funding opportunities.
- **[HB 423 \(Student Elopement\)](#)** was reported favorably in House Education & Employment (16–0), requiring SAFE Teams and school elopement plans for students with disabilities.
- **[HB 753 \(School Counselors\)](#)** was reported favorably in House Education & Employment (16–0), establishing new counselor evaluation criteria and easing certain certification barriers.

- [**HB 1437 \(Conversion Charter Schools\)**](#) was reported favorably with a committee substitute in House Education & Employment (13–3), expanding dispute mediation options and capital outlay eligibility under certain conditions.
- [**SB 896 \(School Safety\)**](#) was reported favorably with a committee substitute in Senate Appropriations (11–6), expanding guardian programs into public colleges and strengthening campus safety and record transfer requirements.
- House floor action advanced multiple K–12 measures, including [**HB 1071 \(Education\)**](#) passed the House (82–31), [**HB 757 \(School Safety\)**](#) passed the House (83–25), [**HB 859 \(Exceptional Students/Video Cameras\)**](#) passed the House (111–0), and [**HB 561 \(Educator Preparation and Certification\)**](#) passed the House (112–0).
- [**SB 1022 \(Children’s Initiative\)**](#) passed the Senate floor (37–0), creating new children’s initiatives in Bay and Broward counties under not-for-profit management with transparency requirements.

Major Legislative Actions

K–12 governance, accountability, and broad education packages

- [**HB 1071 \(Education\)**](#): passed the House (82–31): broad K–12 package revising spending prohibitions, parental rights provisions, teacher certification elements, and accountability requirements for public and private schools.
- [**SB 7036 \(Education\)**](#): reported favorably in Senate Appropriations Committee on Education (22–0): omnibus education measure revising state education laws to streamline local rulemaking, expand school choice and safety options, and strengthen academic and operational requirements; discussion included teacher salary supplement placement and expanded “educational emergency” authority.

School safety, campus safety, and threat assessment records

- [**HB 757 \(School Safety\)**](#): passed the House (83–25): expands the school guardian program and updates safety measures across K–12 and public postsecondary institutions, including a new firearm offense near schools and updated security funding and record-sharing guidelines.
- [**SB 896 \(School Safety\)**](#): reported favorably with a committee substitute in Senate Appropriations (11–6): expands guardian programs to public colleges, creates a new firearm discharge offense near schools, strengthens campus safety requirements, and mandates transfer of student threat assessment records to Florida College System institutions and state universities.

Exceptional student education (ESE), student supports, and student safety

- [**HB 423 \(Student Elopement\)**](#): reported favorably in House Education & Employment (16–0): requires each public school to establish a SAFE Team and adopt an elopement plan to safeguard students with disabilities prone to elopement.
- [**HB 859 \(Exceptional Students and Video Cameras in Public Schools\)**](#): passed the House (111–0): requires installation and maintenance of video cameras with audio in self-contained ESE classrooms and updates related parent and district procedures.

Workforce pipeline, certification, and student support staffing

- [**HB 561 \(Educator Preparation and Certification\)**](#): passed the House (112–0): expands and streamlines teacher certification, preparation, and reinstatement pathways and strengthens professional development collaboration.

- [**SB 1718 \(Educator Preparation and Certification\)**](#): reported favorably in Senate Appropriations Committee on Education (23–0): expands educator preparation institute enrollment, adds a pathway for temporary certification for expired certificates, reinstates prior coverages/endorsements upon reinstatement, and strengthens professional learning access.
- [**HB 753 \(School Counselors\)**](#): reported favorably in House Education & Employment (16–0): establishes new evaluation criteria for certified school counselors and eases certain certification requirements for aspiring counselors; debate emphasized counselor shortages and caseloads.
- [**SB 182 \(School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program\)**](#): reported favorably with a committee substitute (8–0): establishes a DOE mentoring program to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement; questions focused on start date and mentor placement logistics.

Early learning and child care

- [**SB 1690 \(Child Care and Early Learning Services\)**](#): reported favorably with a committee substitute in Senate Appropriations (17–0): streamlines early learning services by revising parental notification requirements, clarifying licensing exemptions, updating terminology, and establishing a professional recognition center; members focused on oversight of the direct-support organization and removal of certain notice requirements.
- [**HB 765 \(Child Care and Early Learning Services\)**](#): reported favorably with a committee substitute in House Health and Human Services (21–0): revises definitions and licensing standards, creates a Florida Child Care Fund, and updates insurance, curriculum, and professional recognition provisions.

Charter schools, private schools, and facilities

- [**HB 1437 \(Conversion Charter Schools\)**](#): reported favorably with a committee substitute in House Education & Employment (13–3): adjusts dispute resolution/mediation requirements for mutual management plans and expands access to capital outlay funds under certain conditions; debate raised questions about timing and scope.
- [**HB 833 \(Private School Facilities\)**](#): reported favorably in House Education & Employment (15–0): allows certain small private schools to be treated as permitted uses in specified zoning districts and operate in existing facilities meeting modified fire code standards.

Athletics, extracurriculars, and student opportunity

- [**HB 1253 \(Athletics in Public K–12 Schools\)**](#): reported favorably with a committee substitute in House Education & Employment (17–0): requires FHSAA bylaws allowing coaches to use personal funds for student athletes subject to conditions and annual limits; questions focused on liability, transportation, and equity across schools.

Children’s initiatives and child welfare

- [**HB 933 \(Children’s Initiative\)**](#): reported favorably in House Health and Human Services (23–0): establishes new children’s initiatives in Bay and Broward counties to improve services for disadvantaged children and families.
- [**SB 1022 \(Children’s Initiative\)**](#): passed the Senate floor (37–0): creates new children’s initiatives in Bay and Broward counties under not-for-profit management with state transparency requirements.
- [**HB 395 \(Dependent Children\)**](#): passed the House (116–0): requires quarterly meetings between DCF/community-based care lead agencies and lived-experience organizations to inform child welfare improvements.

Ethics, public records, and government operations (cross-cutting)

- [**HB 603 \(Ethics for Public Employees\)**](#): reported favorably in House State Affairs (26–0): expands the definition of “relative” to include foster parents and foster children.
- [**HB 139 \(Adverse Personnel Actions and Ethics Complaints\)**](#): reported favorably in House State Affairs (26–0): strengthens protections against retaliation for disclosing specified ethics violations and adjusts Commission on Ethics disclosure facilitation.
- [**SB 332 \(Public Records and Public Meetings/Private Property Rights\)**](#): reported favorably in Senate Rules (21–0): authorizes closed attorney-client sessions for certain property rights claims and keeps related records confidential until claims are resolved.
- [**SB 964 \(Financial Disclosures\)**](#): reported favorably in Senate Rules (22–0): requires certain gift and honorarium expense reports to be filed with the Commission on Ethics.
- [**SB 1612 \(Electronic Payments to Local Governments\)**](#): reported favorably in Senate Rules (21–0): requires local governments to accept electronic payments, including online payment options.

Technology, civics, and related education initiatives

- [**SB 1694 \(Technology Education\)**](#): reported favorably in Senate Rules (23–0): expands technology education requirements by integrating AI into general education and high school computer science courses.
- [**SB 1062 \(Speech and Debate Education\)**](#): reported favorably with a committee substitute in Senate Fiscal Policy (19–0): establishes Florida Speech and Debate Week and creates a statewide debate initiative.
- [**HB 1059 \(Speech and Debate in Education\)**](#): reported favorably in House Education & Employment (19–0): establishes Florida Speech and Debate Week and expands statewide civics, speech, and debate programming.

Higher-conflict items to monitor

- [**HB 995 \(Public Employees Relations Commission\)**](#): reported favorably in House State Affairs (17–8): revises union certification and bargaining processes; members raised constitutionality and fairness questions.
- [**SB 1632 \(Ideologies Inconsistent with American Principles\)**](#): reported favorably in Senate Appropriations Committee on Criminal and Civil Justice (5–3): debate focused on broad wording and undefined terms that could chill speech; sponsor indicated clarifying amendments may follow.
- [**SB 194 \(Charlie Kirk Day of Remembrance\)**](#): reported favorably in Senate Fiscal Policy (12–6): debate questioned appropriateness and divisiveness; amendment discussion included alternative civic engagement framing.
- [**HB 045 / SB 212 \(Sexual Offenders and Sexual Predators\)**](#): advanced with divided votes (House committee 13–3; Senate floor 31–6): increases residency restrictions and expands prohibited areas; debate raised concerns about breadth, housing impacts, and child safety.

Alignment with BCPS Priorities

Retaining High-Quality Staff

- Continued movement on educator certification and preparation pathways ([**HB 561**](#); [**SB 1718**](#)) and mentoring supports ([**SB 182**](#)) aligns with recruitment, retention, and pipeline strengthening.
- The counselor-focused proposal ([**HB 753**](#)) reflects legislative attention to student support staffing capacity and workload.

Strengthening Operations

- Governance and transparency measures advancing this week (ethics and disclosure-related bills) reinforce expectations for clear processes and documentation.
- The broad education packages ([HB 1071](#); [SB 7036](#)) may carry significant operational and compliance implications depending on final provisions, timelines, and rulemaking requirements.
- Local government operations proposals (e.g., electronic payment mandates) may create implementation workstreams that intersect with district partners and municipal services.

Addressing the Funding Gap

- Several advancing measures create implementation workload (SAFE Teams and elopement planning, ESE classroom camera requirements, expanded safety and record-sharing requirements) that may require staffing, training, and technology investments.
- Provisions affecting capital outlay eligibility and facilities use ([HB 1437](#); [HB 833](#)) should be monitored for fiscal and facilities planning implications.

Enhancing Safety & Mental Health

- School and campus safety proposals ([HB 757](#); [SB 896](#)) continue moving, with particular relevance to threat assessment record transfer, guardian program expansion, and firearm-related offenses near educational settings.
- Student safety measures for vulnerable populations ([HB 423](#)) and classroom monitoring requirements ([HB 859](#)) reinforce a continued legislative focus on safety, supervision, and parent-facing accountability.

Promoting Academic Equity

- Measures focused on student supports and access (counselors, elopement planning, children's initiatives) advance equity-related service delivery for students with disabilities and disadvantaged communities.
- Civics and speech/debate initiatives ([SB 1062](#); [HB 1059](#)) continue moving, potentially expanding access to civic learning and student leadership opportunities.

Next Steps

- Continue monitoring House-passed omnibus measures ([HB 1071](#); [HB 757](#); [HB 859](#); [HB 561](#)) for Senate posture, amendment activity, and implementation timelines.
- Coordinate internal impact scans with Academics, Student Support Services, HR, IT, Safety/Security, and Legal on high-workload compliance items (ESE cameras, elopement planning, threat assessment record transfer, guardian program expansion).
- Track fiscal notes and potential funding supports for safety, technology, and staffing-related mandates; flag any unfunded implementation risks early.
- Prepare a short implementation crosswalk for leadership for the highest-momentum items (what changes, owner, start date, and cost/technology needs), and align external messaging with BCPS legislative priorities.