

SRPE February 2, 2016 Legislative Update

Parents and Students making great strides with legislation. Deaf ears are being turned towards Educators.

Educational Choices

Voucher schools are gaining momentum as a people's choice for an education alternative from underperforming schools. Approximately 10,000 parents and students marched on Tallahassee. This Rally in Tally was held on Monday, January 19th in support of the **Florida Tax Credit Voucher Program**.

On Tuesday, Jan. 26th parents showed up in large numbers at the State Capitol advocating for **HB 833 Public School Recess in grades K-5**.

Educational Choice CS/HB 669 Parent and Student Rights Requires school districts to establish a process for parents to requests that his or her child be transferred to another classroom teacher.

Student discipline and safety

Victor Hugo once said, "**He who opens a school door, closes a prison.**" Let's keep our doors open yet safe. Let's keep our students in school.

School districts would have to amend zero tolerance policies, currently mandated by the state, under [SB 490](#) and [HB 1139](#). Schools would be required to draft policies that encouraged alternatives to expulsion or referrals to law enforcement. The bill also refines which violations would lead to the arrest of a student by a school resource officer.

The Legislature is also considering [SB 1368](#) and [HB 1215](#), which would require a resource officer be placed at every school.

A concern with school based resource officers is that many schools tend to turn over the discipline issues to the law enforcement officers. Citing that if the school's only tool is a hammer, then it tends to see every problem as a nail. Students need successful alternatives rather than punitive.

If a student breaks a school rule, zero tolerance policies require a harsh punishment, such as expulsion or suspension, regardless of whether the infraction was an accident or stemmed from extenuating circumstances.

Critics contend that zero tolerance policies disproportionately affect minority students — funneling mostly black and Hispanic kids into what is called the "school-to-prison pipeline."

[SB 268](#) and [HB 229](#) would require all districts to revise their bullying and harassment policy every three years, to include mandatory reporting procedures and a way for someone to anonymously issue a report, too. Districts must also include explicit bullying and harassment provisions in discipline policies. Social Media cyberbullying is inclusive of Bullying and Harassment policies.