



2026

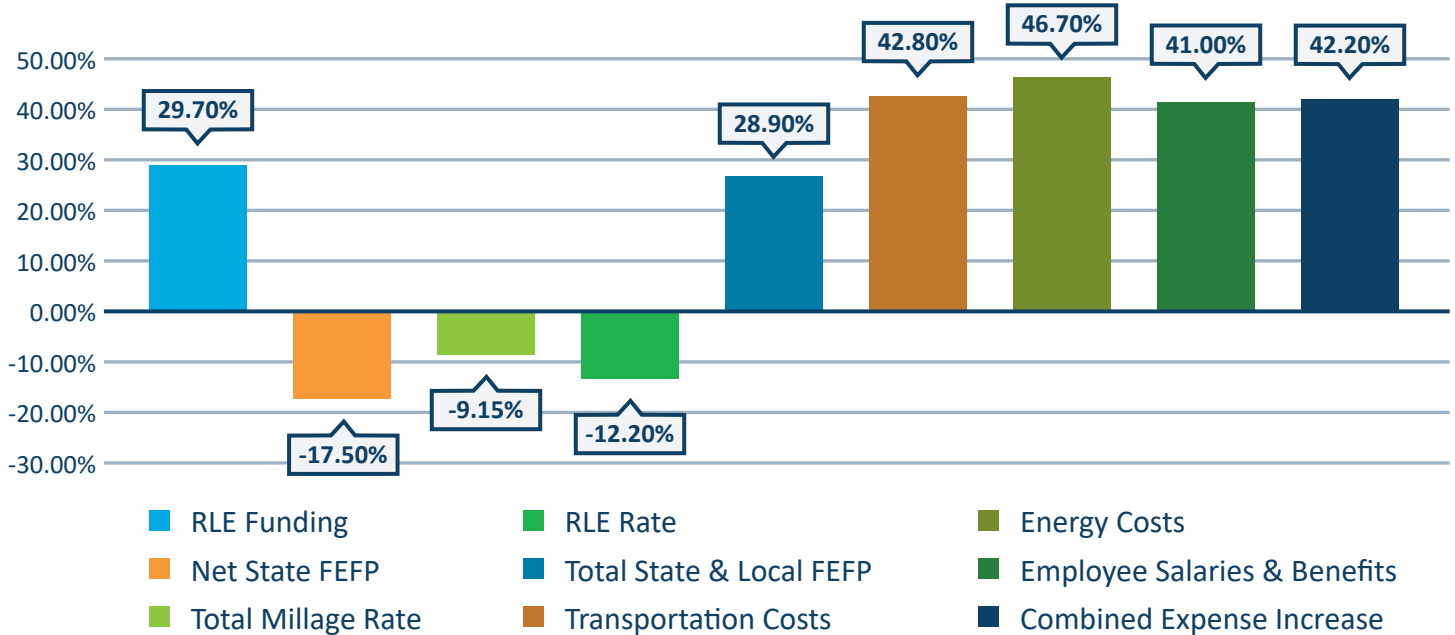
LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

PRIORITY 1 – ADEQUATE & ACCURATE FUNDING

The first priority for Sarasota County Schools, an Academically High-Performing District as defined in F.S. 1003.621 for the 2026 Legislative Session, is to ensure adequate and accurate district funding. Without adequate and accurate funding, no other priority can be implemented at the highest level.

This priority includes providing additional flexibility under F.S. 1003.621 such as additional allowable transfers of certain costs like bus fuel and instructional materials to capital funding, additional charter school application/extension requirements regarding academic performance, and fees that can be charged for certain services. Below is a breakdown, highlighting the importance of adequate funding for our district, with comparisons of cost increases from the 2021-2022 school year to the current year's allocations.

FEFP Revenue vs. Required District Expenses



We are proud of the compensation & benefits package we offer employees, including increasing our starting teacher salary to \$60,000 this school year, second highest in the state. This investment aligns with the Governor's goal of "prioritizing competitive pay as a key strategy to recruit and retain high-quality educators." However, the cost of benefits like health care (+46%), FRS contributions (29.6%), energy costs (+46.7%), transportation costs (+41%) and others have outpaced FEFP funding increases. Funding should stay in alignment with these required expenditures.

MORE ON THE BACK!



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PRIORITY 2 – LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR ALL

The district supports continued efforts to ensure that all education providers receiving state funds are held to the same standards of accountability, transparency, and compliance. All providers, including public schools, charter schools, and private schools receiving state-funded scholarships, should meet the same requirements for student performance, financial oversight, and operational standards. Aligning regulations ensures that families and taxpayers have a clear understanding of how funds are being used across all providers. Uniform standards help parents make informed decisions and guarantee that students receive comparable levels of support and quality regardless of the provider.

PRIORITY 3 – IMPROVED SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING TRACKING

The district also supports improved tracking of scholarship funding in the FEFP. This includes multiple strategies. The Florida Department of Education should transition to a modern student information system that can accurately track where state-funded students are attending school, ensuring integrity in reporting and in funding allocations. There should also be the creation of a separate "district" in the FEFP for scholarship students. Establishing a scholarship district would prevent scholarship students from being reported in public school district enrollment counts, resulting in more reliable data for state and local decision-making. Ensuring scholarship dollars flow through a distinct mechanism prevents distortions in district funding formulas and helps districts plan responsibly for their students.

PRIORITY 4 – SCHOOLS OF HOPE

The district supports legislation to clearly define “persistently underutilized” in a manner consistent with the existing definition of “persistently low performing.” This definition should provide objective criteria and transparency in identifying schools. “Persistently Underutilized” can be defined as a school that’s actual enrollment is below 70% of the available permanent facility student stations, as reported in the Florida Inventory of School Houses report, for at least 3 of the previous 5 years. Additionally, Schools of Hope should share the costs of maintaining and preserving the portion of district facilities they occupy, protecting taxpayer investment and ensuring equitable treatment across all providers.

MORE ON THE FRONT!