



FROM THE COMMISSIONER'S DESK

February 2026



The Commissioner's Message about Mid-Year Progress Monitoring Results

Teachers,

I am thrilled to announce that mid-year progress monitoring results on the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) showed significant increases since the beginning of the year. I commend the hard work of students across our state and the dedication of teachers whose classroom instruction is pivotal to these gains.

On the FAST English Language Arts Progress Monitoring, 49% of students are performing at or above grade level, which is an increase of 10 percentage points since the beginning of the school year and an increase of 4 percentage points compared to the same time last year. This means that about 50,000 more students are now achieving academic excellence in English Language Arts compared to this time last year.

On the FAST Mathematics Progress Monitoring, 34% of students are performing at or above grade level, an increase of 18 percentage points from the beginning of the school year and a 3 point increase over last year. That's nearly 20,000 additional students demonstrating mastery in math this school year compared to the same time last year.

Sincerely,
Anastasios Kamoutsas

MID-YEAR PROGRESS MONITORING RESULTS



AMERICA250FL CONTESTS

To honor the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, the Florida Department of Education, Florida Department of State and Volunteer Florida have invited all Florida students in grades K-12 to participate in the America250FL art and essay contests. These contests provide students an opportunity to honor Florida's contributions to America.

The America250FL art contest is open to all K-5 students in Florida. Six winners will be selected and will receive a 2-year Florida College Plan scholarship provided by the Florida Prepaid College Foundation.

The America250FL essay contest is open to all students in grades 6-12. Eight winners will receive a 2-year Florida College Plan provided by the Florida Prepaid College Foundation.

All entries must be **received** by 5 p.m. (ET) on Monday, March 16, 2026. We encourage you to have your students participate in these contests. More information can be found at America250FloridaContest.com.

AMERICA250FL ESSAY AND ART CONTESTS

#1 IN WORKFORCE EDUCATION

This month, Governor Ron DeSantis announced Florida's achievement as the number one state in the nation for workforce education, fulfilling Executive Order 19-31 five years ahead of the 2030 goal.

This achievement underscores Governor DeSantis' more than \$12 billion investment in workforce education and adds to Florida's strong record of excellence, including national recognition in higher education, talent attraction, and education freedom. Together, these results solidify Florida's position as a national leader in preparing a highly skilled, future-ready workforce through strategic investments and industry-aligned programs.



#1 IN WORKFORCE EDUCATION

CHILDREN'S DAY AT THE CAPITOL

Every year during Legislative Session, leaders and students from across Florida gather in Tallahassee for Children's Week Florida, the state's largest annual celebration of our commitment to children and teens.

I had the joy of reading to students in "Storybook Village," where their curiosity, imagination, and excitement were on full display. There is nothing more inspiring than witnessing that energy firsthand.

Children's Week serves as a powerful reminder of Florida's commitment to ensuring every child is healthy, ready to learn and equipped to reach their fullest potential.



CIVICS EVENTS

February was a busy month for civics education. Since taking office, Governor DeSantis has championed efforts to improve the state's civics education and the success of these events prove Florida's investment in civics is paying off.

The 2026 cohort of the 55-hour Civics Seal of Excellence Endorsement course launched in January. Hundreds of available seats filled up immediately. Through this course, teachers across the state will be better equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide high-quality civics instruction.

50 teachers from across Florida also attended the Capitol Complex Professional Learning event, where they participated in hands-on learning sessions designed to build content knowledge and provide practical classroom resources.

The Florida College System hosted the inaugural Sunshine State Debate in which nearly 100 postsecondary student participants competed using the Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate style. The event showcased the students' mastery of civic discourse and thoughtful persuasion.

Additionally, the annual Florida Civics and Debate Initiative Day at the Capitol was held, with 50 civics and debate students attending. These students received first-hand knowledge of how state government works, participated in a mock session on the House floor, and even had the opportunity to interact with government and elected officials.

We are grateful for the support of the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative and the Florida Debate Initiative. Their partnership and commitment helped make these events possible.



SUNSHINE STATE DEBATE RECAP

RESILIENCY

Resiliency Florida offers a planning guide to help schools host events centered on building resilience. We encourage you to speak with your school leader about sharing the many Resiliency Florida resources at an upcoming event. These resources include the Resiliency Coach Training, the Resiliency Reading List, and Resiliency Parent Resources, which are all designed for parents and children to have conversations about resiliency at home.



RESILIENCY FLORIDA SCHOOL EVENT PLANNER

SUGGESTED READING

Literacy skills developed during formative years are essential for students to succeed both academically and in life, and reading comprehension develops as students engage with interesting and meaningful books. Teachers and parents are encouraged to recommend these books to students.

George Washington by Philip Abraham

This biography explores the life and legacy of George Washington, tracing his journey from a young surveyor in Virginia to the first President of the United States. The text emphasizes his character, perseverance, and commitment to the ideals of liberty and self-government, making it a strong addition to any classroom or school reading list focused on America's founding era.

Recommended for grades K-2.



The Life of Rosa Parks By Kathleen Connors

Through this text, Kathleen Connors introduces readers to Rosa Parks, detailing her early life in Alabama, where she experienced racial segregation. It describes how these experiences shaped her strong sense of fairness and courage. The text explains how one simple but powerful choice helped transform American history.

Recommended for grades 3-5.

