



June 2, 2020

CONTACT: Joni Branch, (850) 201-3223 or (850) 544-7055

FEA releases PreK-12 reopening recommendations

Virtual news conference planned for 1 p.m. today

TALLAHASSEE — Final recommendations for reopening PreK-12 public school campuses were released today, June 2, by the Florida Education Association (FEA). The recommendations, attached, will be discussed at a virtual news conference at 1 p.m. EDT.

The PreK-12 recommendations are the work of the 25-member Statewide Committee to Safely Reopen Florida's Public Schools, which was organized by the FEA and brings together a diverse group of stakeholders invested in the success of our students and public schools. The committee began work on May 21 to develop recommendations in five areas: Ensuring Student Success, Social and Emotional Wellness and Support, Safe Working and Learning Conditions, Investment in Our Neighborhood Public Schools, and Public Health and Safety.

"These recommendations are meant as a foundation, as a floor to discussions on how to reopen schools. They are a conversation starter with input from the people who know our students and schools best," said FEA President Fedrick Ingram, who served as committee chair. "There are only about 70 days before our students are scheduled to return to campuses. It is imperative that we move forward now to make that return safe and successful. We look forward to working with the education commissioner and local districts to bring about the best possible outcomes for kids."

EVENT DETAILS

What: News conference on final recommendations for reopening PreK-12 public schools

When: 1 p.m. EDT today, June 2

Where: Virtual, via Zoom

Registration link for media:

https://floridaea.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_XgFyrj9gSVyqAVGO2dQJXg

Who: FEA President Fedrick Ingram, Vice President Andrew Spar, Secretary-Treasurer Carole Gauronskas and representative members of the Statewide Committee to Safely Reopen Florida's Public Schools
(For a full list of PreK-12 committee members, see attached report.)

A second reopening committee, focused on higher education and organized by the United Faculty of Florida (UFF) and the FEA, will present recommendations at a news conference at 1 p.m. EDT Wednesday, June 3. Details on that event will be provided in a separate advisory.

The PreK-12 and higher education committees based their work on the best available information regarding reopening campuses during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. For links to those resources and background on the FEA/UFF reopening effort, visit <https://feaweb.org/covid19/reopen/>.

Participants in each committee included educators, medical experts and a diverse range of education stakeholders. They brought to their work a deep well of knowledge about Florida's students, public schools and communities, along with a deep commitment to acting in the best interest of all of our state's children.

Voices from the Statewide Committee to Safely Reopen Florida's Public Schools

Carol Cleaver, Escambia County teacher, facilitator of Student Success subcommittee

"During this pandemic, students and educators have had their worlds turned upside down. Through the end of the school year, teachers made a valiant effort to continue academic instruction in as consistent a way as possible — but we must be honest and admit that performing under these types of circumstances does not allow for the high quality education and face-to-face relationships that students deserve. We must further acknowledge the likelihood of interruptions and contingencies in the school year to come, and make every effort to protect the instructional time we do have with students.

"The focus needs to be on achieving academic progress. Determining a student's ability to perform on a standardized test or school improvement percentages should not be our concern when we are endeavoring to make up for lost time from last school year and remain adaptable in the year to come. School testing and evaluations should not be conducted in the 2020-2021 school year.

"While school year calendars and curriculum platforms may be determined by administrators and legislators, it is the teachers and education staff professionals themselves who ultimately do the work of educating children. Please capitalize on our experience, input and concern for Florida's children by bringing us to the planning table."

Al Culp, Escambia County teacher, facilitator of Safe Working and Learning Conditions subcommittee

"The Working Conditions subcommittee members strongly support compliance with the CDC recommendations because those guidelines are based on science. My group acknowledges that following the CDC's guidance will be challenging and costly, but our first priority has to be the safety and well-being of our students, the teachers, and their families. If decisions are based on considerations other than preventing the spread of this virus, it is a near certainty that students, faculty members and families will get sick. Our recommendations reflect our understanding that taking the advice of doctors and scientists will lead to better outcomes for our stakeholders than decisions made based on the ease of their implementation. "

Suzanne Minor, M.D., FAFP, facilitator of Public Health and Safety subcommittee

"Reopening schools during this pandemic is a complex issue. The safety of students, families, employees, and the community is paramount, requiring balancing the need for society to return to normal with the need for society to remain safe from the virus."

David Richardson, Miami Beach city commissioner, facilitator of Investment subcommittee

"There are many health and infrastructure needs in public schools related to the crisis caused by Covid-19. We recognize that none of these needs can be accomplished without adequate state and federal funding. This investment is crucial to Florida's economic recovery related to the pandemic."

#

The Florida Education Association is the state's largest association of professional employees, with more than 145,000 members. FEA represents pre K-12 teachers, higher education faculty, educational staff professionals, students at our colleges and universities preparing to become teachers and retired education employees.