



Legislative Report

*A summary of final legislative actions
in the 16 SREB states based on the
2012 SREB Legislative Reports*

2012 Final Report
September 2012

SREB

Final legislative and budget actions

Alabama (<http://www.legislature.state.al.us/>)

After debating issues such as charter schools, prison overcrowding, job creation and further changes to the state's immigration laws, the Legislature approved budgets for the upcoming fiscal year and completed its regular session in mid-May. For 2012-2013, the state General Fund budget, which supports government operations excluding education, is less than \$1.7 billion — down 5.8 percent from the original 2011-2012 appropriation. The 2012-2013 Education Trust Fund budget, which supports education and education-related expenses, is \$5.4 billion, down 3 percent.

Two-year colleges operate with \$316.1 million (down 1.2 percent), while universities operate with \$1 billion (down 3.5 percent). Tuition and fee increases in 2012-2013 for undergraduate university students range from 3.9 percent to 8.9 percent; tuition and fees remain unchanged at one institution and decline 1.9 percent at another. Community college tuition is up about 1.5 percent at most institutions; one institution raised tuition 5.3 percent, while another enacted a 9.5 percent increase. Tuition and fees remain level at Marion Military Institute.

State funds for K-12 education total nearly \$3.8 billion (down 2.9 percent); of that amount, \$3.5 billion (down 3 percent) is school formula funding. Transportation funding included in the school formula funds is down 11.2 percent to \$262 million.

While funding for most education programs is level or reduced in 2012-2013, the budget provides \$28 million (up 7.7 percent) for the Math, Science and Technology Initiative and \$10.4 million (up 33.7 percent) to provide salary supplements for teachers who earn National Board Certification. With the passage of Senate Bill 257, the state will provide each teacher with \$300 annually to purchase classroom supplies.

Following the lead of several other states, the Legislature approved House Bill 588, requiring the state superintendent of education to design a system for grading public schools by the end of 2012 and to implement the system in the 2013-2014 school year. The bill also establishes the Legislative School Performance Recognition Program to provide financial rewards to public schools that are in the top 25 percent of public schools or that improve their ratings by at least one letter grade.

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The Legislature lowered the minimum compulsory age of school attendance from 7 years of age to 6 years by approving Senate Bill 28. However, parents may opt to delay a child's first school enrollment until he or she is 7.

Alabama law has required 180 days of instruction in public schools each year. The Legislature approved the Flexible School Calendar Act (House Bill 360) to allow schools to satisfy the requirement by providing an equivalent number of hours of instruction (1,080 hours per year) in less than 180 days. While local school boards will continue to determine school calendars, the legislation sets the earliest permitted starting date and latest permitted closing date for the 2012-2013 school year, as well as the earliest permitted starting date for the 2013-2014 school year.

To help provide digital instructional materials to high school students, the Legislature approved House Bill 165 to establish the Alabama Ahead Act. School systems that choose to participate in Alabama Ahead will provide digital textbooks and instructional materials to the extent possible, as well as wireless electronic devices for students and teachers in grades nine through 12. The bill requires the state Department of Education to develop an implementation plan by October 1, 2012. Contingent upon separate future legislative approval (as well as legislative approval of the department's plan), the Alabama Public School and College Authority is authorized to issue up to \$100 million in bonds to purchase computer equipment, software and digital textbooks needed to implement Alabama Ahead.

Senate Bill 388 addresses concerns over the rising cost of public employee retirement benefits by establishing a new defined benefit retirement plan for individuals who join the state Teachers' Retirement System or Employees' Retirement System on or after January 1, 2013. Currently, teachers and state employees are eligible to retire at age 60 with 10 or more years of service or at any age once they have attained 25 years of service. Under the new plan, employees (other than those in law enforcement) will be eligible to retire at age 62. Also, the employee contribution rate will decrease under the new plan. The plan is expected to save the state more than \$160 million annually.

With the passage of Senate Bill 213, an individual who participates in a state retirement system (including the Teachers' Retirement System) and is found guilty of a felony offense related to his or her public position forfeits the right to retirement benefits under that system. However, that person is also entitled to a refund of his or her individual retirement contributions, with interest, minus any retirement benefits he or she previously received.

Legislators approved House Bill 431, the School Board Governance Improvement Act, to ensure that local school boards "operate with the highest degree of accountability." The bill requires school board members to publicly affirm certain principles of educational governance, enumerates specific duties of local boards of education, requires the state superintendent to establish continuing training and education programs for board members, and specifies sanctions for board members who fail to perform their duties. The bill also specifically bars any individual from serving on a local school board who is employed by that board, serves on the board of a private school, or is a registered sex offender or convicted felon.

Other legislation

HB 308 requires local school boards to provide athletic coaches with annual training on how to recognize the symptoms of and obtain the proper medical attention for an athlete with a concussion.

HB 407 permits the Alabama Public School and College Authority to issue up to \$208 million in bonds for school bus fleet renewal or for the construction or renovation of school facilities in certain areas of northern Alabama affected by military base closures; the bill requires the authority to provide \$33 million of the bond proceeds to local school boards by January 1, 2013, for school bus fleet renewal.

HB 670 establishes the Farm to School Procurement Act to encourage school food service officials to purchase local farm products.

SB 191, the Lieutenant Dexter Holcomb Act, requires school bus drivers to pass a physical examination at least once every two years.

Arkansas (<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us>)

The state concluded its fiscal session (which occurs only during even-numbered years) by approving a \$4.7 billion state-funded budget for the 2012-2013 fiscal year, 3.6 percent more than the 2011-2012 budget. Of the total state funds, K-12 education funding rises 2.8 percent to \$2.1 billion for 2012-2013. The Legislature appropriated slightly less than \$2 billion to fund the K-12 school formula, an increase of 3 percent.

Total state funds for the higher education budget increase slightly to \$729.6 million (up 0.5 percent from 2011-2012). Four-year institutions receive 0.5 percent more in state funds, increasing their budget to \$587.5 million. State funds rise 0.5 percent to \$109.4 million for two-year institutions and 0.7 percent to \$32.7 million for technical colleges. For in-state undergraduate students at four-year institutions, the 2012-2013 tuition and fee rates increase about 4 percent. Tuition and fees at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences increase between 12.4 percent and 12.7 percent. Students at most two-year public institutions pay 1.3 percent to 7.8 percent more in tuition and fees this school year; students at Black River Technical College pay 13.4 percent more.

Delaware (<http://legis.delaware.gov>)

The General Assembly concluded the 2012 regular session after approving a budget for 2012-2013, as well as legislation that limits payday loans, authorizes online gambling and expands financial disclosure requirements for lobbyists. Total state general funds are up 2.2 percent in 2012-2013 to nearly \$3.6 billion, including \$216.5 million for higher education (up 1.5 percent) and nearly \$1.2 billion for K-12 education (up 5.3 percent).

Funding to school districts is up 6.7 percent to \$960.4 million. This includes a 1 percent teacher salary increase and larger increases (ranging from 4 percent to 12 percent) for classroom aides and non-instructional school staff. Funding for block grants and other pass-through programs is down 4.1 percent to \$80.4 million, while school transportation funding remains level at \$83.1 million.

General funds are up slightly less than 1 percent to \$114.3 million for the University of Delaware, up 1.8 percent to \$32.8 million for Delaware State University and up 2.5 percent to \$69.1 million for Delaware Technical and Community College. Faculty at Delaware Technical and Community College receive the same salary increase (1 percent) as teachers, while the budget provides funds sufficient for a 1 percent faculty salary increase to the University of Delaware and Delaware State University. Tuition for in-state undergraduates is up 4.5 percent at Delaware State University, up 4.4 percent at the University of Delaware, and up 5 percent at Delaware Technical and Community College.

Funding for the Delaware Higher Education Office, which is located in the state Department of Education, is up 10 percent to \$10.3 million. Most of the increase is for the merit-based SEED scholarship (up 5 percent to \$4.6 million) and the merit-based INSPIRE scholarship program at Delaware State University (doubled to \$1.4 million).

Under legislation approved in 2011, the state Department of Education projects enrollment for each public school in the state in March and, based on those projections, guarantees a certain amount of funding so that schools may make offers of employment to new teachers in the late spring and early summer. Originally, these provisions were set to expire April 1, 2012; the Legislature approved Senate Bill 164 to eliminate the expiration date.

As in many other states, the Legislature has focused attention on school bullying in its different forms. Senate Bill 193 requires the state Department of Education to develop a uniform cyberbullying policy and requires each school district and charter school in the state to formally adopt the policy.

State law already requires each school district and charter school in the state to report incidents of bullying to the state Department of Education; House Bill 268 clarifies that schools must report any claim of bullying, whether or not the claim can be substantiated.

House Bill 243 enacts recommendations from the School Discipline Task Force. It replaces previous language (which requires a principal to report crimes to a law enforcement agency) with new language that still requires a principal to report serious offenses but allows a principal to decide whether to report a minor offense. In addition, the bill requires a school official who reports a crime committed by a child with a disability to provide copies of the child's disciplinary and special education record to the law enforcement agency to which he or she reports the crime.

Under state and federal law, parents whose request for special educational services for their child is denied have the right to appeal that decision. However, a successful appeal often requires obtaining testimony from experts, which can be prohibitively expensive. House Bill 365 entitles parents to reimbursement by the state for these costs if their appeal is successful.

Other legislation

HB 239 repealed the April 20, 2012, expiration of Delaware's Teach for America program.

HB 248 requires the state Department of Education to report to the General Assembly on the effectiveness of the state's Teach for America program by January 20, 2015.

HB 309 prohibits a public or private college or university from requiring students or applicants to disclose their login information for social networking sites.

HB 317 requires the state Department of Education to develop a statewide learning readiness evaluation tool for children entering kindergarten and to implement it statewide by no later than fall 2015.

Florida (<http://www.leg.state.fl.us>)

Much of the Legislature's focus during the 2012 regular session was on taxes, unemployment insurance, and state rules and regulations; legislators approved measures to place stricter oversight on regional workforce boards, repeal more than 200 state rules and regulations, reform the state unemployment insurance program as the "Reemployment Assistance Program," and reduce the unemployment insurance tax burden on employers. To encourage economic development, House Bill 7087 expands a variety of tax credits, exemptions and incentives for businesses; the bill also includes a three-day sales tax holiday for clothing and school supplies in August.

The total state general fund budget for 2012-2013 is up 6.8 percent to nearly \$24.8 billion. Overall, general funds for education total \$12.7 billion (up 6.5 percent). While total K-12 education general funds are up 9.9 percent to nearly \$9.4 billion, funding to universities declines 13.2 percent to \$1.5 billion, and funding to community colleges declines 1.3 percent to \$885.4 million. The state's voluntary prekindergarten program operates with \$413.3 million in general funds, a 7.5 percent increase.

Lottery funds for merit-based Bright Futures scholarships declined 5.9 percent to \$329.4 million; however, lottery funds to support K-12 formula funding to schools are up from \$12.3 million in 2011-2012 to \$122.7 million in 2012-2013. Another \$134.6 million in lottery funds (up 12.5 percent) is designated for the Florida School Recognition Program, which provides financial rewards to high-performing schools and to schools that "demonstrate exemplary improvement."

Tuition increases for in-state undergraduate students at state universities average 11.2 percent. At state colleges, tuition increases average 3.6 percent for two-year degree students and 5.5 percent for four-year degree students.

In 2001, the Legislature established the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. Under the program, individuals contribute to organizations that provide private school scholarships for low-income children; the individuals receive tax credits for their contributions. Previously, state law capped the

amount of tax credits that donors could claim in one year at \$140 million, but it allowed the cap to increase (beginning in 2011-2012) by 25 percent per year if 90 percent or more of the credits were claimed in the prior year. The Legislature increased the cap to \$229 million with the approval of House Bill 859. Under previous law, only children entering kindergarten or first grade could enter the program. The legislation expands that eligibility through grade five.

House Bill 5101 establishes and modifies several provisions related to education. It requires the 100 elementary schools that are the lowest performing on the statewide reading assessment to provide an extra hour each day of intensive reading instruction beyond the regular school day. It also establishes the K-12 Public School Facility Funding Task Force, which will make recommendations to the Legislature on how to provide more equitable school facilities funding (including facilities funding for charter schools). In addition, it establishes the Digital Instructional Materials Work Group to monitor the state-mandated adoption of digital instructional materials in K-12 schools.

In order to provide options for advanced students, the Legislature approved House Bill 7059, which requires each public school to provide accelerated learning options. At a minimum, schools must provide options for whole-grade and midyear promotion of students, “subject-matter acceleration,” virtual instruction at higher grade levels, and the Credit Acceleration Program (which allows secondary students to earn high school credit for a course that requires a certain score on a standardized end-of-course assessment without requiring the student to actually enroll in or complete the course). The bill also establishes provisions for early high school graduation for students who earn all credits required for graduation in fewer than four years.

House Bill 7127 changes several aspects of state law that govern low-performing public schools and actions to improve performance at those schools; the Legislature enacted these changes to carry out Florida’s waiver from certain policies of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Previously, state law required the state Board of Education to divide all public schools into six categories based on academic performance and to intervene at schools in the lowest-performing category. The bill eliminates the categorizations and instead requires state Board intervention and support at any school that receives a D or F in the state’s school-grading system. The bill aligns the accountability requirements of charter schools and traditional public schools, and it requires schools to target additional academic support to help close achievement gaps for all subgroups of students (including economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency).

The Legislature approved House Bill 7063 to expand student eligibility for virtual K-12 instruction. Under the bill, more students are eligible to receive part-time instruction from the Florida Virtual School (FLVS), including students in kindergarten through grade three; also, the bill expands part-time FLVS offerings for grades four and five. The bill expands to students in kindergarten through grade eight eligibility for part-time virtual education programs run by school districts. It requires FLVS to provide (and authorizes FLVS to receive funding for) educational services for students with disabilities and the English for Speakers of Other Languages program.

House Bill 5201 establishes the Florida Virtual Campus under the joint oversight of the state college and university systems “as a statewide resource and clearinghouse for public postsecondary education distance learning courses and degree programs.” It modifies eligibility for the merit-based Bright Futures scholarship program for students graduating from high school in 2012-2013 by reducing, from three years to two, the time in which a student is eligible to accept an initial award after high school graduation and by reducing, from seven years to five, the number of years after high school graduation that a student may receive awards. The bill also establishes the Degree Completion Pilot Project at two state colleges and two state universities to help adult learners earn associate’s or bachelor’s degrees that are “aligned to high-wage, high-skill workforce needs.”

House Bill 7135 also establishes several higher education provisions. The bill requires the state Board of Education to develop a unified state STEM plan, authorizes performance funding for state universities that most successfully produce graduates who are employed in technology fields, and requires the state college and university systems to develop performance metrics. For students initially entering state colleges and universities in 2014-2015 and beyond, the legislation reduces from 36 hours to 30 hours the general education requirements for associate’s and bachelor’s degrees. In addition, the bill allows the university system Board of Governors to waive provisions that currently require a university to spend 70 percent of any tuition differential fee amounts on undergraduate education and the remaining 30 percent on financial aid.

Other legislation

HB 347 allows military veterans to earn college credit “for college-level training and education acquired in the military.”

HB 465 allows school districts to issue bonds for a period of 30 years; previously, the maximum bond period permitted was 20 years.

HB 1403 clarifies that any high school — including a traditional public school, charter school, private school, virtual school or home education cooperative — is eligible for membership in the Florida High School Athletic Association.

Georgia (<http://www.legis.ga.gov>)

For 2012-2013, the General Assembly approved an overall budget of \$39.5 billion, of which \$19.3 billion are state funds (up 5.7 percent from the 2011-2012 original appropriation) and \$904.4 million are lottery funds. The passage of House Bill 386 revises the state’s tax code by changing how automobiles, retirement income and Internet sales are taxed. The bill also includes a revision of certain tax credit programs, an expansion of the state’s marriage exemption, and a phase out of sales tax on certain local projects and energy used in manufacturing. From 2002-2010, the state held a sales tax holiday annually. House Bill 386 reinstates the sales tax holiday for 2012 and 2013, allowing consumers to purchase certain items tax-free for three days, both in the summer for back-to-school items and in October for energy-efficient household appliances.

The state-funded 2012-2013 budget includes \$7.2 billion for K-12 education (up 2.9 percent) and \$2.2 billion for higher education (up 5.2 percent). The state's share of teachers' retirement pay rises to 11.4 percent from 10.3 percent.

Last year, the state Supreme Court struck down language that had authorized a special state commission — the Georgia Charter School Commission — to approve independently charter school applications without local school board or state Board of Education input. House Resolution 1162 will revise the state constitution, if approved by voters, to clarify language that would allow the state to include commission-approved charter schools as special schools created and approved by the state. Currently, if a local school board denies a new charter school application, the applicant may petition the state Board to become a state-chartered special school.

If voters approve the constitutional amendment, House Bill 797 provides for the establishment of the State Charter Schools Commission as an additional state-level authorizing entity on January 1, 2013. The commission's seven members will have staggered, two-year terms and the authority to approve, deny, renew or terminate commission charter school petitions, as well as conduct facility and curriculum reviews of those schools. An existing charter school may petition for renewal as a commission charter school if its contract with the local board or state Board will expire or is rescinded or waived prior to entering into a new charter with the commission.

Beginning July 1, 2012, House Bill 797 changes the state's charter school funding allocation to include school nursing and transportation, when available. For 2012-2013, the General Assembly appropriated \$8.7 million to state-chartered special schools (an increase of 13.5 percent), \$2.8 million (up 64 percent) in grants to charter systems (which are school districts contracted as charter systems with the state Board), and \$2 million (a decrease of 7.2 percent) to fund authorization and competitive grants for charter schools and charter systems.

Many of the governor's education recommendations were adopted in the 2012-2013 budget, including an increase in state funds for school nurses (up 13.5 percent) and teacher salaries (more than tripling to \$55.8 million), based on training (advanced degrees) and longevity. The General Assembly transferred school nurse and transportation funding categories into the Quality Basic Education program (QBE), the K-12 school funding formula. The budget for QBE increased 3.4 percent to \$6.3 billion when excluding this transfer, which also was a recommendation from the governor as a way to provide local school systems and charter schools with flexibility in spending these funds. If the transferred funds are included, the school formula increased to \$6.5 billion, up 6 percent.

The General Assembly paid close attention to the education of special needs students. The state increased its appropriation 3.7 percent to \$24.2 million for state schools (state-operated schools that provide a learning environment to address the academic, vocational and social development needs of students with sensory impairments and multiple disabilities). State funding for the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship, which allows a student with a disability to attend a private or another public school if the child has a current Individualized Education Program, declined 7.1 percent from the 2011-2012 appropriation, to \$10.1 million.

Senate Bill 289 expands virtual school participation by requiring the state Board of Education to create regulations that maximize the number of students (beginning with ninth-graders in 2014) who complete at least one online course prior to graduating from high school. Local systems must pay no more than \$250 in tuition plus maintenance and fees (per student per semester course) to the state Department of Education. The legislation also makes all end-of-course assessments available online by 2015.

Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, each local school system must offer all students in grades three through 12 full-time and part-time options for participating in an online learning program. To implement the virtual instruction program, a local system may do one or all of the following: facilitate enrollment in Georgia Virtual School, contract with a virtual instruction provider approved by the state Department of Education, or enter into an agreement with another local school system or systems.

Although the state's lottery-funded prekindergarten school year was decreased to 160 days (from 180) in 2011-2012, the governor's request to restore 10 days and enroll 84,000 students was approved for the 2012-2013 school year. (Currently, 86,000 students are enrolled.) Total lottery funding for the prekindergarten program decreased slightly to \$298.6 million (down 0.7 percent), and lottery funding for postsecondary scholarships declined 1.1 percent to \$605.8 million.

The total, state-funded higher education budget rises for the first time in three years to \$2.2 billion, up 5.2 percent. Colleges and universities receive \$1.8 billion, up 5.2 percent, and technical colleges receive \$330.6 million, up 5.5 percent, for the next school year. Tuition for 2012-2013 rose between 3.5 to 6 percent (a \$125 to \$220 increase) for in-state undergraduate students attending the state's three public research institutions. For in-state undergraduate students attending public four-year colleges and universities, tuition rates increased 2.5 percent. Mandatory fees at four-year institutions remained level compared with last year. Tuition and fees at two-year colleges rose 1.9 percent on average. Tuition at technical colleges is up 7.5 percent with the spring 2013 semester; students also will pay a new \$50 institutional fee beginning spring 2013.

Other legislation

In response to the standardized test-taking scandal that occurred in Georgia, HB 692 provides that teachers or other certificated professionals who earn a salary increase or bonus based on an evaluation that included falsified student assessment results, standardized test scores or test answers will forfeit that salary increase or bonus and will repay all amounts previously paid.

Kentucky (<http://www.lrc.ky.gov>)

The 2012-2014 biennial budget is up 5.8 percent to \$18.7 billion, compared with the 2010-2012 original appropriation. Total state funds rise to \$9.2 billion (up 0.7 percent) in 2012-2013 and \$9.5 billion (up 3.2 percent) in 2013-2014. State funding for K-12 education decreases slightly (to \$3.8 billion, down 0.1 percent) in 2012-2013 and increases by a small amount (to \$3.9 billion, up 0.4 percent) in 2013-2014. For both years, the school formula remains level.

During the 2012-2013 budget year, higher education funds fall to \$1.2 billion (down 4.6 percent), which includes \$747 million (down 5.1 percent) to four-year institutions and \$191.5 million (down 4.6 percent) to community and technical colleges. State funds for postsecondary education increase slightly (up 0.3 percent) in 2013-2014. Four-year universities receive 0.4 percent more in state funds, and two-year colleges operate with level funding.

For the 2012-2013 school year, maximum tuition rates and mandatory fees for in-state undergraduate students attending public colleges and universities increase for the fifth consecutive school year. The state Council on Postsecondary Education set maximum tuition and fee rates for 2012-2013. Actual increases are 3.7 percent at two-year colleges, 4 percent at four-year institutions, and 6 percent at research universities.

Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, Senate Bill 24 requires any child who is 6 years old by August 1 (previously, October 1) to attend public school or obtain an exemption, and it permits any child who is age 5 by August 1 (previously, October 1) to attend school. The law requires each local school board to adopt a policy that permits a parent or guardian to petition the board to allow a child younger than age 5 to attend public school. The policy must include a process to determine a student's readiness for school.

To help students having trouble with reading, writing, mathematics or behavior, House Bill 69 requires the state Department of Education to develop policies that require each school district to establish a response-to-intervention system for students in kindergarten through grade three. These systems will include tiers of intervention, with varying levels of intensity and duration connecting general, compensatory and special education programs that are based on scientific research and matched to individual student strengths and needs. The law requires school districts to implement response-to-intervention programs for reading and writing by August 1, 2013; for mathematics by August 1, 2014; and for behavior by August 1, 2015. The state Department of Education will coordinate with the Kentucky Collaborative Center for Literacy Development, the Kentucky Center for Mathematics, the Kentucky Center for Instructional Discipline, and other agencies and organizations to ensure that teachers are prepared to utilize scientifically based interventions in reading, writing, mathematics and behavior.

With the approval of House Bill 37, the state Board of Education may authorize districts of innovation to improve the educational performance of students. Districts of innovation will have flexibility from various state and local education policies to meet the diverse needs of students. The initial approval period for an innovation district is five years, and renewals will not exceed five years. A local district applying to become a district of innovation must establish goals and performance targets that may include reducing achievement gaps among low-achieving students, increasing the number of college- and career-ready students, or offering more curriculum choices and student learning opportunities. The application also must include changes needed to better prepare students in the district and schools, a district-wide plan of innovation, and documentation of support from the community, educators, parents and the local school board. The district's application will include only schools that choose to participate; however, a local board may require a persistently low-achieving school to participate in the district's plan.

As a means of providing rigorous academic and career/technical education programs, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 38 to encourage at-risk students to graduate from high school prepared to enter postsecondary education institutions or the workforce with needed skills. The legislation mandates that, by January 1, 2013, the state Department of Education must communicate the minimum core content standards for postsecondary education introductory courses and career-readiness standards. For students in grades six, eight, nine, 10 and 11, the department will assist districts in identifying students who are behind academically or have high absentee rates or discipline problems. The department also will develop more rigorous courses in English, reading and mathematics for students who are academically behind in grades six, nine, 10, 11 and 12 to help them meet college- and career-readiness standards.

If funds are available, the department, in collaboration with the state Office of Career and Technical Education, the state Community and Technical College System, and the state Education Professional Standards Board, will recommend evidence-based models for helping at-risk students. The models will include programs and curricula that focus on adequate academic preparation, reduce high school failure rates and dropout rates, improve student performance, and identify career and education goals.

As in many other states that regulate for-profit educational institutions, House Bill 308 requires all licensed proprietary schools — privately owned, for-profit educational institutions that offer a course or program of instruction and charge fees and tuition — to contribute to a student protection fund. The fund will provide refunds to proprietary school students enrolled or on a protracted leave of absence at the time of the school's closing, discontinuance of a program, or loss of a license or loss of accreditation.

Other legislation

HB 168 prohibits a superintendent from assigning a teacher to an alternative education program as part of any disciplinary action or corrective plan.

HB 366 permits a superintendent's spouse who has eight years of service (previously, 20 years) to work for the same school district upon the recommendation of the school principal and the approval of a majority vote of the school council.

SB 43 requires the state Board of Education to develop an alternative high school diploma for a student whose Individualized Education Program indicates the student cannot participate in the statewide assessment and that an appropriate alternate assessment was selected for the student.

SB 131 provides that the state's six comprehensive universities may offer no more than 18 advanced practice doctoral programs among them, with each university offering at least two such programs.

Louisiana (<http://www.legis.state.la.us>)

In early July, the governor ordered a limited hiring freeze for 2012-2013, which will save about \$13 million in state funds. The overall 2012-2013 budget remains close to the prior year's amended budget total at \$26.5 billion (a slight decrease). Total K-12 funds are 5.4 percent lower than the amended 2011-2012 budget at \$5.3 billion, including \$3.4 billion (up 1 percent) in state funding for the Minimum Foundation Program, the school finance formula. Postsecondary education operates with \$2.9 billion in total funds, down 3.5 percent.

Last year, voters passed a constitutional amendment (Act Number 423 of 2011) that permanently dedicates any monies over \$1.38 billion in the state's tobacco settlement fund to the Louisiana Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) scholarship fund. In 2012-2013, the merit-based TOPS scholarship program operates with \$172.2 million, up 11.6 percent.

The governor's education agenda centered on three goals: "putting a highly effective teacher in every classroom, giving parents and students an equal opportunity in education, and giving school leaders more flexibility to spend their dollars on policies that improve student achievement." During the session, the Legislature approved House Bill 974, House Bill 976 and Senate Bill 581 to address those goals.

Effective during the 2012-2013 school year, House Bill 974, Act Number 1, makes student achievement a priority in school and school district management. Contracts of superintendents in C-, D- or F-rated school districts must include school- and district-level performance targets comprised of student achievement, graduation rates and teacher rating goals. The legislation transfers the authority to hire, place and fire school personnel from local school boards to superintendents and school principals, and it transfers to superintendents the authority to make "reduction in force" decisions. Superintendents and principals must base all employment-related decisions on performance, effectiveness and qualifications and are prohibited from using tenure and seniority as the primary criteria for employment.

After July 1, 2012, a teacher may earn tenure only after receiving a "highly effective" performance rating for five years within a six-year period. Tenured teachers who receive an "ineffective" rating will lose tenure immediately, but they may regain tenure if the rating is successfully appealed or after once again receiving a rating of "highly effective" for five years within a six-year period. A superintendent may terminate a tenured teacher for reasons that now include poor performance.

House Bill 976, Act Number 2, expands course choices for students, makes several changes to charter school policies and supports parent engagement. The bill allows the state Board of Education to transfer any public school rated as low-performing for three years to the Recovery School District (a special school district created by the state to reform underperforming schools) if the transfer is requested by a majority of parents at that school.

The bill creates the Course Choice program, acknowledging that each student has different needs that merit a variety of course choices and course providers. Prior to the 2013-2014 school year, the state Board will create a course catalog for each parish and develop a process for authorizing course providers, whose initial contracts will last for three years. Postsecondary institutions, corporations that offer vocational or technical course work, and online or virtual education entities may operate as course providers. Course providers will receive payment from local school systems for certain eligible students, including those who attend low-performing schools or schools that do not offer the desired courses. Course providers may charge tuition to other students, including home school students and students attending high-performing schools.

The legislation also expands the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence (SSEE) program. SSEE was created to allow low-income students who attend school systems in academic crisis, primarily in New Orleans, to enroll at nonpublic schools. House Bill 976 extends eligibility to students statewide whose family incomes are below 250 percent of federal poverty guidelines and who are entering kindergarten, were enrolled in a low-performing school the previous school year, or received a scholarship the previous school year. Eligible students may continue receiving the SSEE scholarship through grade 12 or after transferring to another participating school. Additionally, students in the program may attend either a nonpublic school or a public school with an A or B performance rating for the most recent school year.

The charter school provisions of House Bill 976 require the state Board of Education to develop a common charter school application and to recruit chartering groups able to address regional workforce needs. The legislation expands avenues for the creation of charter schools and decreases the length of the initial charter contract from five years to four. The operator of a high-performing charter school that earns an A or B performance rating may open one or two additional schools serving the same grade levels as the high-performing school without formally applying to its chartering authorizer.

The legislation creates new methods for opening a charter school. The state Board of Education must create a process for approving multiple charter agreements through a single application from a qualified chartering group that has a demonstrated record of success. The legislation also allows the state Board to certify a state agency or nonprofit corporation as a local charter authorizer and to approve up to five local charter authorizers per regional labor market area. (There are eight market areas in the state.) The initial local charter authorizer contract period will last five years.

Lastly, the bill requires that charter schools hire only teachers with at least a baccalaureate degree. Charter school teachers are no longer required to have state certification. Previously, charter school teachers could teach temporarily while seeking a teaching certification, could have at least 10 years of teaching experience, or could have a bachelor's degree.

In late June, the state's two teachers' unions filed a lawsuit in state court to bar the implementation of House Bill 976. Among other issues, the suit challenges the constitutionality of the funding mechanism for the SSEE program, citing that the bill allows public funds to pay tuition for scholarship recipients to attend private schools.

House Bill 707, Act Number 275, amends the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program to facilitate the state's implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the bill requires the state Board of Education to administer English/language arts, mathematics, science and social studies assessments based on state content and rigorous student achievement standards in grades three through 11, at a minimum.

Senate Bill 581, Act Number 503, lays the groundwork to strengthen the state's early childhood system by requiring the state Board of Education to implement a comprehensive and coordinated early childhood education system by the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. The bill requires the board to define kindergarten readiness, develop performance targets for children under the age of 3 and academic standards for 3- and 4-year-olds, and create a uniform assessment and accountability system.

The governor proposed earlier this year to redesign the state's pension plans. For state employees (except those in hazardous duty positions) and university employees hired after June 30, 2013, and for current employees who choose to opt in, House Bill 61, Act Number 483, replaces the state's defined benefit and defined contribution plans with a "cash balance plan." The plan provides each participant with an investment account, wherein participants share in investment gains but not losses. Upon retirement, instead of receiving defined pension benefits based on his or her salary and longevity, a participant in the new retirement plan will receive a monthly annuity based on the value of his or her investment account.

Other legislation

HB 435, Act Number 581, permits certain military veterans who enroll or apply to a public post-secondary institution and maintain residence in the state for the duration of enrollment to qualify as state residents for tuition purposes.

HB 969, Act Number 25, provides for a rebate equal to the amount donated from an individual or corporation to a nonprofit school tuition organization that grants scholarships for low-income students to attend nonpublic schools.

HB 1131, Act Number 716, provides for separate employer contribution rates for different benefit plans within the Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana, rather than a single blended rate.

Maryland (<http://www.mlis.state.md.us>)

The General Assembly completed its regular session in April after legislators approved a budget for 2012-2013. However, legislators did not come to an agreement on separate legislation to raise additional revenues; without the additional revenues, the state spending plan would have decreased by more than \$400 million. In May, the governor called the General Assembly into a special session, and legislators approved measures to raise revenues and avoid the automatic cuts.

During the special session, legislators approved Senate Bill 1301, the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA). The bill shifts responsibility for funding a portion of teacher retirement costs from the state to local boards of education and phases in the shift over a four-year period. Local boards will have to fund \$136.6 million in teacher retirement contributions in 2012-2013. To support the new costs, minimum required funding from counties to the local boards increases during the phase-in period. BRFA also restores other funding to local boards of education, including \$128.8 million to offset differences in the local costs of providing education, \$19.6 million to assist some school districts with retirement funding, and \$12 million for certain school districts with per capita income tax revenues below the statewide average. Other spending restored with the passage of BRFA includes \$38.5 million for state colleges and universities, \$19.9 million for community colleges and \$33.8 million to provide state employees with a 2 percent cost-of-living increase.

The revenue measure approved by legislators during the special session is Senate Bill 1302, the State and Local Revenue Financing Act. The bill increases state income taxes for individuals earning \$100,000 or more and for joint filers earning \$150,000 or more. This increase is retroactive to the beginning of 2012 and will raise a projected \$195.6 million in 2012-2013. The bill also reduces the individual income tax exemptions provided to individuals earning \$100,000 or more and to joint filers earning \$150,000 or more. This change will raise a projected \$51.7 million in 2012-2013. Other measures included in the bill include tax increases on certain tobacco products and certain real estate transactions, plus the repeal of a corporate income tax credit to offset taxes levied on telecommunications properties.

The general fund budget for 2012-2013 is \$14.6 billion, a 1.1 percent decrease from the original 2011-2012 appropriation. However, the overall budget totals \$35.5 billion, up 3.8 percent. State funds to support local K-12 education are up 1.2 percent to \$5.8 billion, including \$2.8 billion (up 1.3 percent) in basic education formula funding, \$1.1 billion (up 5.8 percent) for school districts with larger numbers of economically disadvantaged students, and \$177.4 million (up 8.3 percent) to educate students with limited English proficiency.

State aid to higher education for 2012-2013 is up 1.7 percent to \$1.5 billion. Aid to state colleges and universities rises 1.5 percent to nearly \$1.2 billion, while community college funding is up 1.2 percent to \$310.3 million. State aid to independent colleges and universities is down 1 percent to \$38.1 million. The budget includes funding that permitted institutional governing boards to limit tuition increases to 3 percent for in-state undergraduates at most state colleges and universities.

Senate Bill 848 addresses local school funding issues. In Maryland, local school districts depend on their county governments for local education funds. While state law requires each county to provide at least as much per pupil funding to the local school board as it provided in the prior fiscal year (known as Maintenance of Effort), counties could reduce funding levels — and school districts would then have to pay a penalty against state-provided education funds in the next fiscal year. Under Senate Bill 848, the state will not assess penalties for those counties that failed to meet effort requirements in 2011-2012. In lieu of fining districts in the future, beginning in 2012-2013, the state will intercept and provide to the school district the local income tax revenues necessary to meet the county's per pupil

funding requirements, should a county government reduce local per pupil funds without a waiver from the state Board of Education. To promote efficiency, however, the bill allows a county to request a waiver from certain funding requirements if both it and the district agree to reduce recurring costs. (The collective bargaining representative also must agree to reductions to compensation.) In addition, the bill permits a county to exceed the limit on property taxes authorized by its county charter for the sole purpose of funding the local school system.

Other legislation approved during the legislative session includes provisions on annual content-area assessments, compulsory attendance, online courses and services, and distance learning. As a result of the passage of House Bill 1227 and Senate Bill 293, students must take annual state assessments in reading, mathematics, language, science and social studies that include written responses, beginning in 2014-2015.

Senate Bill 362 increases the compulsory age of attendance from 15 to 16 (beginning with the 2015-2016 school year) and to age 17 on July 1, 2017. The legislation offers several exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirement, including exemptions for children who have obtained a high school diploma, out-of-state diploma or GED credential, or who are married or in military service. Children subject to compulsory age requirements who are no longer participating in GED courses and have not earned a passing score on the GED test must return to regular attendance at a public school. The legislation also requires the state Board of Education to update its Dropout Prevention/School Completion/Intervention/Resource Guide by December 1, 2012, analyze the effectiveness of related local services, and review available data from other states that have increased compulsory attendance ages over the last decade. In consultation with the state Department of Labor, the state Department of Education must develop a GED Options Program by the end of 2012.

House Bill 1219 and Senate Bill 674 (Chapter Number 288) address online courses and services. County boards of education may request that the state Department of Education develop or review and approve online courses and services. Should the department delegate this authority to county boards of education, the county board must approve any courses and services developed. The county board may assess fees to a vendor based on the cost of reviewing and approving the courses; the county will forward 15 percent of any such fees to the state department.

Beginning with the 2012-2013 school, a postsecondary institution that enrolls students in a fully online distance learning program must register with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) within six months of enrolling its first student in the state, according to House Bill 1223 and Senate Bill 843. Under the bills, an institution that enrolls Maryland students in a fully online distance learning program must have accreditation from an accrediting body recognized by the U. S. Department of Education.

After approval, institutions must comply with certain financial and business practice requirements; MHEC may fine or revoke the registration of institutions that do not meet these requirements. MHEC may require an institution to furnish a performance bond or other form of financial guarantee; the state will use these to reimburse any student who is entitled to a refund of tuition and fees because the insti-

tution did not perform faithfully any agreement or contract with the student or did not comply with state law.

Other legislation

HB 442 establishes the Maryland Innovation Initiative and the Maryland Innovation Initiative Fund to promote the commercialization of technology developed at Maryland's public and independent universities.

HB 745 and SB 689 (Chapter Number 291) establish the Maryland Advisory Council for Virtual Learning within the state Department of Education to encourage and support the education of students in accordance with national standards of online learning and state law.

HB 1228 requires MHEC to approve regional higher education centers — facilities that provide access to affordable higher education in areas of the state that are underserved — and places in law a funding formula for the centers.

SB 364 establishes the Nancy Grasmick Teacher Award. The award provides student loan repayment assistance for public school teachers who teach in a STEM subject area or in a school where at least 75 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price meals, have at least two years of service teaching in the state and have the highest performance evaluation rating for the most recent school year.

SB 967 (Chapter Number 327) establishes the Student Transfer Advisory Committee to review and analyze articulation and postsecondary student support services.

Mississippi (<http://www.billstatus.ls.state.ms.us>)

In early May, Mississippi completed its session, passing a total state-funded budget of \$5.5 billion for 2012-2013, slightly more than was available in 2011-2012. K-12 education receives \$2.3 billion in state funds, an increase of 1.3 percent. Schools receive \$2.1 billion through the finance formula, about 1 percent more. Most programs operate with level funding; however, a new appropriation of \$6 million supports Teach for America and the Teacher Corps to bring more teachers to classrooms in the highest-need school districts.

Four-year colleges and universities operate with \$670 million, a decrease of 4.5 percent. While funding for student financial aid increases to \$29.6 million (up 10 percent), funding to the University Medical Center declines 16.4 percent (to \$177 million). Basic funding to institutions remains at \$362.7 million. Community colleges receive \$237.5 million, an increase of 1.8 percent. On average, tuition rates rose 3.1 percent at public two-year colleges and 6 percent at public four-year institutions.

This year, the governor recommended expanding the state's dual enrollment program to "allow students on the verge of dropping out of school to enroll in a community college workforce training program." Senate Bill 2792 establishes the Mississippi Works Dual Enrollment-Dual Credit Option

Program for potential or recent high school dropouts. An individual may enroll in a dual credit program (between the student's home high school and a local community college) that consists of high school completion course work and a community college credential, certificate or degree program. After successfully completing the dual credit program, graduates will get help from the state Department of Employment Security in securing a job.

In addition, Senate Bill 2792 increases the number of dual enrollment credits from one-half credit to one credit for completing a three-hour postsecondary course, and it grants course credits to students who complete online courses offered by postsecondary institutions only. (Previously, a dual enrollment student could earn credits only for online courses offered by postsecondary institutions and the Mississippi Virtual Public School — a Web-based education program managed by the state Department of Education.)

In an effort to reduce the dropout rate and increase the number of high school graduates in the state, Senate Bill 2454 requires each school district, beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, to implement a dropout plan that focuses on several issues, including measurable, student-centered goals; dropout recovery initiatives directed at dropouts ages 17 to 21; and retention rates in kindergarten and first and second grade.

In a school district where the state Board of Education withdrew accreditation, Senate Bill 2737 allows parents to petition to another school district for a student transfer. In addition, the legislation allows the state Board of Education to take over, abolish and consolidate with one or more school districts, or reduce the size of a school district that the governor twice declared was in a state of emergency. The legislation prohibits a local board member or a local superintendent from continuing to serve in his or her school district after the district is abolished and reorganized. The state Board of Education may loan funds from the School District Emergency Assistance Fund to school districts lacking sufficient financial resources and that either were taken over by the state or are under a state of emergency. Previously, the Board could loan those funds to school districts only in a state of emergency.

Senate Bill 2737 also replicates policies approved in Senate Bill 2776, which simplifies the designations for rating schools and school districts through the state's performance-based accreditation system. Schools and school districts will receive letter grade ratings, instead of classifications such as "Star," "High-Performing," "Academic Watch" or "Failing."

In support of students with special needs, House Bill 1031 creates the Mississippi Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship, which allows an eligible dyslexic student in grades one through six to attend a public or nonpublic school with instruction standards designed to meet the unique learning needs of dyslexic students. To be eligible, the student must have spent the previous school year in a public or nonpublic school — or have secured acceptance into an eligible nonpublic school and requested a scholarship within 30 days before the date of the first scholarship payment. Virtual school, home school and certain other students are not eligible for the scholarship.

House Bill 1032 establishes the Mississippi Dyslexia Education Scholarship Program to recruit and train college students to become dyslexia therapists. The award covers tuition and fees for students enrolled in a master's degree program in dyslexia therapy. After completing the master's program, the scholarship recipient must work in public schools as a dyslexia therapist for the same number of years that he or she received the scholarship award. The legislation also creates the Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired Scholarship Program to assist certified teachers of the visually impaired in taking and passing the state's Braille competency exam or the national certification in literary Braille.

The Legislature passed an assortment of bills that affect local school board responsibilities. House Bill 447 authorizes local school boards to perform annual comprehensive evaluations of their school superintendents. House Bill 696 prohibits local school board members, local superintendents, principals and other administrative staff from altering a student's grade. House Bill 909 extends a local school district's ability to reduce costs under certain extreme budget circumstances through 2015. The policy was due to expire on July 1, 2012.

Other legislation

HB 707 requires public schools to start each school year on or after the third Monday in August, beginning with the 2014-2015 school year.

HB 784 permits a local school board to allow a student who is a member of the National Guard and attends basic training camp during the summer before his or her senior year to receive course credit for completing basic training.

SB 2176 prohibits a local school superintendent whose contract was terminated or not renewed from requesting a grievance hearing before the local school board or a hearing officer.

SB 2450 eliminates the requirement that the state Department of Education approve all pre-Advanced Placement courses.

North Carolina (<http://www.ncleg.net>)

The General Assembly met in its short session to amend the second year of North Carolina's biennial budget as well as to consider other legislation. With the state's revenue collections slowly improving, legislators added \$237.4 million in general funds to the 2012-2013 budget, bringing the total to nearly \$20.2 billion, 2.6 percent more than the general fund budget for 2011-2012.

Under the original budget, general funds for K-12 education were set to decline slightly in 2012-2013; under the amended budget, funding increases to \$7.5 billion, 0.6 percent over the prior year. Funding for community colleges, which was level in the original budget, is up 0.5 percent to \$990.2 million. The amended budget provides an additional \$24.1 million for universities in 2012-2013; the total of nearly \$2.6 billion is 1.4 percent more than in 2011-2012.

The Legislature appropriated \$441.4 million in lottery funds for education in 2012-2013, an increase of 3.9 percent. The budget directed all of the \$16.4 million increase to local school boards to supplement state general funds. Other lottery funding amounts remain level from 2011-2012: \$220.6 million for teachers in early grades; \$63.1 million for prekindergarten; \$100 million for the public school building capital fund; and \$41.2 million for need-based financial aid for students at state colleges and universities. Tuition and fee increases for in-state undergraduates range from 4.1 percent to 11.8 percent at universities; tuition at community colleges is up 3.8 percent.

Proviso language in the budget expands the funding sources that the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) may use for instructional costs. In addition to the previously permitted formula funding and enrollment reserve funds, NCVPS may utilize local, federal and state reserve funds for youth with disabilities.

Budget proviso language also establishes the Excellent Public Schools Act. The act establishes the North Carolina Read to Achieve Program to ensure that all students read at or above grade level by the end of grade three and to require the state Board of Education to enact a comprehensive plan to improve reading achievement in public schools statewide. The language requires schools to retain students in grade three who do not demonstrate adequate reading proficiency. The act specifies that annual report cards for each school district must reflect for each school a numerical performance score on a 100-point scale and a corresponding letter grade on an A through F scale.

The Excellent Public Schools Act establishes the North Carolina Teacher Corps to recruit recent college graduates and mid-career professionals to serve as teachers in high-needs high schools; corps members will attend an intensive summer training institute prior to earning lateral entry teaching licenses. Finally, the act permits local boards of education to develop performance pay plans that provide bonuses or increases in base salary to teachers who meet certain performance criteria, such as growth in student achievement or assignment in a hard-to-staff school or subject area.

The General Assembly approved Senate Bill 724 to enact provisions of North Carolina's successful Race to the Top application. The bill directs the state Board of Education to enact or expand several statewide education reform initiatives, including: a transition to Common Core State Standards; multiple statewide information technology systems to improve teacher instruction and evaluation; performance incentives for teachers in the lowest-achieving schools; expansion of teacher licensure and recruitment programs for low-performing schools; expansion of professional development services for teachers; and expansion of district and school transformation services.

Senate Bill 724 also directs the state Board to ensure that elementary school teacher preparation programs at state colleges and universities have adequate course work in the teaching of reading and mathematics, that students are adequately prepared to teach these subjects prior to receiving certification, and that students are prepared to integrate arts education throughout the curriculum. In addition, the bill requires local boards of education to create transition teams and transition plans for students at risk of academic failure to help them move from elementary to middle grades schools and from the middle grades to high school.

Senate Bill 707, the School Violence Prevention Act of 2012, makes it illegal for a student to use a computer to intimidate or torment a school employee or to cause a third party to stalk or harass a school employee. Supervisors of school employees must report any assault by a student on a school employee that results in an injury, and the bill prohibits a superintendent, principal or supervisor from intimidating an employee to prevent the employee from reporting the assault to law enforcement. The law also eliminates any criminal or civil liability for a school employee who takes action, in good faith, to end a fight between students.

During the 2011 session, the General Assembly established eligibility and co-payment requirements for the state prekindergarten program, but a state Superior Court judge subsequently struck down some of those requirements as unconstitutional. House Bill 966 returns the prekindergarten eligibility criteria to the way they were prior to the 2011 session. In addition, the bill repeals the prohibition against paying teachers on the monthly pay date for days they have not yet worked and sets teacher and school administrator salary schedules for 2012-2013.

Other legislation

HB 964 creates the statewide North Carolina Longitudinal Data System to track individual student data from all levels of education and the state workforce.

SB 187, which primarily makes technical corrections to the 2012-2013 budget, specifies that local school districts must provide either 185 days of instruction or 1,025 hours of instruction annually; previously, school districts were required to meet both criteria.

SB 755 requires schools and local school boards to provide equal access to education employee associations, and it prohibits schools and local school boards from giving preferential treatment to or endorsing one association over another. The bill also prohibits schools and school boards from discouraging or preventing an employee from joining an education employee association.

Oklahoma (<http://www.oklegislature.gov>)

Legislators approved a \$6.8 billion total state-funded budget for 2012-2013, a 3.1 percent increase compared with the original 2011-2012 budget. The budget appropriates \$3.5 billion (up 2.1 percent) in state funds to education, including \$2.3 billion for K-12 education (up 2.3 percent). State funding for career and technical education, libraries, the Center for Science and Technology and the Teacher Preparation Commission remain level.

The higher education appropriation rose to \$955.3 million, up 1.1 percent. Tuition rates for the 2012-2013 school year rose 5 percent at public two-year colleges and 5.3 percent at public four-year universities, on average.

As a continuation of last year's government agency consolidations, Senate Bill 1797 creates the Commission of Educational Quality and Accountability, which will assume the duties and authority of

the Commission for Teacher Preparation and the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability in January 2013. The legislation also reorganizes the Education Oversight Board and renames it the Commission for Education, Instruction Quality and Accountability.

The state has a network of technology centers that provide career training in more than 90 instructional areas for high school and adult learners. Senate Bill 1056 implements a technology center pilot program to increase the number of students taking industry certification exams and obtaining trade-specific industry certifications and licenses. Senate Bill 1182 expands a technology center school district's options for using capital outlay funds for student transportation, grounds maintenance, and instructional and maintenance equipment.

To improve the performance and achievement of certain special needs students, Senate Bill 1565 creates a pilot program to train higher education dyslexia faculty to instruct teacher candidates on how to teach prekindergarten, K-12 and special needs students with dyslexia. Senate Bill 1119 requires school districts to provide information about the state schools for the blind and deaf to the parents of auditory and visually impaired students who may qualify.

Other legislation

SB 1228 eliminates the electronic student transfer system, which allowed a student to transfer to another school district for enrollment in an online course without personally appearing to the new district.

SB 1443 extends for two additional years (until June 30, 2014) policies that exempt school districts from accreditation penalties and other fines as a result of: failing to meet media and equipment standards and media program expenditure standards; spending textbook funds on other district operational needs; and not forming, convening or participating in an advisory committee, including school committees preparing school improvement plans.

South Carolina (<http://www.scstatehouse.gov>)

The Legislature required extra time to come to a final budget agreement for 2012-2013; while the \$6.1 billion general fund budget (up 11.6 percent) was approved before the start of the new fiscal year, legislators also approved a continuing resolution to fund state government until the governor could issue her budget vetoes and the Legislature could respond. The budget includes a 3 percent pay raise for state employees, including college and university staff. Legislators also approved a reduction in an income tax that applies to certain businesses; over three years, the tax rate will decline from 5 percent to 3 percent.

General funds for K-12 education are up 8.5 percent to \$2.1 billion, including \$1.9 billion in state aid to school districts (up 10.9 percent). Also included is \$30.3 million for the statewide South Carolina Public Charter School District, up 19.7 percent. Education Improvement Act funding, generated from an earmarked 1 percent sales tax, is up 7.8 percent to \$644.5 million. This includes increased

recurring appropriations to replace vocational education equipment (\$6.4 million, more than doubled), for student assessments and testing (\$24.8 million, up 40.3 percent), and for instructional materials (\$20.9 million, up 52 percent). Also included is \$48.7 million for 2 percent teacher salary increases; of that amount, about \$10.1 million is nonrecurring funds.

After several years of reductions, general funds for universities are up 2.7 percent to \$307.1 million; technical colleges receive \$118.6 million, up 11.6 percent. Combined general and lottery funds are up slightly for the merit-based LIFE Scholarship program (to \$172.4 million) and up 1.3 percent to \$37.9 million for the merit-based Palmetto Fellows Scholarship. Total funding for the merit-based HOPE Scholarship program is down 3 percent to \$8 million. Tuition and fees for in-state undergraduates increased up to 4.9 percent at universities, up to 4 percent at technical colleges and by 3.2 percent at community colleges.

As in many other states, the Legislature reformed the statewide retirement system for public employees and teachers to ensure its long-term fiscal health. House Bill 4967 enacts several changes to retirement benefits that apply to individuals who begin work on July 1, 2012, and after. These new employees will vest into the retirement system after eight years of service (previously, five years) and will be eligible to receive retirement benefits when their combined age and years of service total 90. (Employees hired before July 1, 2012, are eligible to retire after 28 years of service, regardless of age.)

House Bill 4967 also phases out the Teacher and Employee Retention Incentive (TERI) program, which permits a teacher or employee to retire but remain employed in the same position. A teacher or employee who participates in TERI earns his or her regular salary, and at the end of the TERI employment period, receives the retirement benefits for that amount of time as a lump-sum payment. Teachers and employees hired on or after July 1, 2012, are not eligible to participate in TERI, and the bill phases the program out over five years.

House Bill 3241 amends the charter school laws. Eligible authorizers now include public and independent colleges and universities — previously, local school districts and the South Carolina Public Charter School District were the sole authorizers. The law establishes a revolving loan fund to assist charter schools with facility needs and specifies that conversion charter schools retain the right to use their current equipment and facilities without additional fees or charges. The law clarifies initial funding for conversion charters and specifies that after the first year, the school district will provide funding in the same manner as for regular public schools in the district. Finally, the bill addresses interscholastic and extracurricular activities for charter school students: They are eligible to participate in any extracurricular activities not offered at their charter school at the resident public school that they would attend.

Senate Bill 149, the Equal Access to Interscholastic Activities Act, also expands student access to extracurricular activities. In addition to addressing charter school students, the act expands eligibility for extracurricular activities to home school and Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities students.

In South Carolina, new teachers are employed under a nonrenewable induction contract; at the end of that contract, a district may employ the teacher on an annual contract basis or may terminate the

teacher's employment. Previously, the length of an induction contract was one year. With the passage of House Bill 3028, a school district may employ a teacher under an induction contract for up to three years, though the district also may offer the teacher an annual contract (or terminate the teacher's employment) at the end of the first or second year.

As a cost-saving measure, House Bill 4904 eliminates, for the second year in a row, the requirement for school districts to print copies of district and school report cards. It also provides to the college Class of 2012 a grace period on the repayment of South Carolina Teacher Loans. Individuals who completed an undergraduate or graduate education degree in 2012 but who are not employed as public school teachers in South Carolina by September 1, 2012, may defer payments for one year.

House Bill 4905, another cost-saving measure, allowed school districts, for the third consecutive year, to delay by one month (to May 15) the date by which they had to notify teachers whether their contracts were renewed for the 2012-2013 school year.

Other legislation

HB 3236 specifies that attendance at a school that is a member of the South Carolina Association of Christian Schools satisfies state compulsory education requirements.

HB 4595 allocates \$33.5 million from the state's funding to school districts to satisfy maintenance of effort requirements under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The bill also permits school districts to negotiate salaries for retired teachers employed under TERI below the minimum salary schedule.

HB 4690, the Jason Flatt Act, requires (beginning with the 2013-2014 school year) a middle grades or high school employee to receive two hours of youth suicide awareness and prevention training as a condition for renewing his or her credentials.

HB 5051 allows four-year colleges and universities to offer doctoral degrees in marine science.

SB 833 permits state colleges and universities to charge tuition rates for distance education courses taken by active duty military personnel at a rate lower than in-state undergraduate tuition rates.

Tennessee (<http://www.capitol.tn.gov>)

In late April, the General Assembly approved a \$31.5 billion budget for 2012-2013 that includes a 2.5 percent salary raise for state employees, teachers and postsecondary faculty (their first pay increase in four years) and a reduction in the grocery tax (from 5.5 percent to 5.25 percent). Total state funding decreases 6.4 percent to \$12.6 billion, compared with the original appropriation for 2011-2012. Elementary and secondary education operate with 2.3 percent more in state funds (totaling \$4.2 billion), including \$3.9 billion to fund the school formula (an increase of 3.2 percent). A slight increase (to \$1.4 billion, up 0.5 percent) in appropriations to higher education provides postsecondary institu-

tions with their first year of funding increases in several years. Tuition and fees at all public postsecondary institutions increased for the 2012-2013 school year. For in-state undergraduate students, tuition and fee increases ranged from 4.2 percent to 5.7 percent at public two-year colleges and from 3.4 percent to 8.3 percent at public four-year institutions.

The General Assembly passed several key pieces of legislation that focus on teacher preparation, parental involvement and school accountability. Senate Bill 2208 (Public Chapter 962) amends school accountability provisions by replacing the Adequate Yearly Progress policies established by the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Each year, the state superintendent will present to the state Board of Education (for its approval) annual, measurable achievement goals and achievement gap closure goals for the state and for local school systems.

When a local system meets both achievement and achievement gap targets, the state Board of Education will permit the system to develop its own school improvement plan and provide more funding flexibility to the system. School systems that miss the targets are subject to one of the following: placement on a public list of school systems in need of improvement, creation of an aggressive corrective action plan, or submission of a detailed analysis of their student achievement results and a plan to achieve their annual, measurable objectives.

Beginning in 2012-2013 and at least every three years thereafter, the state superintendent will designate schools as “priority,” “focus” or “reward,” based on overall achievement. A school system with a school(s) identified as “focus” will outline how the system will address the factors that led to the status designation. The state Department of Education will honor schools designated as “reward” schools and provide opportunities for the schools to serve as strategic partners to raise student achievement levels throughout the state.

Schools identified as “priority” represent the bottom 5 percent of all schools and are subject to one of the following interventions: a school improvement process; placement in a local school district innovation zone (an oversight entity that works to improve priority schools within the local school system); or placement in the Achievement School District (ASD) — a unit of the state Department of Education that oversees underperforming schools.

In addition, Senate Bill 2208 revises the 2010 First to the Top Act, which assigned underperforming schools to the ASD. The legislation provides the state superintendent with the option to directly operate the ASD or hire a managing entity; previously, the state superintendent could hire a managing entity only. The bill also authorizes the superintendent to assign any “priority” school or grade level within a school to the ASD and to remove any school from the district. The legislation also details a five-year transition plan back to the local school district when a school is assigned to the ASD by the superintendent.

To enhance teacher preparation, Senate Bill 3341 requires only teachers who have subject-specific state endorsements to teach a course that has an end-of-course (EOC) exam, unless the teacher demonstrates sufficient content knowledge by passing the EOC exam for the subject. The teacher is not

required to retake the exam (when subsequently receiving the same teaching course assignment), unless the teacher's latest evaluation demonstrates a "below expectations" or "significantly below expectations" performance effectiveness level.

Senate Bill 3588 (Public Chapter 762) requires the state Department of Education to develop model contracts for parental involvement that school systems are encouraged to implement. The voluntary contract will commit parents at least to reviewing their student's homework, signing report cards and attending parent-teacher conferences. The contract will include a method for parents to explain any obstacles that hindered them from complying with the contract.

With the same objective of encouraging and facilitating parental involvement, House Bill 2994 establishes a four-year parent involvement pilot program for school systems with the most schools operated by the ASD. The pilot program is limited to schools serving kindergarten through grade three. Schools must provide parents with a list of expectations concerning a student's school attendance, physical readiness and academic work. Parents will receive blank parent involvement report cards to evaluate themselves as "excellent," "satisfactory," "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory," based on four factors: parent response to meeting requests or communication; student homework completion and test preparation; student physical preparation; and student attendance and tardiness. The ASD and schools will create incentives for participation.

Other legislation

HB 3062 (Public Chapter 999) requires virtual schools to follow the same class size, instructional time and technology access requirements as public K-12 schools.

SB 2900 (Public Chapter 772) permits a school to award a special education diploma to a student who satisfactorily completes an Individualized Education Program and has a satisfactory record of attendance and conduct, but who has not met proficiency testing requirements.

SB 2982 (Public Chapter 830) allows local school districts to use school finance funding to hire a building manager.

SB 3155 creates a four-year pilot program that assesses (using a standardized test to determine how instruction can best meet the learning needs of students and eliminate disparities in learning abilities) kindergarten students in school systems with the most schools operated by the ASD.

Texas (<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>)

The Texas Legislature meets every other year to approve a biennial budget and did not have a regularly scheduled legislative session in 2012. In 2011, the Legislature enacted changes to the school finance formula that permit the state to fund K-12 education at approximately \$4 billion less, over the biennium, than originally mandated by the school finance formula.

The total biennial budget for 2012-2013 totals \$172.3 billion, down 8.1 percent from the estimated budget for the prior biennium. This includes \$86.9 billion in general funds, down 1.9 percent. Higher education funding is \$21.8 billion from all funds (down 4.3 percent), including nearly \$14.4 billion in general funds (down 7.8 percent). The general fund amount includes \$5.8 billion for four-year universities (down 5 percent), \$1.9 billion for two-year and technical colleges (down 2.7 percent), \$2.3 billion for health-related institutions (down 11.7 percent) and \$1.1 billion for the Higher Education Coordinating Board (down 22.7 percent).

Overall funds for K-12 education are up slightly to \$53.8 billion, including \$36.8 billion in general funds (up 9 percent). Because this level of K-12 funding does not actually cover full growth in formula financing, the Legislature eliminated funding for several programs, including the technology allotment to school districts and the prekindergarten grant program. The budget also substantially reduced funding for a number of other programs, including the Student Success Initiative (down 92 percent to \$23.5 million) and the District Awards for Teacher Excellence performance incentive program (down 89.6 percent to \$40 million). In addition, the budget eliminated nearly 200 positions at the Texas Education Agency.

In June, the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) directed all state agencies and institutions of higher education to ensure that their budget requests for the 2014-2015 biennium do not exceed their budgets for the current biennium; exceptions to this limitation include statutorily required school formula funding and required employer contributions for retirement and health benefits. In addition, the LBB directed agencies and institutions of higher education to submit details of how they would reduce their general fund budget requests by 5 percent and 10 percent.

Virginia (<http://www.legis.state.va.us>)

After returning for a special session in March, the governor approved the amended 2011-2012 budget in late May. The total amended budget (\$16.3 billion, up 5.7 percent) included \$6.6 billion for education, an increase of 1.6 percent compared with the amended 2010-2011 budget. K-12 education operated with almost \$5.0 billion (up 3.7 percent), including \$4.9 billion (up 3.9 percent) to fund the school finance formula. Higher education received \$1.2 billion, down 7.2 percent. State funding increased for the National Board Certification program (up 3.2 percent) and declined slightly for the Governor's School Program (down 0.2 percent), a collection of high school and summer programs for gifted students. Lottery funds increased both for the state's preschool program (up 4 percent) and for the Early Reading Intervention program (up 1.8 percent), which provides reading services to students in kindergarten through grade three.

The 2012-2014 biennium budget totals \$35.8 billion, up 9.5 percent compared with the amended 2010-2012 biennium budget. Total state funds for 2012-2013 increase 6 percent to \$17.3 billion, including \$7.0 billion for education (up 6.8 percent from the amended 2011-2012 budget). The K-12 education budget is \$5.3 billion, up 7.1 percent, which contains \$5.2 billion (up 6.9 percent) in school formula funding. State-funded appropriations to some education programs increased this year:

the National Board Certification program (up 7.4 percent), Governor's School Program (up 7 percent) and the state's preschool program (up 8.4 percent).

State funds for higher education increased 5.5 percent to about \$1.3 billion. Tuition and fees increased an average of 4.5 percent for in-state undergraduate students attending public colleges and universities.

For 2013-2014, the total state budget is \$17.5 billion (an increase of 1.1 percent). State funds to education rise 0.7 percent to \$7.1 billion. Elementary and secondary education funds increase 0.5 percent to just over \$5.3 billion, which includes slightly less than \$5.3 billion in school formula funding.

Legislators passed numerous pieces of legislation to increase student achievement, expand school choice, develop dual enrollment policies and consolidate the number of high school diplomas available. To increase reading proficiency, House Bill 1181 provides a reading intervention service for third-graders who demonstrate deficiencies based on the results of their Standards of Learning reading test or any reading diagnostic test prior to promotion to the fourth grade.

House Bill 1184 requires local school boards and community colleges to develop an articulation agreement that specifies the options for high school students who choose to complete an associate's degree or a one-year general studies certification from a community college concurrent with earning a high school diploma. The agreement will include the credit available for dual enrollment courses and Advanced Placement courses with qualifying exam scores of 3 or higher.

House Bill 1061 and Senate Bill 489 revise secondary school graduation requirements by modifying the types of diplomas available to students. The legislation deletes provisions relating to modified standard, standard technical and advanced technical diplomas. Students will earn either a standard or an advanced studies diploma. Both diplomas require students to complete one virtual course, which may be non-credit-bearing.

The advanced studies diploma is recommended for students pursuing baccalaureate studies. Beginning with first-time ninth-graders in 2013-2014, the standard diploma will require the student to concentrate in career and technical education and earn a career and technical education credential. The state Board of Education will make provisions for students with disabilities to earn a standard diploma. In addition, the Board will establish an adult high school diploma (for those not subject to compulsory attendance policies) that also will grant the student a career and technical education credential.

New charter school policies passed in House Bill 1173 and Senate Bill 440. Both bills require a local board of education to submit its rationale for denying, revoking or not renewing a public charter school application to the state Board of Education, which does not have the authority to grant, deny or revoke a charter application. The bills stipulate that, as a part of the charter agreement, charter schools will negotiate an amount of per pupil funding with local boards that corresponds with the average school-based costs of educating students in the local school district, unless the cost of operating the charter school is lower.

Additionally, the bills exempt charter school purchases from the state's procurement policies, unless otherwise negotiated by contract, and they remove the provision that allows a local school board to revoke a charter if the board determines that the charter is not in the public interest or harms the welfare of students in the local district. (A local school board also may revoke a charter under four other circumstances.) The bills also give local school boards the discretion to determine whether charter school personnel are employees of the charter school or the local board granting the charter, and they provide that a local board may allow a charter school to use vacant or unused properties or real estate owned by the local board.

Contingent upon the passage of the 2013-2014 budget and beginning in 2013, House Bill 321 establishes the Education Improvement Scholarships tax credit program, administered by the state Department of Education. Individuals, businesses and nonprofit organizations are eligible for the program after donating funds to nonprofit organizations that provide education improvement scholarships to low-income students or students with disabilities, as a means for these students to attend nonpublic elementary or secondary schools. Contributors will get a tax credit equal to 65 percent of their donations. Nonprofit organizations receiving the donations must distribute at least 90 percent of each donation to the scholarships, with an annual cap of \$25 million in credits. A contributor may carry forward any unused portion of the tax credit for five years.

In addition, the legislation increases the tax credit limits for the Neighborhood Assistance Program — a tax credit program that encourages businesses to donate to neighborhood organizations for the benefit of low-income persons — and expands the types of programs eligible to participate to include those serving students with disabilities. To participate, low-income individuals and students with disabilities must compose at least 50 percent of the people served by the neighborhood organization. Contributors will receive a 65 percent tax credit. (Currently, the credit is 40 percent.) Beginning July 1, 2012, neighborhood organizations may receive up to \$825,000 annually in credits (up from the previous \$500,000 cap). The amount of tax credits that the overall program may receive was increased from \$11.9 million to \$15 million, with no more than \$8 million (up from \$4.9 million) donated for education proposals.

House Bill 765 and Senate Bill 475 allow a private postsecondary institution to manage a college partnership laboratory program (a public school established by a postsecondary institution that operates a teacher education program approved by the state Board of Education). Previously, only a public postsecondary institution was permitted to operate such a program. The institution may charge tuition for enrichment courses (not required to earn a high school diploma) and courses that will earn the student college credit.

The General Assembly reformed the state employee and teacher retirement system with the passage of House Bill 1130 and Senate Bill 498. These bills create a hybrid retirement plan and a disability program for local employees participating in the hybrid retirement plan that includes both a defined contribution and a defined benefit component. All new employees (state employees, local employees and judges) hired after January 1, 2014, must participate in the hybrid plan. Employees who began service

on or before December 31, 2013, may opt through April 30, 2014, to participate in the hybrid plan or remain with their current retirement programs.

The legislation also changes the average final compensation calculation by increasing the number of consecutive months of creditable service from 36 months to 60 months. The retirement contribution multiplier (to calculate the retirees' retirement allowance) will decrease to 1.65 percent (from 1.7 percent) for a member who does not have at least 60 months of creditable service by January 1, 2013, or for a member who retires due to disability.

Other legislation

HB 76 and SB 278 shift the effective date for renewing teacher contracts from April 15 to June 15.

HB 195 requires the governing boards of each public postsecondary institution to award academic course credit to students for educational experience gained from military service.

HB 250 requires the state Department of Education to report the percentage of a school district's operating budget that is spent on instructional costs in the annual School Performance Report Card.

HB 603 provides that a local school board may establish an open school enrollment policy for any student residing within the school division, upon the request of a parent or guardian.

HB 629 increases the number of members on the University of Virginia's (UVA) Board of Visitors from 16 to 17, of whom at least 12 are at-large appointees, 12 are UVA graduates, and one is a physician with administrative and clinical experience in an academic medical center.

HB 639 requires the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, the state's coordinating board for postsecondary institutions, to publish the employment rates of graduates at 18 months and five years after graduation from public and private nonprofit postsecondary institutions, beginning in August 2013.

HB 756 allows the state Department of Education to establish the Innovation Technical Advisory Group to provide technical assistance and advice in carrying out duties relating to charter schools, college partnership laboratory schools and virtual school programs.

HB 886 addresses truancy, requiring the state Board to develop provisions by July 2013 that: focus on early intervention for repeated unexcused absences; identify and address a student's academic, social, familial and other barriers that impede attendance; and arrange conferences between school personnel, students, parents and community service providers.

SB 497 requires local government and local school board employees to pay a 5 percent employee contribution to the state retirement system. Local board employees will phase in the contribution over a five-year period. Local employers must provide local employees with raises that offset the costs of the contributions.

West Virginia (<http://www.legis.state.wv.us>)

After extending the regular legislative session to complete work on the budget, the Legislature adjourned in mid-March, having completed a \$4.1 billion general fund budget for 2012-2013 (up 3.4 percent). General funds for K-12 education rise 1.8 percent to \$2 billion, including nearly \$1.9 billion in formula funding for schools (up 1.5 percent). Funds for universities are up 1.5 percent to \$314.5 million, while community and technical colleges receive \$72.6 million, up 4.5 percent.

An item of major concern for the state has been the rising cost of health care and other benefits for retired state employees and teachers. To ensure adequate funding to meet the state's obligations, the Legislature adopted Senate Bill 469. The legislation dedicates \$30 million annually to the West Virginia Retiree Health Benefit Trust Fund and another \$35 million annually to the Post-July 1, 2010, Employee Trust (which will pay post-retirement benefits for state employees hired July 1, 2010, and after). The bill shifts responsibility from county boards of education to the state for post-retirement benefit payments to retired teachers.

The Legislature approved bills that the governor identified as priorities. House Bill 4236 establishes a statewide system of annual evaluations for classroom teachers, vice principals and principals, beginning with the 2013-2014 school year. For a classroom teacher, the evaluation is split into three parts: 80 percent is based on the teacher's performance relative to the state's professional teaching standards, 15 percent is based on evidence of student learning, and the remaining 5 percent is based on school-wide student academic growth on statewide assessments. The goal of the evaluation system is to improve educator performance, target professional development in areas identified through the evaluation process as needing improvement, document unsatisfactory performance as a basis for dismissal, and indicate areas of improvement in teacher education programs in the state. The passage of this legislation allows the state Department of Education to seek a waiver from policies under the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

House Bill 4122 updates provisions for alternative teacher education programs. These programs provide teacher education for individuals who obtain an alternative certification to teach in an area of critical need and shortage, rather than earning teacher certification through traditional university programs, while completing the education required to become a certified teacher. To fill a teaching position under these programs, the bill specifies that a school district must advertise the vacant position at least twice and not receive any applications from qualified applicants. The bill also allows alternative teacher education programs to deliver instruction through "nontraditional" methods, such as online learning, summer sessions and professional development.

To provide an alternative route for aspiring teachers and help schools fill teacher staffing gaps, House Bill 4101 allows an aspiring teacher to satisfy his or her student teaching requirements through a Teacher-In-Residence program. Under the program, prospective teachers who are in the senior year of an educator preparation program may fill a vacant teaching position if no certified teachers apply. A teacher under the program receives a stipend and is supervised and mentored by the teacher's educator preparation program, the school principal and other teachers at the school.

Another piece of legislation that the governor identified as a priority is Senate Bill 371, which establishes a pilot school system collaborative innovation zone — a public-private partnership initiative that will implement new approaches to improve the performance and progress of the students, schools and local school system. Under the bill, the school system involved in the pilot project may seek waivers from state law to provide greater local control of education in a way that improves local delivery of education. The pilot program is intended for a particular county that has already established a public-private partnership to improve education and provide other services for students and their families.

To help West Virginians further their education attainment, the Legislature approved Senate Bill 436, which establishes two programs: the Earn a Degree, Graduate Early (EDGE) initiative and the Collaborative Degree Completion Program. EDGE will link public schools with colleges and universities to prepare high school students for workplace and higher education success and to give them the opportunity to earn community and technical college credit free of charge. The purposes of EDGE are to create incentives for students to pursue postsecondary education, align courses in grades 11 and 12 with community and technical college certificate and associate's degree programs, expand successful concurrent enrollment programs, increase community and technical college enrollment, and create programs of study that will allow a student to earn an associate's degree one year after high school graduation.

The Collaborative Degree Completion Program, a partnership between public school career and technical centers and community and technical colleges, is designed to increase the number of residents with college credentials, provide opportunities for adults to earn college credentials and increase the skill level of the state's workforce. Under the program, these educational institutions will jointly identify postsecondary adult career/technical education programs already in existence that they can develop into certificate or associate's degree programs.

In addition, Senate Bill 436 establishes a select committee on outcomes-based funding models in higher education. The committee will conduct a detailed analysis and, by December 1, 2012, provide recommendations for the state to incorporate one or more of the models as part of the state's financing policy.

Other legislation

HB 4583 delays by one month each of the deadlines for a school board to terminate a teacher or notify a teacher of his or her transfer, or for a teacher to resign. The bill also provides that teachers who voluntarily transfer from one teaching position to another must do so by the 20th day (previously, the fifth day) before a school year begins.

SB 186 places into statute salary supplements that teachers and school staff receive based on their levels of education and years of experience.

SB 221, the Jason Flatt Act, requires the West Virginia Center for Professional Development routinely to provide suicide prevention education to teachers, administrators, principals and service personnel who have direct contact with students.

SB 646 requires the state Board of Education to study issues related to General Education Development diploma examinations, including how to control the costs of administering the exam and recommendations for retaining the paper version of the test (which is phasing out in favor of computerized testing).

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