



SREB

Legislative Report

Final legislative and budget actions

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

Alabama's 2017-18 general fund budget totals \$1.8 billion, down less than \$1 million from the 2016-17 total. This provides funding for state activities other than education. For 2017-18, the Education Trust Fund budget, which provides funding for all levels of education and other programs, totals \$6.4 billion, down 0.4 percent from 2016-17. The K-12 Foundation Program funding formula is up 0.5 percent to \$3.6 billion. Funding provided to districts for school transportation increases 1 percent to \$339.2 million, and funding for district information technology coordinators totals \$5.8 million, a 20.6 percent increase.

Funding for the Department of Early Childhood Education rises 19.9 percent to nearly \$79.8 million. Most of the increase and the department's budget is directed to the Office of School Readiness, which operates the First Class Pre-K program; funding totals \$77.5 million, up 20.2 percent. The program is slated to add 122 new classrooms for the 2017-18 school year, increasing enrollment to nearly 17,000 students — 28 percent of all Alabama four-year-olds. The Office of School Readiness also operates the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program, funded at \$2.1 million, a 13.3 percent increase.

State college and university funding is flat for 2017-18, at \$1 billion overall, with the exception of \$250,000 in new funding for the Center for Law Enforcement Best Practices at Jacksonville State University. Community college funding overall is \$364.9 million, unchanged from the prior year except for \$5.3 million (more than double the 2016-17 amount) for grants to workforce training initiatives that help individuals obtain industry certifications. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education receives a 19.5 percent increase to \$28.7 million, but most of that amount is from the nearly \$4.7 million provided for National Guard Scholarships (up from \$624,498 in the prior year).

House Bill 89 requires the Alabama State Department of Education to develop and implement, by October 1, 2017, an electronic notification system, accessible by the department and the governor, for schools to provide and

distribute information relating to school delays, early releases, shelter-in-place information, and other emergency-related information.

Senate Bill 32 requires, beginning with the 2018-19 school year, high school students to successfully pass a civics exam with questions drawn from the federal Citizenship and Immigration Services naturalization test to complete the required high school government course. Students must correctly answer at least 60 of the 100 questions on the test and may retake it until they obtain a passing score.

Senate Bill 315 modifies the higher education benefits provided to military veterans who served during wartime or under extra-hazardous conditions, and to the children and spouses of veterans who were disabled or killed in the line of duty. Previously, the state entitled those individuals to attend state colleges and universities without paying for tuition, fees or books; for individuals who apply for these benefits on July 31, 2017 and afterwards, the benefit provided is reimbursement of tuition, fees and book costs. The combined reimbursement for books and fees is limited to \$1,000 per semester, per student. A child or spouse of a disabled or deceased veteran who applies for benefits on or after July 31, 2017 must first apply for and, if awarded benefits, use all other federal, state, institutional and third-party scholarships and grants that are available before applying for veterans' benefits, and must maintain satisfactory academic progress to continue receiving the benefits.

For a tuition scholarship provided to a member of the Alabama National Guard, Senate Bill 315 specifies that the benefit provided may not exceed the average cost of tuition per semester at a state-supported Alabama four-year institution. The bill caps the maximum annual amount of benefits provided at \$10 million, requires a member receiving the benefits to maintain a 2.0 GPA and specifies that a member may receive a scholarship for a maximum of 120 academic hours.

Other legislation

HB 381 provides legal immunity to local school board members and school system employees for acts or omissions as a result of providing the information that boards may distribute to parents and guardians of students regarding immunizations and infectious diseases.

SB 203 grants military recruiters of the United States Armed Forces and Department of Homeland Security the same information and access to students granted to prospective employers or postsecondary institutions.

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

Before adjourning, legislators adopted a 2017-18 state-funded budget that will provide a maximum of \$5.5 billion, an increase of just over 3 percent compared to 2016-17 allocations. Funding to support the operation of elementary and secondary schools rises slightly to nearly \$2.2 billion. The General Education portion of the budget that supports the state Department of Education, the schools for the deaf and the blind, the Department of Career Education, rehabilitative services and other areas declines by 0.3 percent to \$104.1 million. The largest portion of this funding (\$41.8 million, no change) provides the state share of school construction projects. Arkansas's three technical institutes, which work to increase the employability of students, will operate with \$8 million, a slight decrease.

Funding for postsecondary institutions remains at the prior-year funding level of nearly \$733.6 million. This includes \$588.1 million for four-year colleges and universities, \$111.9 million for two-year colleges and \$33.5 million for two-year technical colleges.

Legislators passed Act 1063 (Senate Bill 502), the Right to Read Act, which requires that, no later than 2023, persons completing a state-approved educator preparation program and those seeking a teacher license have proficient knowledge and skills to teach reading using the best practices of scientific reading instruction. Also, beginning in 2018-19, school districts and charter schools will provide professional development in scientific reading instruction, leading to a proficiency credential for elementary teachers and an awareness credential for teachers licensed at other levels.

Also relative to reading, Act 940 (Senate Bill 494) requires public school districts to report to the parents or legal guardians of each student in kindergarten through eighth grade the reading level of the student at least two times per year.

Act 744 (House Bill 1608) specifies the measures the state will use to rate schools as required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. These measures include academic achievement and student growth, the graduation rate, the progress of English-language learners, improvements in closing achievement gaps and the academic growth of student subgroups, ninth grade credit completion, equity in resource allocation, the percentage of students completing advanced credits and industry-recognized certification, access to pre-school, the proportion of teachers holding National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification or an advanced degree, and public school district and community partnerships.

Act 930 (Senate Bill 647) repeals the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program Act and creates the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act. The bill sets out the responsibility of the state Board of Education to approve academic standards and appropriate assessments, and for the Department of Education to develop a comprehensive system of accountability for schools and districts, establish academic standards and provide for their periodic review, implement the state assessment system, and analyze the data produced by the assessments.

The act requires the state Department of Education to begin working with districts in 2017-18 to transition to a student-focused learning system to promote success for all students. The state Board of Education may promote the system's goal to support effectiveness, report on educator effectiveness, and report rates at which low-income and minority students are disproportionately taught by educators who are ineffective, inexperienced or teaching out of their fields. The act requires schools to develop improvement plans for district approval and districts to develop support plans for schools in need of targeted or comprehensive support.

Act 316 (House Bill 1426) and Act 613 (Senate Bill 528) each create student financial assistance programs aimed at high-needs occupations or fields. Act 316 creates the Arkansas Future Grant Program to provide financial assistance to eligible students seeking a two-year degree or certification in science, technology, engineering, mathematics or in another high-demand field. The last-dollar grant will cover the cost of tuition, fees and other required charges, less the amount the student receives in other sources of financial assistance. Act 613 creates the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship to provide awards of up to \$800 per year to eligible students seeking an associate degree or certification in certain high-demand fields identified by the Department of Workforce Services, including industry, health care and information technology. In addition, students may apply for a summer term scholarship if funds are available.

Act 148 (House Bill 1209) calls for the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to develop, and the Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt, policies to implement a productivity-based funding model for public higher education institutions that focuses on institutional missions; student progression and completion; affordability; the ability of students to successfully transfer from one institution to another; success in serving underrepresented students; and the production of degrees and credentials in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and high-demand fields.

Other legislation

Act 173 (HB 1208) permits a school district or charter school to allow a student who resides in the district and attends a private school or home school to enroll in an academic course.

Act 478 (HB 1539) requires each student to pass the civics portion of the federal Citizenship and Immigration Services naturalization test as a requirement to receive a high school diploma or equivalency diploma.

Act 561 (SB 519) requires the commissioner of education to update materials and resources relating to the teaching of historical contributions made by African-Americans, and creates a separate holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Act 562 (HB 1249) permits properly licensed persons with additional training to carry a concealed handgun on college and university campuses, except in limited circumstances.

Act 563 (HB 1518) requires the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop a plan to address the prevention of sexual assault.

Act 742 (HB 1902) permits a public charter authorizer to designate a charter school as a school for agricultural studies and repeals the Agriculture School Pilot Program.

Act 862 (HB 1457) permits public school districts and charter schools to develop a plan for alternative instruction methods for use on days when school is cancelled.

Act 872 (HB 1459) permits a school district to submit a plan to the Department of Education to award high school course credit based on demonstrated subject matter competence instead of, or combined with, actual hours of classroom instruction.

Act 1105 (HB 1575) limits the amount of fund balances school districts may maintain.

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

Concluding a session dominated by a revenue shortfall, the Delaware General Assembly required extra time to complete its work, approving a 2017-18 budget agreement and adjourning in the early morning hours of July 2. The governor signed the budget the following day. The budget provides \$4.1 billion in general funds for 2017-18, up 0.6 percent from the prior year. Included in the appropriations for the Office of Management and Budget is \$1 million in general funds for up to 10 Opportunity Grants, which school districts and charter schools will use to provide services and supports to disadvantaged students.

Higher education funding is up 1.1 percent to \$237.1 million. This includes \$120.7 million for the University of Delaware (up 0.1 percent), \$35.1 million for Delaware State University (up 0.2 percent) and \$80.7 million (up 2.6 percent) for Delaware Technical and Community College.

Funding for the state Department of Education totals \$1.4 billion for 2017-18, a 2.8 percent increase, including nearly \$1.2 billion for school district operations, up 2.9 percent. This amount includes a reduction of \$26 million, effective July 1, for districts and charter schools. The reductions are allocated proportionately by enrollment, and districts and charter schools must submit plans specifying how they will achieve those reductions to the state Department of Education by October 31. Block grants and other pass-through programs receive \$111.8 million, up 7.5 percent, and funding for student transportation is up 1 percent to \$92.4 million.

General funds for Delaware Department of Education operations decrease 6.7 percent to \$48.7 million. The reduction includes elimination of funding for the state Board of Education. The merit-based SEED scholarship program for students at the University of Delaware and Delaware Technical and Community College receives level funding of nearly \$5.7 million; the merit-based Inspire program for Delaware State University students remains funded at \$1.6 million. General funds for other student financial aid programs decline 20 percent to \$2.5 million; all state student financial aid programs are administered through the Department of Education.

Early childhood initiatives, including the Delaware Stars for Early Success quality rating and improvement system, receive an increase of 26.9 percent for a total of more than \$20.6 million.

House Bill 143 returns Delaware to a three-tiered teacher licensure system, eliminating the provisional license for teachers in their first year of teaching who have not yet received a passing score on the required performance assessment. The provisional license tier was enacted in 2016. Educators with no experience who are receiving their first license will now receive a four-year initial license, and have two school years to complete a performance assessment. For vocational trade and industry licensure applicants the bill eliminates the requirement to obtain a passing score on the Praxis I examination or another examination of general knowledge, and extends from five years to six years the period of an initial license.

House Bill 15 requires all public high schools, including charter schools, to offer at least one computer science course, and directs the state Department of Education to develop standards for computer science. Beginning with the 2018-19 school year, a student may use a computer science course to satisfy a mathematics graduation credit requirement, except for Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II or equivalent courses.

Delaware law mandates school attendance for all children between the ages of five and 16. House Bill 23 specifies that a child over the age of 16 who has not graduated may withdraw from school only with written consent from the child's parent or guardian and after completing an exit interview that provides information regarding the detrimental impacts of early withdrawal, the likelihood of diminished earning potential and the increased likelihood of unemployment.

Other legislation

HB 70 requires every public elementary school to teach cursive writing by the end of grade four as a component of English language arts, beginning with the 2018-19 school year.

HB 142 requires school resource officers — law enforcement officers who are not considered public school personnel — to receive annual training regarding interactions with students with disabilities, including best practices for de-escalation techniques and information on intervention decisions and techniques used by school personnel.

HCR 39 creates a task force to study school district consolidation.

HJR 4 requires the state Department of Education to develop a certificate of multi-literacy for Delaware high school students who have attained high levels of proficiency in one or more world languages in addition to English.

SB 102 consolidates several provisions on required training for school personnel regarding child abuse, child sexual abuse training and detection, suicide prevention, bullying, criminal youth gang detection, and teen dating violence and sexual assault, and establishes the required hours of training in each area that each school employee must receive every three years.

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

While legislators came to a budget agreement at the end of the regular session in early May, the governor vetoed formula funding provided to school districts, and called legislators back for a special session in early June to appropriate a greater amount for K-12 education. After gubernatorial vetoes, the statewide general fund budget for 2017-18 totals \$30.8 billion, up 2.1 percent from the post-veto 2016-17 budget.

General funds for formula funding to K-12 schools through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) total just under \$8 billion, up 3.5 percent; general funds for class size reduction are up 0.8 percent to \$2.9 billion. Additional funding for the FEFP derived from lottery revenues is up 46.2 percent to \$404.6 million, while lottery funds for class size reduction and the School Recognition Program remain level at \$103.8 million and \$134.6 million, respectively.

General funding for school readiness rises 2.6 percent to \$140.6 million, while the statewide voluntary prekindergarten program receives \$396.8 million, up 0.4 percent. General funds to the Gardiner Scholarship Program, which allows disabled students to obtain educational services or products, rise 3 percent to \$73.3 million.

State colleges receive \$965.3 million in general funds, up 1.1 percent, while universities receive \$12.2 billion for education and general activities, a 12.2 percent increase. Lottery funds are down 15.4 percent to \$231.8 million for state colleges, and fall 16.9 percent to \$229.3 million for universities.

The merit-based Benacquisto Scholarship Program for students who achieve recognition as National Merit Scholars receives nearly \$14.3 million, up 10.5 percent. Lottery funds for Bright Futures scholarships rise 82.8 percent to \$397.3 million. While lottery funds for need-based Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG) awards to full- and part-time students at public colleges and universities decline 8.4 percent to \$59.4 million, general funds for the program nearly triple to \$148.6 million. The increased funding is expected to provide awards to over 200,000 students in 2017-18, more than double the prior year.

Legislators approved many education measures through House Bill 7069. Under the bill, districts must offer statewide English and mathematics assessments for grades three through six in paper format only and must provide the results for all statewide English and mathematics assessments in an easily understandable format. The bill requires the commissioner of education to contract for an independent study of whether the SAT and ACT may be administered in lieu of high school level English and mathematics assessments. Relative to school accountability, the bill frees schools with grades of D or F in the state accountability system from personnel contract restrictions and requires a district to annually approve an improvement plan for all schools with D and F grades. Districts must provide the state Department of Education with a district-managed turnaround plan for any school that earns a D or F grade for two consecutive years. The bill also expands the system that provides early warning for students at risk of failure in grades six through eight to cover students in kindergarten through grade eight.

House Bill 7069 establishes the Schools of Excellence Program, which provides flexibility to schools that perform in the 80th percentile or better of similar-level schools in the state accountability system for two out of three years. Schools of Excellence are exempt from minimum reading instruction time requirements and district requirements for the start or finish time of the instructional day, and may satisfy class size requirements based on the average number of students at the school rather than actual classroom counts. The Schools of Hope program allows a nonprofit organization to establish, through a performance-based agreement with a local school board, a school that serves and is designed to improve the academic performance

of students at persistently low-performing schools. A School of Hope is exempt from local school board policies and from state education statutes, except those regarding student assessment and school grades, student progression and graduation, services for disabled students, civil rights, student health and safety, public meetings and records requirements, and ethics requirements. Schools of Hope receive funding in the same manner as charter schools, and the bill establishes a loan program for facilities and startup funding needs.

House Bill 7069 permits a high-performing charter school to establish a second school campus anywhere in the state if the new campus is located in the attendance area of a persistently low-performing school. A high-performing charter school system may apply to the state Board of Education to establish a school in any district in the state.

The bill modifies the Florida Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program, established in 2015 to provide awards to teachers who achieve a score in the 80th percentile or higher on the ACT or SAT and who have been rated as highly effective. The bill sets the award amount at \$6,000 (previously up to \$10,000). It provides that, beginning in 2020-21, to receive an award a teacher must have achieved a score in the 77th percentile or higher (or, if he or she was a cum laude or better bachelor's degree graduate, 71st percentile or higher) on the SAT, ACT, GRE, LSAT, GMAT or MCAT. The bill also establishes the Florida Best and Brightest Principal Scholarship Program for principals at schools with the highest percentages of teachers who are Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship recipients; principals receiving awards who serve at Title I schools will receive \$5,000, while principals at other schools will receive \$4,000. The bill also requires school districts to give principals receiving awards the same administrative flexibilities provided under the Principal Autonomy Pilot Program Initiative, established in 2016.

House Bill 7069 also authorizes charter schools and charter management organizations to provide competency-based teacher certification programs, and requires all teacher preparation programs to include scientifically researched and evidence-based reading instructional strategies. Schools must ensure that kindergarten through third-grade students with substantial reading deficiencies have an Individualized Education Plan or an individualized progress monitoring plan, and must provide, for those who are retained in grade three due to a reading deficiency, at least 90 minutes daily of uninterrupted, evidence-based, explicit, systematic, and multisensory reading instruction. The bill eliminates the requirement that each school district adopt a digital classroom plan.

House Bill 7069 appropriates \$413.9 million in general funds to finance its various provisions. This amount includes \$233.9 million for the Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship and Principal Scholarship programs (the Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program received \$49 million in 2016-17), while \$30 million supports the Gardiner Scholarship Program. Another \$10 million (plus \$5 million in one-time monies) funds provisions in the bill relating to statewide student assessments, while the remaining \$140 million is designated to implement the remaining bill provisions including Schools of Hope and the related loan program.

Legislators approved Senate Bill 436, the Florida Student and School Personnel Religious Liberties Act. The act prohibits school districts from discriminating against students, parents or school personnel based on their religious viewpoints and specifies that students may express their religious beliefs in coursework and assignments. School districts must provide religious groups with access to school facilities in the same manner as provided to secular groups.

House Bill 989 requires each school board to maintain an online list of current instructional materials by grade level and permits a resident of the county in which a school board is located to object to the use of any specific materials. A school board must conduct a public hearing in response to an objection to an adopted instructional material and allow the resident to offer evidence that it contains inappropriate or prohibited content. In addition, the bill eliminates the requirement that a school district use at least 50 percent of its state instructional material allocation to purchase electronic materials.

Other legislation

HB 15 expands Gardiner Scholarship Program eligibility to students who suffer from anaphylaxis and rare diseases as well as sensory impaired, traumatic brain injured, hospital-bound and homebound students.

HB 293 requires the state Department of Education to contract with an outside entity to conduct a study of states with high-performing students in grades six through eight. The study must include information on academic expectations, instructional strategies, attendance policies, teacher quality, administrator leadership and performance, and parent and community involvement in the identified states.

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

The Georgia General Assembly ended its 2017 legislative session late in March. The Legislature adjourned having passed an amended 2016-17 state-funded budget of \$24.3 billion, up 2.5 percent from the original budget, and a \$24.9 billion 2017-18 budget, up 2.6 percent from the amended 2016-17 budget.

Amendments to the 2016-17 budget provide \$606.2 million in additional state funds, including \$108.9 million for a midterm adjustment for a K-12 enrollment growth of 11,855 additional students. The supplemental budget also raised the appropriation for the Move On When Ready dual enrollment program by 28.8 percent to \$75.1 million, sufficient funding for 68,000 awards.

For 2017-18, state funds for K-12 education total \$9.4 billion, a 4.4 percent increase over the amended 2016-17 budget. That amount includes \$162 million for a 2 percent adjustment to the state teacher salary schedule and a 2 percent salary increase for bus drivers and school nutrition personnel. It also includes \$133 million for additional enrollment growth of 10,796 students and for a training and experience increase for teachers. The 2017-18 budget includes \$4 million to support additional school counselors, pursuant to House Bill 283 from the 2013 session, and \$1 million to implement House Bill 338, passed this year to improve the academic achievement of the lowest performing schools. Career and technical education programs receive \$17.9 million in funding, a 2 percent increase over the original 2016-17 budget. The amended 2016-17 budget for career and technical education included an appropriation of \$5 million for equipment grants for local districts.

Funding for the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) in 2017-18 includes state funds of \$426.3 million, up 3 percent, including \$364.8 million in lottery funds, up 2 percent. The DECAL budget maintains funding for 84,000 slots in the Georgia Pre-K program. The budget also includes \$357,718 for its new foundation, pursuant to House Bill 463 described below.

In higher education, the 2017-18 budget includes \$71.2 million in increased formula funds for both the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia to respond to enrollment growth and associated facilities requirements, as well as \$49.2 million for merit-based pay adjustments and employee recruitment and retention initiatives. Overall, general funds for the University System increase 7 percent to

\$2.3 billion. General funds for the Technical College system increase to \$361 million, up 3 percent from the previous year.

The Georgia Student Finance Commission will operate in 2017-18 with \$879.7 million in state funds, a 6.5 percent increase over the amended 2016-17 budget. The budget provides a 9.4 percent increase in lottery funds, to \$571.8 million, to increase the award amount for merit-based HOPE Scholarships at public colleges and universities by 3 percent and meet the projected demand for scholarships — including for the Zell Miller Scholarship program, which provides a higher level of assistance than HOPE Scholarships. General funds for Tuition Equalization Grants that support students attending independent postsecondary institutions total \$22.8 million, a 7.6 percent increase and sufficient to raise the grant amount from \$900 to \$950 a year. Move On When Ready receives \$78.8 million in general funds, up 5 percent.

House Bill 338, the First Priority Act — Helping Turnaround Schools Put Students First, specifies interventions for chronically low-performing schools. Unlike the proposed Opportunity School District for struggling schools that did not receive voter approval, the state Board of Education will appoint a Chief Turnaround Officer after consultation with the state school superintendent and the Education Turnaround Advisory Council established in the bill, as well as a national search. The Chief Turnaround Officer, who reports to the state Board of Education, is responsible for managing and overseeing a system of supports and assistance for the state's lowest-performing schools, and for identifying the schools based on the state accountability system. If after three years under an intensive school improvement plan a school does not improve as determined by the Chief Turnaround Officer, the school is subject to state intervention. Possible interventions include removal of school personnel, conversion to a charter or special school, and operation of the school by a private nonprofit operator. House Bill 338 also creates a joint study committee to determine the need for a state accreditation process for public schools and school systems, and a joint study committee on the establishment of a leadership academy.

House Bill 237 creates the Public Education Innovation Fund Foundation to promote public-private partnerships between businesses, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, school systems and public schools to improve student achievement. The foundation will award funds through a competitive grant process, giving priority to schools that have performed in the lowest 5 percent of schools under the state accountability system. Donors will receive income tax credits. The amount of all tax credits is capped at \$5 million per tax year.

House Bill 463 authorizes DECAL to establish the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning, to promote educational excellence through public-private partnerships between businesses, nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, school systems and public schools with early care and education programs. DECAL will award foundation funds through a competitive grant process.

Senate Bill 211 establishes a statewide annual assessment program for grades three through 12. It requires school systems to administer assessments in grades one and two that provide results tied to performance indicators in reading and math. The bill directs the state Department of Education to pursue the maximum flexibility in federal law for state assessment systems, including applying for an innovative assessment demonstration authority and utilizing a nationally recognized college- and career-ready high school assessment, provided comparability to Georgia academic standards can be established. It also directs the state Board of Education to conduct a comparability study of nationally recognized assessments such as the ACT, SAT and ACCUPLACER to determine their alignment with Georgia academic standards.

House Bill 37 prohibits private postsecondary institutions from adopting sanctuary policies, including private independent nonprofit postsecondary and proprietary postsecondary institutions eligible to receive state supported Tuition Equalization Grants. The bill defines sanctuary policies as any regulation, rule, policy or practice prohibiting or restricting officials or employees from communicating or cooperating with federal officials regarding information about an individual believed to be violating state or federal laws, illegally residing within the U.S. or reasonably believed to be involved in domestic terrorism. Violations would result in withholding of state funds or state-administered federal funds provided to the institution directly. It also would impact funds going to students in the form of scholarships, loans and grants for students.

House Bill 280 allows an individual with an appropriate license to have a concealed handgun in any building or on property owned by or leased to any public technical school, vocational school, college, university or other institution of postsecondary education, with the exception of sporting venues or student housing (including fraternity or sorority houses); space used for college or career academies; space where classes are held in which high school students are enrolled; or faculty, staff or administrative offices or rooms where disciplinary proceedings are conducted.

Other legislation

HB 139 requires the state Department of Education to make available on its website specified school system information and individual school budget and expenditure information. School districts, schools, and charter schools with websites must post a link to this information in a prominent location.

HB 224 allows a student from a military family living in base housing to attend any school in a local system determined to have capacity.

HB 245 directs the Professional Standards Commission to establish a process, no later than July 1, 2018, by which military spouses may qualify for temporary teaching certificates.

SB 186 gives a student who earned a high school diploma through dual coursework eligibility to receive a HOPE Grant toward an associate degree.

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

Kentucky's 2017 legislative session ended on March 30. During the session, the Legislature passed House Bill 471, which amends provisions in the 2016-18 biennial budget but does not change any of the appropriated amounts. Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) formula funding provisions in the budget amendment bill allow a public charter school to receive (with some restrictions) its portion of the local school district's student funding.

Under the biennial budget approved in 2016, general funds rise 2.3 percent in 2017-18 to nearly \$10.9 billion. General funds for the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System decline 4.4 percent to \$744.8 million in 2017-18; the \$779.2 million provided in 2016-17, however, represented an increase of 160.3 percent over the prior year.

Statewide general funds for K-12 education decline 0.2 percent to \$4.1 billion in 2017-18, and include \$3 billion for SEEK formula funding to schools, down 0.4 percent. General funds to state-supported postsecondary institutions decline 4 percent to \$844 million in 2017-18. However, legislators allocated \$42.9 million in 2017-18 to establish the Postsecondary Education Performance Fund; these funds will be distributed to institutions based on the mechanism established in Senate Bill 153, described below.

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, which administers statewide student financial aid programs, receives \$245.2 million in 2017-18, up 2.1 percent. This includes \$15.9 million to establish the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship, which provides last-dollar financial aid to permit students to attend Kentucky Community and Technical College System institutions at no cost.

House Bill 520 allows school boards to authorize charter schools in their school districts beginning with the 2017-18 school year. The mayors of Louisville and Lexington also may authorize charter schools. Under the legislation, an independent board will govern each charter school and schools will provide a nonsectarian educational program that meets or exceeds student performance standards adopted by the Kentucky Board of Education. The state Board of Education may override a local school board's decision to deny, refuse to renew, or revoke a school's charter, and the state board's decision is subject to judicial review. Only certified teachers and administrators approved by the Kentucky Educational Professional Standards Board can teach at the schools.

Senate Bill 1 changes the way Kentucky public schools are held accountable for student progress and changes how teachers are evaluated. It requires regular reviews of the state's academic standards, establishes school success indicators, provides state funding for school districts to use college admissions tests to assess students' academic success, and gives local school boards control over teacher evaluation. The state Department of Education will review the state's academic content standards and the alignment of corresponding assessments every six years beginning in 2017-18. The legislation establishes new benchmarks for college and career readiness, including college and admissions exam scores, college credits earned, and apprenticeship hours. The law requires high schools to increase their percentage of graduates who meet at least one of the benchmarks.

Senate Bill 153 changes the state's postsecondary education funding mechanism by allocating 35 percent of funds based on student success measures and 35 percent of funds based on course completion rates. It provides the remaining 30 percent of funds to vital campus operations and student support. Initially, this performance funding allocation method will apply to the \$42.9 million appropriated for 2017-18 for the postsecondary education performance fund established during the 2016 session. In subsequent years, state universities and the community and technical college system will receive all state funding — with exceptions for some mandated programs — under the framework of Senate Bill 153. The legislation does not reduce funding to any institution in 2018-19, and it limits reductions in fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Senate Bill 50 gives Kentucky school districts more leeway in setting school calendars. It allows districts, beginning in 2017-18, to use a "variable student instructional year" and offer the required 1,062 hours of instructional time in less than the 170 days required for the school year.

Senate Bill 17 makes explicit in state law that Kentucky public school students and public college or university students may express their religious and political views in their school work, artwork, speeches, and in other ways. The legislation specifies that students may display religious messages on their clothes while at school, use school newspapers and public-address systems to announce student religious meetings, and distribute political literature on school grounds. The bill prohibits public colleges and universities from unreasonable restrictions on student speech exercised outdoors on campus and must give religious and political organizations equal access to public forums.

Several workforce and employment bills apply to educators. House Bill 1 prohibits public employees from going on strike. Under Senate Bill 6, which concerns unions, an employee cannot be enrolled as a member of a labor organization unless the employee has affirmatively requested membership in writing. School districts may no longer make mandatory dues deductions without explicit employee permission.

Other legislation

HB 195 allows the Kentucky Adult Education Program to establish programs aligned with college- and career-ready standards for adult education or similar standards adopted by the federal Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. At least one of the programs will include a test aligned with the standards so that passing the test entitles a student to receive a high school equivalency diploma.

HB 206 establishes the Dual Credit Scholarship Program, administered by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA), to provide dual credit scholarship funding for each eligible high school student for a maximum of two successfully completed dual credit courses.

HB 277 allows a person to serve on a local board of education if the individual has an aunt, uncle, son-in-law or daughter-in-law employed by the local school district, which previously was prohibited. However, the bill retains restrictions that prevent a person from serving on a school board when a parent, sibling or child of the individual is employed by the district.

HB 312 ends the KHEAA student loan repayment programs Best In Class, Best In Care and Best In Law, and establishes student loan cancellation for high school dual credit coursework teachers.

SB 117 requires the Education Professional Standards Board to establish standards and procedures for alternative certification for individuals with exceptional work experience, participants in a local school district training program, professionals from postsecondary institutions, adjunct instructors, military veterans, students in university alternative programs, individuals in fields other than education, and Teach for America participants.

SB 159 adds to high school graduation eligibility the requirement that each student pass a civics test with questions drawn from the federal Citizenship and Immigration Services naturalization test.

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

Recognizing that legislators likely would require extra time to complete a budget agreement for 2017-18, the governor at the end of May issued his call for a special session — beginning 30 minutes after regular session adjournment — one week prior to the end of the regular session. Legislators subsequently approved, in mid-June, a \$13.6 billion state-funded budget for 2017-18, up 0.6 percent from the original 2016-17 appropriation. This includes \$9.6 billion in general funds, up 0.2 percent. A \$304 million budget shortfall for 2016-17 required legislators to meet in a special session in February, which resulted in an agreement to lower spending and transfer funds; the analysis below reflects changes from the original 2016-17 appropriations levels.

General funds for K-12 education rise 2.2 percent to \$3.6 billion, of which nearly \$3.5 billion (also up 2.2 percent) is directed to Minimum Foundation Program formula funding to school districts. General funds to the Louisiana Scholarship Program, which provides scholarships for children from low-income families to attend nonpublic schools, total \$39.9 million, up 10.4 percent. State general fund assistance to nonpublic schools — primarily to cover the costs of maintaining and reporting education data, provide salary supplements for lunchroom employees and help defray the cost of books and instructional materials — is down 2 percent to just under \$19 million.

State funds for higher education total under \$1.2 billion, up 5.4 percent, including just over \$1 billion in general funds, a 9 percent increase. Previously, the Legislature appropriated operating funds to the state's three university systems and Louisiana Community and Technical College System; for 2017-18, those funds

are provided to the Louisiana Board of Regents, which will in turn distribute the funds to each postsecondary system according to its outcome-based funding formula. General funds for the merit-based TOPS scholarship program rise 0.8 percent to \$81.9 million.

To assist policymakers and the public in assessing the extent to which students have access to a quality public education, House Bill 517 requires the state superintendent of education to annually prepare a report that provides information for each school. Under the bill, the report must contain information by school on the percentage of students who: are economically disadvantaged; have an Individualized Education Program or Individual Accommodation Plan; are racial or ethnic minorities; are English-language learners; complete Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or dual enrollment courses; complete industry certifications; have access to instruction in visual and performing arts; and have received out-of-school suspensions or been expelled. The report also must include for each school information on the result of state assessments in grades three through 12, the percentage of teachers determined to be highly effective and the number of teacher absences.

Louisiana's teacher evaluation system considers certain factors when determining student growth, such as student attendance and discipline or whether a student receives special education services. House Bill 130 establishes as a factor whether a student is economically disadvantaged (previously limited to students who qualified for free or reduced-price meals). The definition of an economically disadvantaged student under the legislation is broader and includes those whose families qualify for certain food or financial assistance programs, or healthcare programs for families with limited resources, those who qualify for reduced-price meals, and English-language learners.

Leaders in several states have expressed concern over the amount of classroom time that students spend taking standards-based assessments. House Bill 616 specifies that no more than two percent of students' instructional time in an academic year may be used to take these assessments; the restriction does not apply to examinations for college entrance or credit, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or industry-based credentials.

In response to the disruptions caused by natural disasters that occurred over the previous school year as well as the possibility of such disruptions in the future, legislators approved House Bill 20, which waives requirements for the minimum length of each school day and school year for any public school that temporarily shared facilities with another school because of a natural disaster or emergency. In addition, Senate Bill 170 permits the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to make allowances in calculating school and district performance scores for 2016-17 for schools that were in declared disaster areas.

House Bill 688 prohibits state colleges and universities from asking on their admissions applications questions regarding an applicant's criminal history, except for convictions for stalking, cyberstalking, rape or sexual battery. If an institution denies an application based on a conviction for one of those crimes, it must notify the applicant and allow the individual to appeal the decision. The bill allows a college or university to inquire, once it admits a student, regarding convictions for crimes other than the above for purposes of determining whether the institution should limit that student's participation in campus life when the student's criminal conduct bears a direct relationship on that participation.

In 2015, the Legislature provided the management boards of state colleges and universities with the authority to establish and increase student fees without legislative approval through the 2016-17 academic year. House Bill 113 extends that authority through the 2019-20 academic year.

Other legislation

HB 4 permits the reemployment of retired school nurses.

HB 31 permits the reemployment of retired school psychologists in critical shortage areas.

HB 79 prohibits a school from administering corporal punishment to a disabled student, but specifies that seclusion and restraint are not considered corporal punishment.

HB 178 establishes that an educator preparation program approved by BESE is not a proprietary school and not subject to regulation by the Louisiana Board of Regents.

SB 215 permits a charter school to enroll the child of one of its faculty members and permits a charter school with a foreign immersion mission to enroll the child of a foreign consular officer who resides in the state; in either case, the student's enrollment does not count against the maximum student capacity of any program, class, grade level or school.

SB 233 requires BESE to award points, in its school and district accountability system, on a school's annual performance score for any school with a foreign language immersion program.

Maryland (<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/>)

The General Assembly concluded its 2017 regular session after approving legislation to address the state's opioid addiction and overdose crisis, strengthen ethics rules that apply to legislators and state employees, permanently ban fracking in the state, and require businesses with 15 or more employees to provide paid sick leave. Legislators were confronted with slow growth in state revenues and lowered revenue projections, as well as projected general fund shortfalls in fiscal year 2019 and beyond.

The statewide general fund budget for 2017-18 totals \$17.2 billion — up \$4.4 million from the originally approved 2016-17 budget. State institutions of higher education receive nearly \$1.5 billion in general funds, a 6.2 percent increase. General funding for programs administered through the Maryland Higher Education Commission includes \$256.1 million in aid to community colleges (up 2 percent), \$63.5 million for community college employee benefits (up 0.3 percent), \$82.8 million for the need-based Educational Excellence Awards program (up 3.4 percent) and \$51 million in aid to non-public colleges (up 0.4 percent).

State general fund aid to school districts totals just under \$6 billion, up 0.4 percent. This includes decreases to Foundation Program formula funding (down 1.4 percent to \$2.7 billion), aid to school districts with larger numbers of economically disadvantaged students (down 0.2 percent to \$1.3 billion) and formula funding provided to districts with a lower amount of local per-pupil wealth than the statewide average (down 7.8 percent to \$50.2 million). General funds for school district employee benefits rise slightly (0.4 percent) to \$790.9 million, support for disabled students rises 1.3 percent to \$440.5 million, and transportation funding is up 2 percent to \$276.3 million. Funds to support education of Limited English Proficient students rises 9.5 percent to \$248.7 million. Teacher development funding is up 125 percent to \$7.2 million while funding for innovative programs rises 111 percent to \$17.1 million.

Legislators approved Senate Bill 319 to include students at Pathways in Technology Early College High (P-TECH) schools, established in 2016, in Foundation Program formula funding. In addition, the bill establishes funding mechanisms for P-TECH planning grants, supplemental school grants and supplemental college grants, and includes P-TECH students in the funding formula for state aid to community colleges.

House Bill 684 and Senate Bill 1024 provide, during the 2017-18 through 2019-20 fiscal years, supplemental grants to school districts with declining enrollments when the enrollment count for the most recently completed school year was lower than average enrollment for that year and the two preceding years. The bills also provide prekindergarten grants for districts that offer a full-day kindergarten program for all enrolled four-year-old students.

Legislators passed House Bill 978 — the Protect Our Schools Act of 2017 — regarding educational accountability and interventions for low-performing schools. The bill requires Maryland's statewide educational accountability program to include at least three school quality indicators that measure either the comparative opportunities provided to students or the level of student success in public schools. One of the quality indicators must be school climate surveys. The bill requires the state Board of Education to establish a scoring system for schools under the accountability system, consisting of both academic and school quality indicators, that provides meaningful differentiation between schools. The board may not report composite scores in a letter-grade fashion.

Under the Protect Our Schools Act, a local board of education must develop and implement — in consultation with principals, parents, local leaders, teachers and others — a plan to improve student outcomes at each school that is identified by the state Department of Education (MSDE) for comprehensive support and improvement. Each plan must include evidence-based interventions that are based on a school-level needs assessment and must be approved by the school, the local board and MSDE. If student outcomes have not, in the determination of the department, improved after three years under a comprehensive support and improvement plan, MSDE is required to determine an appropriate intervention strategy in collaboration with the local board. However, the bill prohibits certain interventions, including creating a state-run school district; creating a new local school system; converting a school to charter status or creating a new public school without local board approval; providing scholarships for students to attend nonpublic schools through vouchers, tax credits or education savings accounts; and contracting with for-profit companies.

In 2015, the General Assembly established the Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools. With the passage of House Bill 461 and Senate Bill 452 — the More Learning, Less Testing Act of 2017 — each district board of education will meet with its district's teachers' employee representatives and come to an agreement on the amount of time that may be devoted to mandatory assessments in each grade. The first agreements must be reached by December 1, 2017, and revised or re-approved every two years thereafter.

Legislators approved bills to address the individualized education program (IEP) established under federal law for each student who requires special education services. House Bill 1240 requires MSDE to study the IEP process in the state, including staff and resources assigned in each school system to help parents participate in the IEP process, dispute resolution procedures, and the population density in each system of students with IEPs and special education teachers. House Bill 174 and Senate Bill 710 require an IEP team to obtain written consent from a parent to enroll the student in a non-credit-bearing alternative education program, to designate the student for alternative assessment under the state's alternative curriculum, or to include seclusion or restraint in the student's IEP. Related to seclusion and restraint, Senate Bill 786 requires MSDE to convene a task force that will examine behavioral intervention policies and practices, including restraint, seclusion and trauma-informed interventions.

Several SREB states in recent years have enacted measures designed to grow state economies and help students attain marketable skills through apprenticeships. In addition to providing manufacturing business tax credits, Senate Bill 317, the More Jobs for Marylanders Act, establishes income tax credits for businesses that employ apprentices and establishes the Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship for students in

job skills programs at community colleges. The legislation also requires the state Board of Education to set a goal that, by 2025, 45 percent of high school students complete a career-tech program, earn industry-recognized credentials or complete an apprenticeship prior to graduation.

The General Assembly, as part of its response to the nationwide opioid epidemic, approved House Bill 1082, the Heroin and Opioid Education and Community Action Act of 2017. The legislation requires the state Board of Education to ensure that the statewide drug addiction and prevention education program includes opioid addiction and prevention. Local boards of education are required to develop policies that require schools to store naloxone and authorize school personnel to administer it, and each college or university that receives state funding is required to establish a policy on opioid addiction and prevention.

Other legislation

HB 425 and SB 651 prohibit schools from suspending or expelling students in kindergarten through grade two; the bill makes exceptions for an expulsion required by federal law or a suspension of up to five days when there is an imminent threat of harm to students or staff that interventions or supports cannot address.

HB 516 and SB 581 establish the Workgroup to Study the Implementation of Universal Access to Prekindergarten for 4-Year-Olds.

HB 548 and SB 667 permit each county board of education to administer, in consultation with prekindergarten teachers, an early learning assessment to prekindergarten students.

HB 669 permits a local board of education to establish a program to allow anonymous electronic reporting of student bullying, harassment or intimidation.

HB 786 requires the state Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the state Board of Education to recommend best practices for school district provision of student behavioral needs assessments and behavioral health counseling services.

HB 920 requires the state Board of Education to require all certified educators, beginning in 2018, to complete training by December 1 of each year on understanding and responding to youth suicide risk.

HB 967 and SB 424, the Textbook Cost Savings Act of 2017, require the William E. Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation at the University System of Maryland and MSDE to jointly explore providing all K-12 students with high-quality, low-cost learning materials such as open-source materials, and to provide findings and recommendations by the end of 2018.

HB 1145, the Public School Employee Whistleblower Protection Act, prohibits a public school employer from taking or refusing to take any personnel action as a reprisal against a public school employee who discloses or threatens to disclose employer practices that violate laws or regulations, provides information or testimony regarding such violations, or objects to or refuses to participate in such a violation.

HB 1381 and SB 866 establish a pilot program for adults who did not graduate high school to earn their high school diplomas and possibly postsecondary credits and industry certifications.

HB 1522 requires the state Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and MSDE to conduct a needs assessment for school-based behavioral health services for students.

SB 908 establishes the Maryland Education Development Collaborative to advise the state Board of Education, General Assembly and local boards of education on policies to promote twenty-first century learning and diversity across the state's public schools.

Mississippi (<http://www.legislature.ms.gov/>)

The Legislature adjourned in late March, but returned to Jackson in early June to complete work on proposals to fund the Attorney General's office and the Department of Transportation. Overall, the 2017-18 budget totals \$6 billion in state funds, \$5.5 billion of which is general funds. That represents a 3.4 percent decrease from the 2016-17 budget as reduced during the year. The 2016-17 figures in this summary reflect four mid-year budget reductions made between September 2016 and March 2017. K-12 funding for 2017-18 totals \$2.4 billion, a decrease of 0.4 percent from the 2016-17 reduced level. This amount includes a 4.7 percent increase for vocational education funding, bringing that program's funding to \$81.8 million. It also includes Mississippi Adequate Education Program formula funding of \$2.2 billion (down 0.9 percent).

Institutions of higher education receive a total of \$666.8 million in funding representing a 7.5 percent decrease from the 2016-17 budget as reduced. Support for student financial assistance programs totals \$37.6 million, down 2.8 percent. Community and junior college funding for 2017-18 is \$237.2 million, a decrease of 7.8 percent.

While Mississippi previously enacted an anti-bullying law, House Bill 263 specifies that each school district must include prohibitions in its personnel policies, discipline policies, and code of student conduct against the bullying of a student or retaliation against any person who in good faith provides information concerning an incident of bullying. Districts must also establish a procedure for notifying the parent or guardian of both the victim and bully within a reasonable amount of time, establish the actions a student should take to get assistance or intervention in response to bullying, set out counseling options, set out reporting procedures, and prohibit the imposition of disciplinary measures on a victim who uses reasonable self-defense in response to bullying. Additionally, the bill requires the district to post on its website the procedure for reporting bullying. House Bill 263 also directs school districts to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention and requires that all school district employees receive suicide prevention education.

The Mississippi Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship for Students with Dyslexia program, established in 2012, provides scholarships to a nonpublic school of choice for students to receive comprehensive multisensory dyslexia therapy. Previously, the program was limited to students in grades one through six; House Bill 1046 expands the program through grade 12.

Previously, to serve as a school superintendent, state law required an individual to have at least four years of classroom or administrative experience. Senate Bill 2398 revises that requirement, mandating classroom or administrative experience of not less than six years, including at least three years of administrative experience as a school building principal in a school with an A or B accountability rating, a school that increased its accountability rating by a letter grade during the period in which the principal was employed as principal, or a school with a comparable accountability rating in another state (as verified by the Mississippi Department of Education). The state Board of Education is directed to issue regulations with an alternative set of qualifications by January 1, 2018, that include minimum credentials, educational prerequisites, and relevant best practice experience requirements that will qualify a person to serve as a superintendent.

Two pieces of legislation make changes to Mississippi's school accountability system. Senate Bill 2431 authorizes the state Board of Education to place failing school districts into district transformation status. Interim superintendents (previously called conservators) will head districts of transformation (previously called conservator districts), signaling those individuals' role of focusing on academic instruction along with resolving any accreditation violations. The interim superintendent will remain in place until the district has achieved a district grade of C or better on Mississippi's accountability rubric for five consecutive years, at which point the district returns to local control; under prior law, there was no specific timeline for a district

to return to local control. House Bill 347 repeals the existing New Start School program, which required schools rated as failing for three consecutive years to enter a school transformation process that included terminating the employment of the principal and all licensed and non-licensed employees.

Other legislation

HB 1413 specifies that a student who is suspended for more than 10 days has the right to a hearing, with legal counsel, present evidence, and cross-examine witnesses at that hearing. A student also has the right to an appeal.

SB 2273 directs the Board of Education to include cursive reading (in addition to cursive writing) as an elementary curriculum standard, implemented across the curriculum.

SB 2432 specifies that the special Mississippi Occupational Diploma for students with disabilities is no longer available to any student entering the ninth grade in the 2017-18 school year or thereafter, pending state Board of Education approval of new graduation options.

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

Meeting in the long session, legislators approved a budget for the 2017-19 biennium that provides just under \$23 billion in general funds statewide for 2017-18 (up 3 percent from the revised 2016-17 total), and \$23.6 billion in 2018-19 (up another 2.9 percent). Community colleges receive over \$1.1 billion in each year of the biennium, with funds increasing 2.4 percent in 2017-18 and a further 1.8 percent in 2018-19. State universities receive nearly \$2.9 billion in the first year of the biennium (up 1.5 percent), and under \$3 billion in the second year (a 2.6 percent increase).

General funds for K-12 education through the Department of Public Instruction rise 3.6 percent in 2017-18 to \$9 billion, and by 4.2 percent in 2018-19 to \$9.4 billion. Funds directed to classroom instruction are up to nearly \$6.8 billion in the first year of a biennium, a 3.6 percent increase. However, this declines 0.5 percent in the second year to \$6.7 billion.

Appropriations for K-12 education include funding to raise teacher pay by an average of 10 percent over the biennium while assistant principals and principals will see average pay increases of 13 percent and 9 percent, respectively. In addition, teachers with 25 or more years of experience will receive a \$385 bonus in each year of the biennium, while non-certified and central office staff will receive \$1,000 raises. The budget also renames the Third Grade Reading Teacher Performance Pilot Program as the Third Grade Read to Achieve Teacher Bonus Program and allocates \$5 million in each year of the biennium to provide bonuses of up to \$3,500 to teachers whose student growth index score for third grade reading is in the top 25 percent in the state or the top 25 percent in their school districts.

The budget provides \$6 million in each year to provide grants to nonprofit organizations, working independently or with school districts, to provide high-quality, evidence-based extended learning and student support programs to improve the academic outcomes of at-risk students. Proviso language in the budget bill requires each school district to provide at least two work-based learning opportunities related to career and technical instruction, and establishes a B-3 Interagency Council to create a vision and accountability model for a birth through grade three system of early education.

Proviso language in the budget establishes the North Carolina Personal Education Savings Accounts Program, which will provide up to \$9,000 per year to each participating disabled student for education and

therapeutic expenses, including private school tuition. Legislators appropriated \$3.4 million for the first year of the program (2018-19), which is administered through the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority. Legislators used budget proviso language to move the ApprenticeshipNC program — which works with employers to develop apprenticeship agreements and programs — from the state Department of Commerce to the North Carolina Community Colleges System, and to establish the Board of Postsecondary Education Credentials. The board will make recommendations for the development of a statewide system to link industry and businesses with educators, government and community organizations to identify needed workforce skills and training and to ensure the availability of courses of study and vocational training to meet those needs.

Budget language also addresses college- and career-ready reading and literacy skills. For a student to receive a college and career ready endorsement on his or her high school diploma, the student must receive on a nationally normed college admissions test a benchmark score that represents the achievement required to have a 50 percent chance of receiving a B or higher or a 75 percent chance of receiving a C or higher in a corresponding first-year, credit bearing postsecondary course. The Superintendent of Public Instruction may utilize up to \$200,000 to support the Reading Improvement Commission, which is charged with making recommendations to improve reading comprehension and literacy skills for students in grades four through 12.

House Bill 527, concerning free speech on college campuses, requires the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina to adopt a policy on free expression that prohibits universities under the board's management from requiring students or faculty to express a particular point of view but requires those institutions to implement disciplinary sanctions against anyone under their jurisdiction who substantially interferes with the free expression of others. The institutions also must provide information on the policies regarding free expression in their freshman orientation programs.

To improve the teaching profession, legislators approved Senate Bill 599, Excellent Educators in Every Classroom, which establishes the Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission to ensure high standards for educators. The commission is required to develop and recommend to the state Board of Education rules related to all aspects of teacher preparation programs. The legislation repeals prior statutes that governed educator preparation programs and establishes a new set of provisions, including requiring the state Board of Education to develop performance measures for these programs. Under the bill's provisions, educator preparation programs will submit annual performance reports based on those measures. The bill also establishes sanctions for programs that do not meet performance standards, including probationary status and the revocation of program certification.

Senate Bill 448 allows a local board of education to employ a higher education faculty member as an adjunct instructor in a core academic subject. Under the bill, a local board may employ adjunct instructors on an annual or semester basis for up to 20 hours per week or for less than six full consecutive months.

State law caps class sizes at 18 students in kindergarten, 16 students in grade one, and 17 students in grades two and three. House Bill 13 permits, for 2017-18 only, a maximum average class size of 20 students in kindergarten through grade three, and specifies that no individual class may have more than 33 students.

Other legislation

HB 135, which primarily makes technical changes to education statutes, requires the state Board of Education to require students to complete instruction in CPR and obtain a passing grade in a course on the founding principles of the United States of America and the State of North Carolina to graduate from high school.

HB 149 requires the state Board of Education to ensure that teachers and school personnel are provided professional development opportunities on the identification of and intervention strategies for students with dyslexia, dyscalculia, or other specific learning disabilities.

HB 486 requires the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina and the State Board of Community Colleges each to adopt a policy that any National Guard service member placed into active duty is provided an excused absence.

HB 532 expands, from eight to nine, the number of laboratory schools under the University of North Carolina Laboratory Schools program.

HB 704 establishes the Joint Legislative Study Committee on the Division of Local School Administrative Units to determine whether it is feasible and advisable to enact legislation that would permit two previously consolidated school districts to divide into separate school districts.

HB 800 permits a charter school to serve as a program site under the statewide prekindergarten program.

SB 78 requires the Department of Public Instruction to study and report on the cost to local school districts of complying with federal education funding mandates.

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

Legislators approved, and the governor signed, a 2017-18 budget bill that appropriates \$6.8 billion in state funds — up 1.2 percent from the originally approved 2016-17 budget. However, the budget imposes a 4.2 percent reduction from the original 2016-17 appropriation on most agencies and programs. The Oklahoma Supreme Court recently ruled a \$1.50-per-pack cigarette fee unconstitutional; revenue generated by the fee was intended for a Health Care Enhancement Fund supporting health and social programs. This will require budget cuts of \$214 million to those programs if not addressed by the Legislature.

Funding for career and technical education is down 4.9 percent to \$112.5 million, and the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability receives \$1.6 million, down 3.4 percent. Funding for state institutions of higher education is down 4.5 percent to \$773.6 million. State funds for elementary and secondary education rise 0.9 percent to over \$2.4 billion; this includes \$51 million in reserve funds.

Several bills addressed school funding. In addition to House Bill 2360 and Senate Bill 852, which provided reserve funding, House Bill 1578, the School Finance Review Commission Act, establishes a task force to study and make recommendations to the Legislature by December 31, 2018 on how to improve the state education aid formula. House Bill 1837 modifies the distribution of lottery funds. Rather than requiring the Lottery Commission to transfer at least 35 percent of net proceeds to the Oklahoma Education Lottery Trust Fund, the bill requires the commission to transfer \$50 million of each fiscal year's net proceeds. Lottery proceeds over \$50 million deposited into the fund will be appropriated by the Legislature for allocation to public schools.

Senate Bill 514 creates a task force to study and make recommendations to the Legislature on eliminating administrative overhead costs and improving efficiency in school district operations. The task force will consider the relative enrollment sizes of school districts, as well as their respective stability and student performance on statewide assessments. The task force must submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the governor and Legislature by August 1, 2018.

House Bill 1693 establishes a new A-F school grading system that brings Oklahoma into compliance with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. Each school will receive a grade for each measure specified in the law,

as well as a summative grade. The measures include statewide assessments, graduation rates for high schools, and English language proficiency. The bill allows the state board to adopt alternative systems of accountability for schools serving only prekindergarten or kindergarten through second grade.

Several pieces of legislation modify the Reading Sufficiency Act, designed to ensure that students can read by the end of the third grade and that students with significant reading deficiencies are not automatically promoted to the fourth grade. House Bill 1760 and Senate Bill 84 add students who score at the unsatisfactory level to the students who must be evaluated for probationary promotion by a school's Student Reading Proficiency Team. Another bill addressing reading instruction, House Bill 1789, requires that prospective teachers receive quality education on research-based strategies for literacy development instruction, assessment and intervention for all students. Institutions within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education offering elementary education, early childhood education or special education programs must require teacher candidates to study strategies including reading instruction that is explicitly taught, sequenced, multimodal, multidisciplinary, and reflective to adapt to individual learners.

House Bill 2155 requires the state Board of Education to adopt a statewide system of college and career planning tools. Each high school student will have an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) developed by the student and the student's parent or guardian in collaboration with school counselors, teachers, administrators and other school personnel, and updated annually. The ICAP will help align coursework and curriculum, and assist students to establish personalized academic and career goals, explore postsecondary career and educational opportunities, apply to postsecondary institutions, secure financial aid and enter the workforce. The bill requires students entering the ninth grade in the 2019-20 school year to complete an ICAP to graduate from a public high school with a standard diploma.

Senate Bill 529 modifies the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program by: stipulating that to continue receiving a reward, a student must meet retention and degree completion requirements established by the institution rather than previous GPA requirements; prohibiting the use of award monies to pay for remedial coursework beginning in the 2018-19 school year; and increasing the parental income cap for students who apply in the eighth, ninth or tenth grade.

Other legislation

HB 1201 modifies the School District Transparency Act, which directs state Department of Education to make school district expenditure information available on its website. It deletes the requirement for including copies of all credit card statements and specifies that the calculation of per-pupil expenditure is derived by dividing total current expenditures by the total number of students enrolled for each school year.

HB 1202 defines "per-pupil" and specifies that aggregate current expenditures do not include adult and community education, facilities acquisition and construction services, debt services, property and other expenditures not related to day-to-day operations.

HB 1576 requires the Commission for Educational Quality and Accountability to adopt rules requiring educator preparation programs to provide coursework or training in the use of digital and other instructional technologies, and specifies that educator professional development must include digital teaching and learning standards.

HB 1623 prohibits school district personnel from using corporal punishment on students with the most significant cognitive disabilities unless the use of corporal punishment is addressed in the student's IEP.

HB 1790 allows school districts to offer a remediation course for high school students who score below a nineteen on the ACT or below an equivalent score on the SAT.

HB 1952 stipulates that school districts cannot prohibit a teacher from, or take disciplinary action against a teacher for, disclosing publicly or reporting a violation of state or federal law, or a rule promulgated pursuant to law. A copy of this law must be posted in a conspicuous place for all teachers to see.

HB 2156 changes the computer education requirement in the state subject matter standards so that it may be satisfied by a unit or set of competencies in a foreign language.

SB 15 provides for the development and implementation of teacher recruitment programs by the state Department of Education and the Board of Regents, subject to the availability of funds, and establishes the Oklahoma Teacher Recruitment Revolving Fund that will receive each \$20 license plate fee generated by the Oklahoma License to Education license plates.

SB 45 authorizes the state Department of Education to contract directly with educators who are current or retired employees of Oklahoma public school districts to assist the department with services that require the expertise and qualifications of an Oklahoma certified educator.

SB 244 requires each virtual charter school approved and sponsored by the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board to keep full and complete student attendance records in one of the student information systems approved by the state Department of Education and requires, by July 1, the governing body of each virtual charter school to adopt an attendance policy.

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

After concluding the regular session without a budget agreement for 2017-18, legislators returned to Columbia and approved the final budget in early June. Statewide general funds are up 4.9 percent over the originally approved 2016-17 budget to over \$7.9 billion. General funds to universities rise 6.3 percent to \$413.2 million, while comprehensive and technical education institutions receive \$149 million, up 6.1 percent. Statewide funding for K-12 education is up 3.4 percent to nearly \$2.8 billion, including nearly \$1.8 billion in state aid to school districts, a 2.9 percent increase. Education Improvement Act funding, from an earmarked 1 percent sales tax, is projected to total \$797.5 million, up 6.1 percent; legislators directed \$100.6 million of those funds to the statewide South Carolina Public Charter School District, up 24 percent.

Senate Bill 462 requires schools and school districts to provide each student with a personalized high school diploma pathway that allows the student to earn endorsements based on his or her course of study. The bill requires the state Board of Education to outline procedures for personalizing pathways based on students' postsecondary plans. The state board also must develop, in collaboration with the Vocational Rehabilitation Department, the Department of Employment and Workforce, businesses, and stakeholders, a uniform employability credential for students with disabilities for whom (as determined by their Individualized Education Program teams) a standard diploma pathway is not appropriate.

To promote the fiscal integrity of school districts, legislators approved House Bill 3221, which requires the state Department of Education to work with district superintendents and finance officers to develop a statewide program that establishes three levels of fiscal and budgetary concern — fiscal watch, fiscal caution and fiscal emergency. If the state superintendent of education declares a district under fiscal watch, the district board must submit a financial recovery plan to the state department within 60 days. The state superintendent may modify the submitted plan while the department will provide technical assistance to the district.

A district may earn its release from fiscal watch in the fiscal year after the one in which watch status was declared if the superintendent determines that the district has successfully implemented corrective actions.

The bill further requires the state superintendent to declare a district to be in a state of fiscal caution if there are specific audit-related deficiencies or there is an ongoing investigation into the district's finances or its board. Under fiscal caution, state department staff must visit and inspect the district and provide technical assistance, and may order a performance audit of the district at the district's expense. The district must submit proposals to correct the practices and conditions that led to the fiscal caution declaration. The state superintendent may release the district from fiscal caution status in the fiscal year after the one in which caution status was declared. However, the state superintendent (with state Board of Education approval) may instead place the district in fiscal emergency status if the local board does not make reasonable proposals or take actions to correct the identified financial problems.

If the state superintendent places a district under fiscal emergency status — which the superintendent may declare if a district does not submit a plan of corrective action or make sufficient progress under such a plan, is at risk of defaulting on debt, or has been under either (or both) fiscal watch or caution status for three years — the state department may take over the financial operations of the district and continue performing that duty until the district is released from fiscal emergency status. In addition to the above provisions, the legislation requires the state auditor to adopt the fiscal integrity program adopted by the state Department of Education. The state auditor may order the state Department of Education to immediately assume emergency management of a school district following a declaration of either fiscal caution or fiscal emergency in the district.

Other legislation

HB 3220 establishes the South Carolina Education and Economic Development Coordinating Council to report annually on progress toward implementing career pathways and the ability of those pathways to provide a better prepared workforce and student success in postsecondary education. It also will make recommendations for a communication and marketing plan to promote career pathways. The council membership includes the state superintendent of education, the executive director of the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education, the chairman of the Education Oversight Committee and the chairman of the Commission on Higher Education.

SB 213 creates a joint legislative screening commission to consider qualifications and make nominations to the general assembly for trustees to state-supported colleges, universities and schools.

Tennessee (<http://www.legislature.state.tn.us/>)

The Tennessee Legislature adjourned May 10, having completed work on the 2017-18 budget bill and other legislation. For 2017-18, the Basic Education Program receives \$4.6 billion, a 4.1 percent increase. Other education programs (including career and technical education and early childhood) receive \$321.1 million, an 8.1 percent increase.

State funding for higher education programs totals \$1.8 billion, a 5.5 percent increase. State-administered higher education programs (including all the state-funded programs under the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation) operate with \$505.1 million of that amount, an 8.9 percent increase. The University of Tennessee receives \$527.5 million, a 6.3 percent increase, while the Tennessee Board of Regents systems receives \$771.8 million, a 2.8 percent increase.

The Legislature passed Senate Bill 1198, modifying existing provisions regarding school accountability. The bill specifies that the performance goals and measures the state Board of Education is required to establish for schools and districts must include, at a minimum, student achievement, student growth, and other appropriate indicators of performance. The state Department of Education must annually recommend, and the state board must approve, performance designations for districts. The districts obtaining the highest performance designation will be provided with increased funding flexibility. Districts receiving the lowest performance determination are required to create a plan for corrective action that includes a detailed analysis of student achievement results, and submit the plan to the commissioner for approval.

Schools identified as priority schools are those in the bottom 5 percent of schools in performance, all public high schools failing to graduate one-third or more of their students, and schools with chronically low-performing subgroups that have not improved after receiving additional targeted support. Priority schools are subject to district-led interventions or other improvement processes, and must establish a comprehensive support and improvement plan — based on a school-level needs assessment that includes evidence-based interventions, a process for notifying parents of the school’s status, and a plan for stakeholder engagement. After June 1, 2017, the commissioner may only assign priority schools to the Achievement School District (ASD). A school removed from a local district and placed in the ASD will remain until the school is no longer identified as a priority school for two consecutive years, though no school may remain in the ASD for more than 10 years.

Several pieces of legislation addressed Tennessee’s initiative to increase the number of adult residents with a college education to 55 percent by 2025. With passage of House Bill 53 and beginning in the 2018 fall semester, Tennessee Reconnect, which currently provides last-dollar scholarships to adults returning to colleges of applied technology to complete two-year degrees, will provide scholarships to all adults returning to college to earn two-year degrees at community colleges. To be eligible, a student must be a state resident for at least a year before applying, maintain a 2.0 GPA and enroll at least part-time. Lottery funds will support the projected annual \$10 million cost of the expanded program. The Tennessee Support, Training and Renewal Opportunity for National Guard (STRONG) Act, Senate Bill 1216, replaces the Tennessee National Guard Tuition Assistance program and provides Tennessee National Guard members with last-dollar assistance toward a first bachelor’s degree. Senate Bill 720 creates the Tennessee Middle College Scholarship and expands eligibility for the Tennessee HOPE scholarship to students who complete middle college — a program operated by an eligible public two-year postsecondary institution in partnership with school district that permits students to enter the postsecondary institution in their junior year of high school and to earn both a high school diploma and an associate degree in two years.

The General Assembly enacted two bills addressing charter schools. The Tennessee High Quality Charter High School Act (House Bill 310) redefines a charter agreement to mean a fixed-term renewable agreement between a public charter school and the chartering authority that outlines the responsibilities and performance expectations of each party. The legislation specifies that an authorizer may revoke a charter agreement for failure to meet the minimum performance requirements set out in the agreement. All chartering authorities must adopt national authorizing standards. A local board of education that authorizes charter schools may charge an annual fee to schools it has authorized, which ranges from 1 to 3 percent of each school’s local and state per-student funding, depending on the number of charter schools the board oversees. House Bill 267 increases the application fee that a chartering authority may charge to a charter school sponsor from \$500 to \$2,500 per application; the fee applies only to an application for the creation of a new school.

House Bill 45 requires school districts to integrate physical activity into the school week in conjunction with (but not to replace) the school’s current physical education program. For elementary school students,

the amount is a minimum of 130 minutes of physical activity per full school week, and for middle and high school students a minimum of 90 minutes of physical activity per full school week and 15 minutes per day. Physical activity may include walking, jumping rope, playing volleyball, or other forms of activity that promote fitness and well-being.

House Bill 174 declares that educators have the right: to be treated with civility and respect; to have their professional judgement respected; to report student misbehavior; to provide a safe classroom and school environment; to defend themselves and their students from physical violence; to share a student information with parents or legal guardians unless doing so violates the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act; to review all instructional material or curricula before they are used for student instruction; and not to be required to use personal money to appropriately equip a classroom. To deter the filing of meritless litigation against educators or education entities, Senate Bill 729 establishes that an educational entity or employee is not liable for an action relating to the control, grading, suspension, expulsion, or discipline of student unless the action violates a law, rule or clearly articulated policy.

Other legislation

HB 22 requires each school district to offer students in each of its high schools, beginning with the 2018-19 school year, the opportunity to take at least four postsecondary courses.

SB 232 requires the state Board of Education to create an endorsement in computer science for all teachers who demonstrate sufficient content knowledge in the course material.

SB 614 encourages teacher preparation programs to partner with stakeholders in the fields of neurological or brain science research to provide educators with knowledge of cognitive development and how emerging research in the brain sciences can inform educational practices and policies.

SB 1195 requires the state Department of Education to develop, and the state board to adopt, rules to ensure the education of students incarcerated in a licensed detention center by the school district in which the detention center is located. The rules must include, at a minimum, procedures allocating funding equal to the per-pupil state and local funds received by the school district in which the student was enrolled at the time of incarceration, and procedures for the prompt transfer of the incarcerated student's records.

SB 1232 requires state institutions of higher education to develop and implement uniform procedures for awarding academic credit through course equivalencies for military education training, experience and occupational specialties.

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

The biennial regular session concluded on May 31, but the governor called legislators back into a special session that began in mid-July. The Legislature enacted several education-related items on the governor's session call with the passage of House Bill 21, which: establishes grants to help school districts offset financial hardships they experience due to changes to Foundation School Program formula funding or to statutes that equalize wealth differences between school districts; provides additional state aid to charter schools with acceptable performance ratings; modifies provisions that provide extra aid to districts with low student enrollment; and establishes the Texas Commission on Public School Finance. The bill transfers \$311 million in general funds from the state Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to the Texas Education Agency (TEA); of that, \$150 million is allocated to school district hardship grants, \$60 million to additional charter

school aid, and \$41 million for aid to low-enrollment districts. The bill transfers \$212 million from HHSC to the Teacher Retirement System of Texas for lowering premiums and deductibles during the 2018 and 2019 plan years.

For the 2018-19 biennium (which begins in September 2017), statewide general funds decline 2.5 percent to \$113.1 billion. While higher education funding rises 1.1 percent to \$17.8 billion, public education funding declines 1.5 percent to under \$41 billion for the biennium. Despite the decline in general funds for public education, increased revenue from the property tax relief fund brings overall state funds for Foundation School Program formula funding to \$42.7 billion for the biennium, up 0.7 percent.

Relative to the statewide school accountability system, House Bill 22 consolidates the areas (known as domains) on which schools and school districts are evaluated from five domains to three — student achievement, school performance, and closing the gaps. The bill requires the commissioner of education to evaluate the performance of each school and district on an A-F grading scale in each of the three domains and overall.

In response to the removal of dual credit enrollment limitations in 2015 and the subsequent growth in the number of students participating in dual enrollment programs, House Bill 1638 requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to develop statewide goals for dual enrollment programs. The bill also requires a dual enrollment program agreement between a school district and a public college or university to include specific program goals, establish what credits students may earn under the program, describe the supports and guidance that the district and college or university will provide to students, and state the sources of funding for courses in the program. Senate Bill 1091 restricts the courses that institutions may offer under a dual credit enrollment program to those in the core curriculum of the college or university providing college credit, a career or technical education course, or a course in a foreign language.

Legislators approved House Bill 2087 to prohibit private website and software providers from using student information gathered for school purposes to target advertising at students or to create profiles of individual students. While the bill prohibits private website and software from renting or selling student information, they may provide information, with parental consent, to help students obtain employment, postsecondary education or financial aid; they also may disclose student information for legal and regulatory compliance purposes or legitimate research purposes.

Senate Bill 179 includes cyberbullying in the definition of bullying, and permits school districts to establish bullying prevention and mediation policies. The legislation specifies that a school district or charter school may place a student in an alternative education program or expel the student if he or she engages in bullying that encourages the victim to commit suicide, incites violence against another student by a group, or involves the release of intimate visual material of another student. In addition, TEA must maintain online resources to assist school employees in working with students with mental health conditions.

Senate Bill 1839 requires TEA to provide state-gathered data on educator performance to educator preparation programs to help improve program design and the effectiveness of program graduates. It also permits the commissioner of education to exempt teachers certified in other states from examination requirements to earn a Texas teacher certification. In addition, the bill — along with House Bill 2039 — requires the state Board of Education to establish an early childhood certificate for educators that provides special training for teaching students in kindergarten through grade three.

To assist schools in obtaining instructional materials, House Bill 3526 requires the commissioner of education to establish a web portal with information on all state-adopted instructional materials, including a repository of open education resources that schools and districts may access at no cost. The bill also

permits the commissioner to provide up to \$25 million annually for grants that allow school districts and charter schools to establish programs for lending learning technology to students. In addition, Senate Bill 810 requires THECB to provide up to \$200,000 in grants over the 2018-19 biennium to encourage college and university faculty to develop courses that only use open education resources.

In response to ongoing, nationwide concern over sexual assault on college campuses, the Legislature approved Senate Bill 968, which requires all public and private colleges and universities in the state to inform students of the protocol for reporting instances of campus sexual assault. Those institutions also are required to provide students and employees the means to electronically report instances of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence or stalking. Senate Bill 969 prohibits a public or private college or university from taking disciplinary action against a student who reports an instance of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence or stalking.

Other legislation

HB 674 permits school districts and charter schools to establish positive behavior programs as an alternative to out-of-school suspensions for students in kindergarten through grade two.

HB 728 requires the state Board of Education to establish a program that allows high school students to obtain an advanced mathematics or science credit by completing an advanced computer science course.

HB 1553 permits a school district that has failed to satisfy state accreditation criteria or academic or financial accountability standards to enter into an agreement with an institution of higher education to assist the district in improving its performance.

HB 1886 requires schools to screen students for dyslexia at the end of kindergarten and the first grade, and requires each regional education service center to employ a dyslexia specialist.

HB 2130 requires TEA to conduct a study of how the statewide student assessment program impacts students with disabilities and whether the administration of alternative assessments to those students complies with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act.

HB 2729 requires TEA to jointly develop with THECB and the Texas Workforce Commission an inventory of industry-recognized credentials and certificates that students may earn at public high schools through career and technology education programs.

SB 30, the Community Safety Education Act, requires the state Board of Education and the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement to jointly develop instruction for students in grades nine through 12 on proper interaction with police officers during traffic stops and other encounters.

SB 587 permits dependent children of United States armed forces members who are deployed or transferred to Texas to enroll full-time in the state virtual school network.

SB 1882 exempts a public school campus, when it has failed to satisfy academic performance standards during its first two years of operations, from state-mandated interventions if the school district contracts with a charter school to operate the campus.

SB 2039 requires the commissioner of education to develop instruction on sexual abuse and sex trafficking for use in schools' health education curricula, and requires school districts and charter schools to adopt policies on sex trafficking prevention.

Virginia (<http://viriniageneralassembly.gov/>)

The 2017 legislative session ended after the General Assembly approved changes to the 2016-18 biennial budget that reduced the previously approved budget for 2016-17 but increased general funds in 2017-18. For 2017-18, general funds rise to nearly \$20.4 billion, 1.2 percent above the amended 2016-17 budget.

General funds for education budgets total \$8 billion in 2017-18, an increase of 3 percent, when compared to the amended 2016-17 budget. The largest portion of education funding supports the operation of K-12 schools. Amendments to the previously adopted budget bring the total general funds to \$6 billion in 2017-18 for direct aid to schools — an increase over the amended 2016-17 budget of 6.3 percent.

General fund support for the operation of higher education institutions in 2017-18 totals more than \$1.4 billion, slightly lower than the amended 2016-17 budget. This reduction includes a system-wide cut of 3.8 percent, or \$56.1 million, in appropriations and \$4 million in interest income, but the state also provided additional funding of \$18.3 million primarily for faculty salary increases. Four-year colleges and universities receive nearly \$1.1 billion; two-year colleges will receive \$381 million.

Several bills relating to health and safety issues passed during the session. House Bill 1408 permits a local school board to work with a qualified nonprofit vision health organization to test students in grade two or three and in grades seven and 10. House Bill 1437 eliminates the requirement to test the sight and hearing of a student if deficiencies are covered in the student's Individualized Education Program. Relating to the administration of medication, House Bill 1661 permits schools to stock and administer injectable medication to treat adrenal crisis in students, per a prescriber's written order. Senate Bill 1116 authorizes school board employees who are nurses or nurse aides, who have received proper training, to assist students who use an insulin pump. Relative to student safety, House Bill 1709 will now require school board policy to direct principals to notify, within five days of an alleged bullying incident, a parent of the status of an investigation relating to the incident. House Bill 2282 requires the state Board of Education to develop guidelines for relevant school staff on the prevention of trafficking of children. Senate Bill 1359 requires local boards to develop and implement plans to test for lead in schools' drinking water and remediate any problems found.

Senate Bill 1475 and House Bill 2257 both address family life education. Senate Bill 1475 requires family life education curriculum guidelines to include age-appropriate information on the value of family relationships and the prevention of sexual violence, and that consent is required before sexual activity. House Bill 2257 permits high school family life education to incorporate effective and evidence-based programs on the law and the meaning of consent.

Relative to career and technical education, Senate Bill 1159 permits successful completion of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) to satisfy a career and technical education credential when it is required for high school graduation. House Bill 1552 requires local school boards to post on their websites information on opportunities to obtain nationally recognized career readiness certificates at public high schools, community colleges and workforce centers.

The teaching profession was also the topic of bills passed during the session. House Bill 1770 and Senate Bill 1583 permit a school district board or superintendent to waive licensure requirements for career and technical education teachers. For teachers seeking licensure or recertification, House Bill 1829 requires training in CPR while House Bill 2352 exempts teachers licensed out-of-state from certain assessment requirements if approved by the local officials employing the teacher. Regarding license revocation, House Bill 2432 requires a superintendent to conduct an immediate investigation of any complaint against a teacher, and a local school board to conduct a hearing on a superintendent's petition for revocation within 90 days. House

Bill 2140 and Senate Bill 1523 create a pilot program to administer an exit survey to teachers who leave the profession. House Bill 2332 sets a goal for the Commonwealth that teacher salaries be competitive with the national average pay for teachers.

Other legislation

HB 1592 and SB 999 require each comprehensive community college to develop policies for awarding academic credit for the successful completion of state-approved registered apprenticeship credentials that are aligned with a credit-bearing program of study. To receive credit, students must achieve the same outcomes with the same academic rigor as required in the equivalent courses.

HB 1662 and SB 1534 require the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to establish a policy to grant undergraduate credit to any entering student who has successfully completed a dual enrollment course.

HB 1663 and SB 1493 require the Northern Virginia Community College, working with the state Department of Education, to contract with a partner organization to develop and implement high-quality computer science training and professional development for public school teachers statewide and to improve computer science literacy for public school students.

HB 1664 requires SCHEV to publish on its website the proportion of graduates from each public postsecondary institution and private nonprofit institution who are eligible to participate in the Tuition Assistance Grant Program and who are employed at 18 months and five years after graduation.

HB 1965 and SB 1026 extend eligibility for the Two-Year College Transfer Grant Program to students whose Expected Family Contribution as calculated by the federal government is no more than \$12,000 (up from \$8,000).

HB 1981 requires the state Board of Education to develop rules for the designation of local School Divisions of Innovation, with the goal of meeting the diverse needs of students and improving student learning, educational performance, and college, career and citizenship readiness. School divisions designated as such would be exempt from certain regulations and permitted to adopt alternative policies in some areas, as outlined in a plan of innovation.

SB 1234 requires SCHEV and each public postsecondary institution to develop a passport credit program, offered at two-year colleges, that will permit the transfer of certain lower-division course credits to any public college or university.

SB 1376 requires governing boards of public colleges and universities to notify students and the public 30 days in advance of a vote to increase tuition or fees.

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

The Legislature approved, during the 2017 regular legislative session, a budget for 2017-18 that would have reduced expenditures and expended reserve funds. However, the governor vetoed it in its entirety. Legislators convened a special session in early May to work on a new budget agreement.

In the special session, the West Virginia Legislature approved in mid-June a \$4.2 billion general fund budget for 2017-18, up 0.9 percent from the original 2016-17 budget. While overall K-12 education funding rises 0.2 percent to over \$1.9 billion, the increase is due to a 1 percent rise in state aid to schools to slightly

less than \$1.8 billion. K-12 funding to the state Department of Education declines 8.8 percent to \$140.4 million; much of the decline is due to the elimination of funding for Regional Education Service Agencies (\$3.5 million) and Innovation in Education grants (\$2.5 million) as well as a \$1 million reduction to 21st Century Assessment and Professional Development. Higher education funding is down 4.8 percent to \$378 million, including \$61.4 million for community and technical colleges (down 4.4 percent) and \$248.3 million to four-year colleges and universities (down 6 percent).

During the regular session, legislators approved House Bill 2711, which contains several education changes requested by the governor. The legislation eliminates the eight regional educational service agencies governed by the state Board of Education on July 1, 2018. Beginning in 2018-19, a county board of education may enter into a cooperative agreement with one or more other county boards of education to share services such as purchasing, data, legal or administrative services, professional development, distance learning, and child health and development services. Counties may add up to 30 minutes to the school day to make up for instructional time lost due to inclement weather or emergencies and may also deliver up to five days of instruction through alternative methods when schools are closed for inclement weather or emergencies.

To provide school districts with more financial flexibility, legislators approved House Bill 2561, which permits a school district to use portions of the state funding provided for school transportation costs, instructional program improvement and instructional technology improvement, for school facility maintenance and replacement. The bill also allows districts to increase the amount of instructional program improvement funding used to employ school personnel, and allows them to use funding for improving instructional technology to employ technology system specialists.

House Bill 2711 requires the state Board of Education to engage with the Legislative Oversight Committee on Education Accountability prior to adopting or revising academic standards, adopting a statewide summative assessment or implementing a new statewide education accountability system. It also prohibits the state board from implementing Common Core standards or adopting Smarter Balanced or PARCC assessments.

With the approval of Senate Bill 630 — the Establishing Accessibility and Equity in Public Education Enhancement Act — a county board of education may establish a virtual education program, either individually or in consortia with other school systems. The programs may be entirely virtual or combine virtual education with classroom instruction. The law subjects students in these programs to the same academic standards and assessments as students in traditional academic programs. They also count in the net enrollment of the district in which they reside, for purposes of state funding allocations.

House Bill 2815 contains several changes to higher education governance in the state that the governor requested. Under the legislation, the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, West Virginia University and Marshall University receive the authority to make governance decisions on their budgets and finances, hiring, rulemaking and capital projects, without approval from the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC). The other state institutions of higher education are permitted to make a range of governance decisions that the HEPC may not approve or deny, but the HEPC may determine whether the decision is consistent with law and policy. HEPC may not charge fees to state institutions of higher education, beginning July 1, 2018. Also related to higher education governance, House Bill 2542 modifies several provisions relating to personnel at public institutions of higher education, including allowing institutions to establish their own classification and compensation systems and requiring the governing board of each institution to adopt a rule on the elimination of full-time classified employee positions.

Senate Bill 186 changes the dates relative to the age of enrollment in early grades. It moves the date by which a child must reach age 4 to enroll in prekindergarten in 2018 from August 31 to June 30. In 2019, a child must reach age 5 by June 30 to enroll in kindergarten. In 2019, the date by which children who reach age 6 are required to enroll in first grade is moved from August 31 to June 30.

Other legislation

HB 2195 requires each county board of education to implement a comprehensive drug awareness and prevention program for K-12 students regarding the dangers of substance abuse and requires health education in grades six through 12 to include at least 60 minutes of instruction regarding the dangers of opioid use.

HB 2494 removes the requirement for each school to mail a copy of the school report card to the parents of each child enrolled in the school; schools and school districts must make their report cards available on district websites and in printed form upon request.

HB 2637 permits a county school board to provide a one-time financial incentive for purposes of recruiting teachers in critical need or shortage areas.

HB 2702 permits an excused student absence when, as documented and reasonably explained, the absence was made necessary by a personal injury or illness suffered by the student's parent or guardian.

HB 2704 prohibits an individual convicted of a sexual offense against a child from holding a teaching license or certificate, and provides for automatic revocation of the license or certificate held by a teacher convicted of such an offense.

HB 2771 allows the state superintendent of education to issue a temporary, one-year teaching certificate to a military spouse who holds an unencumbered teaching certificate or license from another state of US territory.

This report was prepared by Jeffrey Grove, SREB research associate (Jeffrey.Grove@SREB.org); Gale Gaines, vice president, state services (Gale.Gaines@SREB.org); and Lee Posey, director of legislative services (Lee.Posey@SREB.org). All can be reached at (404) 875-9211.