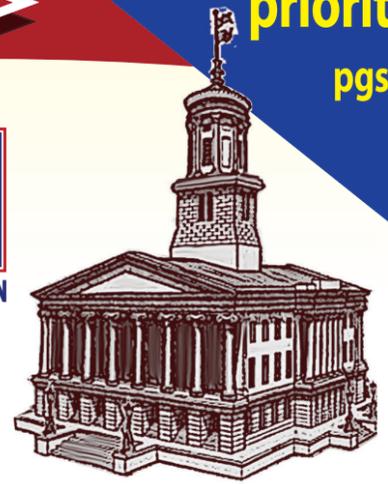


TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION PUBLIC SCHOOL ADVOCATE

Gov. Lee budget
priorities

pgs. 4-5



LEGISLATIVE REPORT | March 11, 2019 | VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

Special calendar set for proposals to remedy ongoing portfolio issues

There have been numerous bills filed to remedy ongoing problems with the pre-k and kindergarten portfolio. So many, in fact, that the House education committee has created a special calendar for bills pertaining to the portfolio. Those bills will be heard in the Curriculum, Testing and Innovation subcommittee on Tuesday, April 9th, at Noon in House hearing room 4.

TEA recently polled over 1,500 teachers using the portfolio system in both pre-k/kindergarten and other untested subjects and found overwhelming majorities of educators still see major problems with the current model. Only 5 percent of those surveyed felt the portfolio accurately measured

Portfolio calendar
cont. page 7

GETTING ALL STATE MONEY INTO PAYCHECKS

The governor's initial budget unveiled on March 4 has \$71.3 million in salary increases for "teachers and other positions funded through the BEP formula for next year." It's a clear statement what the administration believes should happen. However, in the very next line, the governor budget recognizes a problem TEA has been battling for the past several years.

"The amount of the salary increases

will depend on each LEA's salary schedule and structure, but if applied across-the-board, this would be a 2.5% salary increase."

Teachers across Tennessee know the 'but' in that sentence is not going to happen—unless the administration and General Assembly take concrete action. TEA is pounding the hallways of the Capitol to make sure it occurs.

"The teacher salary funding is

substantial at \$71 million, but the key will be to ensure that money actually ends up in teachers' paychecks," said TEA President Beth Brown.

Salary increase
cont. page 8

Bill would treat all school nurses as other licensed professionals

Any faculty with one will tell you a school nurse is a vital part of a well-run school. Yet flaws in Tennessee law may put nurses at a different status than other school-based health professionals.

School nurses are the only licensed professionals in Tennessee schools that are not automatically considered certified personnel, with many systems designating registered nurses as classified employees. TEA school nurse members have asked for a change to recognize their professional licensed designation.

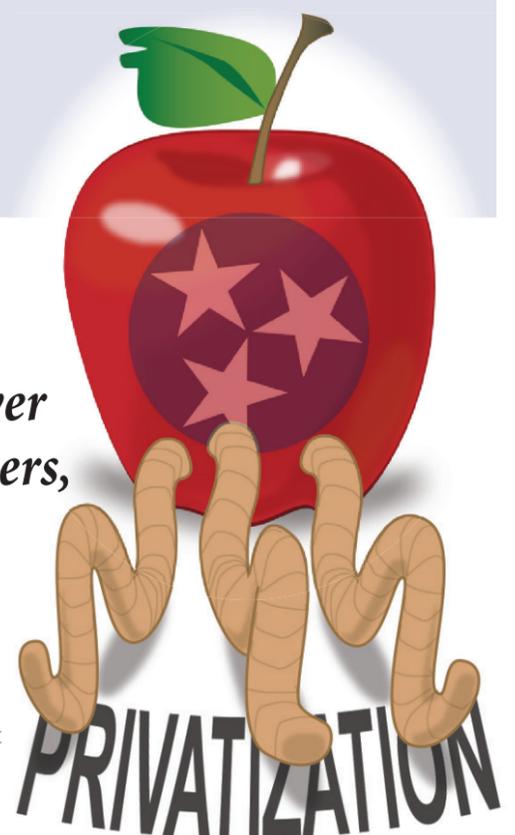


Professional standing for nurses
cont. page 8

Gov. Bill Lee announces plan to divert taxpayer money to vouchers, charters

In his State of the State address, Gov. Bill Lee announced his intent to allocate more than one-fifth of his K-12 education budget to advance privatization in Tennessee. His proposed budget includes more than \$25 million for education savings accounts and \$12 million for a charter school building slush fund.

"TEA has serious concerns about the governor's plan to fund a



program that is essentially private school vouchers with even less accountability that are more susceptible to fraud and abuse,"

Privatization
cont. page 7



THE STRONGEST VOICE FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS

Test-taking skills do not prepare students for future

By TEA President Beth Brown



For the last two years, I have been tasked with teaching students at my high school how to take the ACT, and last year, I spent half of each day teaching ACT Prep. Read that sentence again. I spent half of each day last year teaching students how to take a test. I cannot lie: it was not my favorite teaching assignment.

Due to school accountability measures tied to students' ACT scores, my district felt the need to provide rigorous test preparation for all sophomores. I recognize that test prep works. Over the past two years I witnessed significant improvement in students' scores on

the benchmark ACT tests in my class; moreover, those gains were evident on the official ACT administered by the state. There were unintended negative consequences of these gains, however.

Schools can produce test-takers or skilled workers, but as my school discovered, it's difficult to do both.

After students were enrolled in English, geometry, world history, biology, foreign language, physical education or fine art, and ACT prep, there simply was no room in the schedule for a career-technical education class.

There were a number of unhappy people about it! My students were unhappy to be taking test prep instead of a high-interest, hands-on class; I was unhappy teaching students test prep strategies for an assessment about which most of them care very little; and the CTE teachers were unhappy that their programs of study were undercut.

Governor Lee is a staunch supporter of career-technical education, and I'm sure that he would be as proud as our faculty is of the 18 Grundy County High School students who earned their industry certification in welding last year. Those students will graduate from high school and immediately begin earning more money than I do as a highly-experienced, multi-degreed educator. [That, my friends, is a topic for another column!]

Gov. Lee pledged support for CTE during his campaign, and he is keeping that promise by investing \$25 million in the Governor's Investment in Vocational Education Act and \$4 million in the Future Workforce Initiative. According to his State of the State Address, these programs will "increase the number of young adults earning an industry certification and entering a career within one year of high school graduation" as well as "add 100 new CTE programs [and] grow the number of teachers qualified to teach work-based learning and computer science classes."

Also proposed in the General Assembly is legislation that would again create multiple pathways to graduation. When I began teaching in 2001, there were three paths to graduation: university path, technical path, and dual path (for students who were interested in both). That system modeled the differentiation that effective educators know is essential to good teaching. Any educator will tell you that not every student is destined for college, nor do we need them to be.

As encouraged as I am by these measures, I'm concerned that Gov. Lee's plans for enhanced CTE opportunities won't be as fruitful as he hopes. As renowned educator and author Stephen Covey said, "When you have too many priorities, you effectively have no top priorities." Schools can produce test-takers or skilled workers, but as my school discovered, it's difficult to do both. Even with more resources promised by the governor, there is a finite number of hours in a day, and accountability measures tied to test scores will force districts to focus on test preparation rather than what students need and want.

Call it whatever you like, it will still be bad for students

By TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder



The fight against private school vouchers is not new in Tennessee. We have been defeating various voucher proposals for six years now. Tennesseans have been very clear that we do not want taxpayer dollars funding private schools.

Gov. Bill Lee indicated in his State of the State address that he supports an idea that ignores data of failed programs in other states and the wishes of Tennesseans, and instead back a proposal to privatize public education in our state. The solution to the many holes that have been poked in previous years' voucher schemes? Give it a new name! Vouchers are now called "education savings accounts."

Putting a new name on a bad idea doesn't suddenly make it a good idea. There is a reason legislators keep voting down the various voucher proposals in recent years. There is a reason educators, parents and public education advocates have such serious objections to all forms of private school vouchers.

Vouchers, education savings accounts, tax credits – whatever name you put on it, still undermines the financial standing of public schools, puts students at risk for falling behind academically and forces districts to make cuts to important programs like CTE and the arts.

If anyone talks specifically about "education savings accounts," let's look at Arizona's program. Arizona has had an ESA program in place since 2014. The state has seen rampant fraud and abuse, which has cost the state hundreds or thousands of dollars that could have been appropriately spent in public schools. A report by the Arizona Auditor General found instances of parents transferring the ESA money to children's 529 college savings accounts and, in some cases, just pocketing the money and sending the child back to public schools. In 2018, Arizona teachers and parents organized to get a ballot referendum on the expansion of the wasteful ESA program, and 65 percent of Arizona voters were against ESAs.

Just as in Arizona, Tennesseans have been very clear that we are not interested using our taxpayer dollars to fund private school tuition or homeschooling. Aside from Arizona, there are numerous studies showing

I am all for creative ways to reach, teach and inspire our students, but we must not do so in a way that erodes our strong system of public schools.

the harm caused to students by all forms of voucher programs in other states. We don't need to use our own children as guinea pigs just to learn the same lessons other states are already experiencing.

I don't disagree with the governor that we need to look at new ways to ensure every child has access to a high-quality public education. Instead of privatization schemes that have been proven to fail, the state should invest in a proven method of school improvement – transformational community schools.

TEA has been advocating for increased funding from the state that would give districts the flexibility and resources needed to properly implement the transformational community school model. This model allows parents, educators and community members to create a learning environment that meets the unique needs of the students in that individual community. There is already a lot of data beyond the effectiveness of this school improvement model – data that relies on more than test scores.

I am all for creative ways to reach, teach and inspire our students, but we must not do so in a way that erodes our strong system of public schools. There are other – better – options.

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UniServ Staff contact information can be found on page 6.



Use your educator voice to fight for public education!

YOU are the very best lobbyist for public education. The professional expertise and real-life stories you share directly with your legislators makes the difference.



Register to attend **TEA Civication** on the Tuesday of your Spring Break. TEA will reimburse you for mileage and provide a hotel room for those traveling more than 50 miles from Nashville. Civication is the perfect opportunity for face-to-face time with the elected leaders who make decisions that directly impact your classroom.

Wear **RED** every Wednesday and on TEA's #RedforEd challenge days (Next one: Friday, April 5). Take a selfie or group picture with colleagues, and post it to your social media profiles with the hashtags **#RedforEd**, **#TN2020Vision** and your local's hashtag.

Make regular contact with your legislators a priority. Phone calls and emails from educators back home can make the difference in how legislators vote on crucial issues like private school vouchers, testing, association attacks and increasing funding. Remember to start each contact with something positive!

In addition to legislators, it is important to also prioritize regular communication with your colleagues in your building. Make sure everyone is informed on what is happening in the legislature and hold each other accountable for staying engaged in the fight!



ASK TEA

ANSWERS FROM THE EXPERTS AT THE TEA HOTLINE

Q: I work in the school office and my supervisor constantly criticizes me which makes me feel bad. I need this job, but the hostile work environment is taking a toll. Is there anything I can do?

A: Although federal and state law prohibits certain acts of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, not all acts are unlawful, which can be confusing. The phrase "hostile work environment" has a specific meaning in the law and each situation will require a careful analysis to determine if an unlawful act has occurred. It is often the case that a supervisor that is merely being rude or demanding is not violating the law, but that is not always the case. In order to establish a claim of unlawful discrimination or harassment an employee must be able to establish he or she was discriminated or harassed because of their membership in a protected class, which includes among others gender, race, age, religion, national origin, or disability.

With that background, a good place to start is by speaking with your association rep or local UniServ coordinator who can help you find the best mechanism to address your concerns. At minimum every district should have a complaint procedure that covers potential violations of federal and state laws, but often there are also informal ways to address matters in the realm of professionalism or civility.

Q: Someone told me that a breach of TN Ready testing protocols could cost me my teaching license. Is that true?

A: Yes, that's what the law suggests. The law provides that any person found not to have followed security guidelines for administration of the TCAP or a successor test shall be suspended, and such action will be grounds for dismissal from employment and revocation of licensure. Moreover, the recently amended code of ethics requires state assessments to be administered fairly and ethically. And, finally, the licensure rules provide that the minimum sanction for violation of the code is a one-year suspension of the educator's license. In light of the severe statutory and regulatory sanctions, members should adhere to established security protocols when giving state assessments, but know the association stands ready to represent members if a need arises.

Q: I want to use all of my accumulated sick leave for my upcoming maternity leave, but my district will only let me use three weeks of sick leave. Can the district keep me from using my sick leave?

A: In some circumstances, yes. Under state and federal law there are options for maternity leave that may be available to you, but those are unpaid leaves. Pursuant to the teacher sick leave law, however, paid sick leave may be used in conjunction with an otherwise unpaid maternity leave, but only for the period of physical disability associated with the birth of a child, which must be certified by your physician. For assistance securing a maternity leave or using your accumulated sick leave, contact your association rep or local UniServ coordinator.



The TEA Advocacy Hotline supports local leaders and building representatives in answering member questions. If you have an employment-related question, please contact your building rep or UniServ coordinator.



#TN2020Vision

Gov. Lee's Proposed K-12

\$160,483,000

increase for public education

\$71.3M Teacher salaries

\$46.2M BEP increase

Health insurance

Student population growth

Nurses, Social Workers

RTI funding

\$37,450,000

diverted

privatized

Other increases

- ✓ **\$30M School safety**
- ✓ **\$5.2M Combined CTE investments**
- ✓ **\$5M Priority schools support**
- ✓ **\$2.8M ACT retake opportunity**

K12 Funding

00
Education

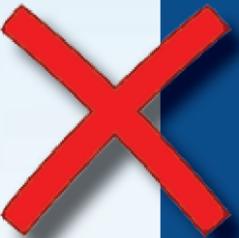


50,000
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ization

 **\$25.5M Education savings account vouchers**

 **\$12M Charter school building fund**

Tell your legislators how the governor's proposed budget will impact your classroom:

- 
- Tennessee currently ranks 34th in average teacher pay nationwide. The governor's proposed 2.5% raise must include safeguards to ensure the increase shows up in all teachers' paychecks.
 - School safety is a top priority for parents, educators and elected officials. Gov. Lee's school safety grants will support districts' efforts to keep kids safe.
 - Expanding STEM and CTE opportunities is an important component of setting students up for success after high school graduation.
- 
- More than a fifth of the proposed increases for K12 would immediately leave school districts in the form of education savings accounts and rapid charter school expansion.
 - The more than \$37 million in Gov. Lee's budget would be better spent on methods proven to increase student achievement and improve public schools.

SAVE the DATE

TEA Civication

Tuesday of Spring Break

Stand up for public education!

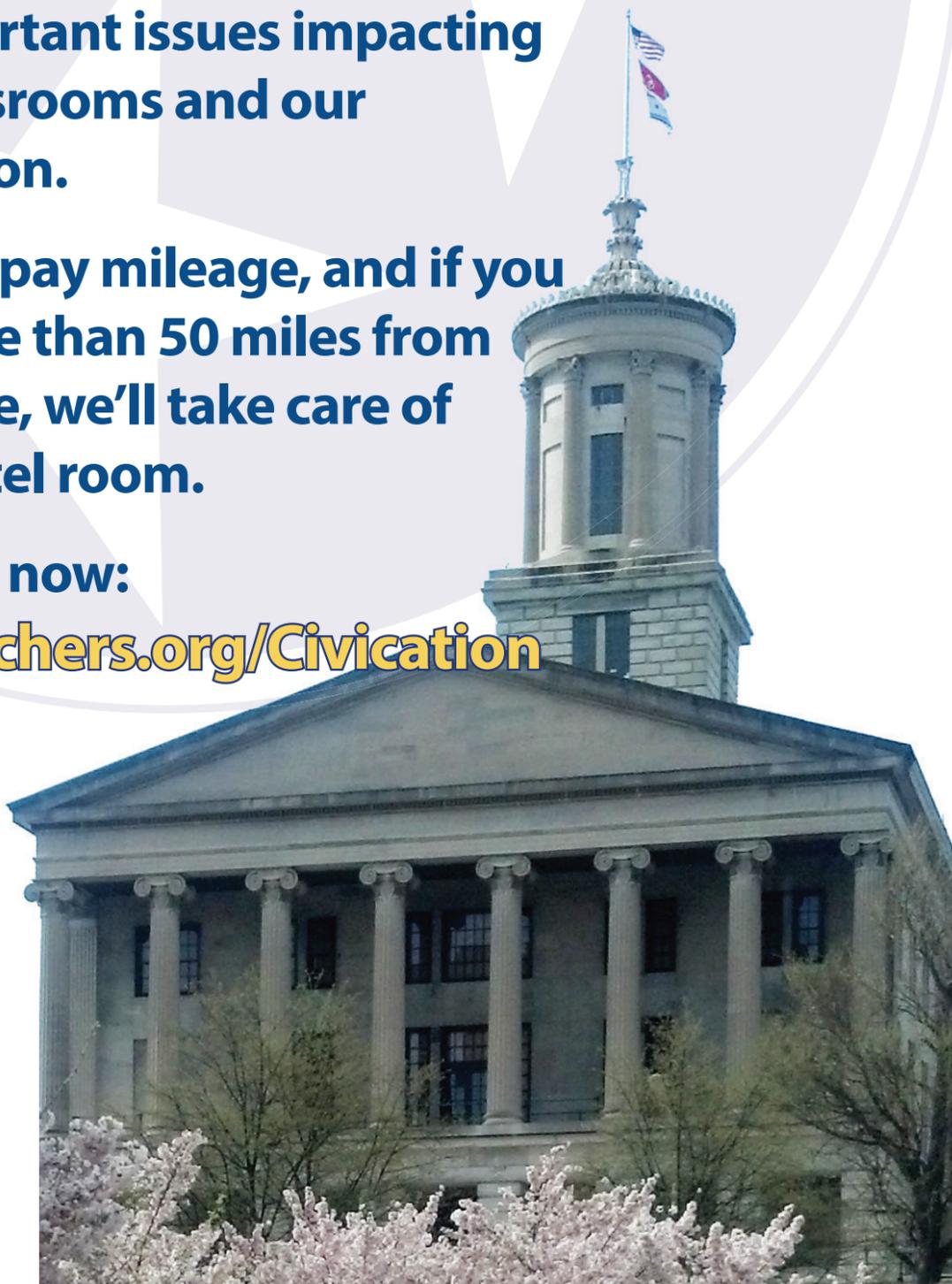
Join educators from across the state in participating in TEA's Civication on the Tuesday of your Spring Break.

Hearing directly from educators in their districts can make the difference in how legislators vote on important issues impacting our classrooms and our profession.

TEA will pay mileage, and if you live more than 50 miles from Nashville, we'll take care of your hotel room.

Register now:

TEAteachers.org/Civication



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TEA Education Support Professionals (ESP) Conference April 13, 2019

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You will enhance your skills through training opportunities that empower you as a support professional within your school district. **Don't miss this opportunity for training geared toward education support professionals.**



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Nashville, TN 37201**

Sessions and Topics included are:

- Leadership Development
- Legal Rights as an ESP
- One-on-One Organizing
- Making Your Money Work for You
- Building Your TEAm Through Mentoring

19-006

Register: TEAteachers.org/ESP-Conference

Teachers keep pressure on legislators to find appropriate fix for Pre-K/Kindergarten portfolio

Portfolio calendar from page 1

student knowledge and state academic standards, while less than two percent felt keeping the current system as is was the best approach.

"While the model is well-intended, it is clear the portfolio for early educators is not achieving what was hoped, and needs to be fundamentally reexamined," said TEA chief lobbyist Jim Wrye.

Many legislators acknowledge the continued problems teachers are facing with the portfolio system, and there are several different proposals concerning how best to address the issue. One proposal, HB91/SB442, sponsored by Rep. Gary Hicks and Sen. Mike Bell would call for the state board of education to approve an alternative growth indicator, while allowing individual LEAs to opt out of the current portfolio system if they so choose. Another, HB993/SB1139, sponsored by Rep. Jerome Moon and Sen. Art Swann, would eliminate the portfolio model entirely and return untested teachers to their previous method of evaluation. A third, HB1384/SB509, sponsored by Rep. Ryan Williams and Sen. Becky Massey, calls for enhanced training and support from the department of education and also allows for an LEA to develop an alternative growth model in certain circumstances.

"We greatly appreciate the legislators who take the feedback they're receiving from the classrooms seriously," said Wrye. "This is a prime example of the power of teacher voice and we encourage all educators who use the portfolio to call their legislators and ask them to help fix the problem."

Members of the referenced subcommittee can be found here: www.capitol.tn.gov/house/committees/sub-educationcurriculum.aspx.

TEA survey confirms educators are fed up with state testing failures, immediate relief from high-stakes testing needed

As legislators consider bills aimed at fixing the problems plaguing TNReady, the presence of educators is critical at the Capitol.

"The recent TEA survey on testing clearly shows there is no trust left in TNReady," said TEA President Beth Brown. "We see the damage it has caused and we know it can't be fixed by putting another Band-Aid on a failed test. So we are asking every educator to tell their elected officials change is needed right now."

With several bills moving through the Tennessee General Assembly to change the state testing regime, Brown stressed the importance of members coming to the Capitol as the only way to get rid of the failed test.

"Hearing from teachers from back home is crucial for the legislators," Brown said. "All you have to do is show up on Tuesday of your spring break — TEA will cover your mileage, meals and hotel Monday night if you live more than 50 miles away from Nashville."

One of the key bills targeting TNReady is HB383/SB488 filed by Rep. Terri Lynn Weaver (R-Lancaster) and Sen. Janice Bowling (R-Tullahoma), which would allow districts to administer the ACT, ACT Aspire or SAT tests as an approved testing alternative in math and English language arts for high school students.

Thanks to TEA's efforts in raising awareness of the persisting delays, loss of data, and credibility problems plaguing the TNReady test, more legislators than ever are concerned about allowing TNReady to go forward, but they need to hear more first-hand experiences from teachers in their districts.

TEA's recent survey on TNReady with more than 5,300 responses and 1,800 comments shows teachers across all grades overwhelmingly support scrapping TNReady and replacing it with a nationally recognized assessment system.

Of all the middle school teachers who took the survey, 98 percent support the notion that the state should make fundamental changes in the testing system. When asked what options they would prefer for assessing students, 47 percent of middle school teachers said they would like to see expanded use of benchmark testing used for RTI, followed by ACT (31 percent) or another nationally aligned summative year-end testing system, such as Smarter Balance (22 percent).

Among high school teachers, 87 percent said they would choose the ACT suite of assessments if they had a choice in state testing systems for end-of-course exams in their subject area. Eighty-four percent of those teachers rejected the notion that TNReady accurately measures student knowledge and Tennessee standards.

Many of those surveyed invited legislators and state education officials into their classrooms to observe students before, during and after the testing period. Teachers stressed that the repeated failures of TNReady, coupled with the state's delays in seeking a new testing vendor, have eroded all trust left in the current system among students, parents and teachers alike.

"As parents, taxpayers and voters, we have every right to demand this change right now. We cannot afford another year of failures, delays and broken promises," Brown said.

United effort needed to protect public schools from privatization threats

Privatization from page 1

said TEA President Beth Brown. "At a time when classrooms lack needed resources and teachers are digging into their own pockets to buy classroom supplies, it is discouraging to see funding going to something proven to harm student achievement in other states."

The increase in the building fund for private charter operators is partnered with a proposal to make it easier for new charter schools to be approved. While details on this are still not final, TEA strongly opposes any charter legislation that limits the authority of the locally elected school board to be the final voice on new charter school applications.

"Charter schools need to be a local decision, because local taxpayers bear a majority of the costs," Brown said. "Also, local boards of education better understand the needs of their district and are better equipped to make the right decision for the students they serve."

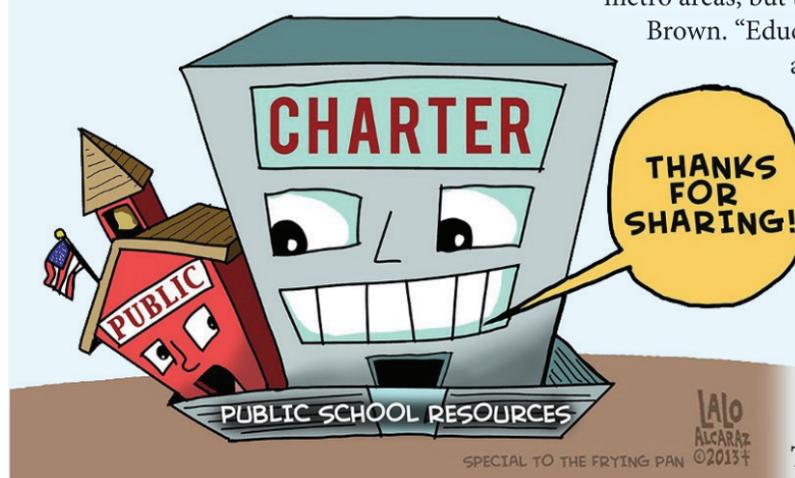
Both charter schools and any form of private school vouchers have proven to destabilize public school budgets and negatively impact existing classrooms. These privatization schemes also have a track record of harming student achievement.

"We have seen in other states where students in voucher programs and unaccountable charter schools are not keeping up with their peers in traditional public schools," Brown said. "There are many proven ways to improve public education for all schools; unfortunately, the governor is choosing to invest significant resources in two dangerous paths."

The more than \$35 million currently slated for education savings accounts and rapid charter expansion would be better used in ways proven to increase student performance, like reducing class sizes and updating text books and classroom technology.

"As a rural educator, I understand the assumption that these risks will only impact metro areas, but that is simply untrue," said Brown. "Educators and public education advocates from every corner

of the state need to stand together to defeat every single attempt to privatize education. If passed, these proposals would erode the foundation of all public schools."



SPECIAL TO THE FRYING PAN

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Bill addresses vaping use among young

Use of electronic cigarettes by middle and high school students has become a major and growing discipline and health issue in Tennessee schools. According to the state health department, 40 percent of high school students have used a vaping product, and 11.5 percent report current use, mirroring disturbing national trends. Educators are taking notice and in-school suspensions are on the rise.

A proven way to combat student use of vaping and traditional tobacco products is to raise the purchasing age. TEA-backed legislation, HB1459/SB849 by Rep. Ron Gant (R-Rossville) and Sen. Joey Hensley (R-Hohenwald), does just that, raising the purchasing age from 18 to 21.

"It's an epidemic that harms students not only in their current and future health, but harms teaching and learning as use of vaping products increases," said TEA President Beth

Brown. "Juil and other vaping products are becoming a huge headache for every school administrator. We need to drastically reduce access."

TEA is working to bring the negative impacts on schools to the debate on the bills, which are opposed by the Farm Bureau but supported, surprisingly enough, by key players in the tobacco industry. There is also a hefty fiscal note to the bill, with a loss of tax revenue up to \$8 million.

"Raising the age of purchase is a tough battle, but if we can win it we will see less student access to these disruptive and dangerous products," said TEA lobbyist Jim Wrye. "Sharing the negative effects these products have in schools may help in its passage."

The House version passed a Health subcommittee in late February, and the Senate version is calendared for the Commerce committee next week.

Professional standing for nurses from page 1

A TEA-backed bill will change a nurse designation to that of school psychologists, social workers and other school certified personnel whose licenses come from the Department of Health. HB808/SB1242 by Rep. Sabi Kumar (R-Springfield) and Sen. Dolores Gresham (R-Somerville) changes state law to put nurses on par with other school-based health professionals.

"TCRS already recognizes school nurses as other certified personnel for retirement purposes, yet the rest of the code and state rules allow them to be treated as if they have no professional license with a college degree requirement," said TEA lobbyist Jim Wrye. "While many counties treat nurses the same as other certified personnel, others do not. It is time we recognize nurses as the licensed professionals they are statewide."

Salary increase from page 1

TEA research shows the administration is right, \$71.3 million for the instructional staff in Tennessee schools would provide close to a 2.5 percent across-the-board raise. However, we all know record increases in teacher salary funds over the past several years haven't gotten to all teachers' paychecks. There needs to be a fix — this year.

The dilution of teacher salary dollars from state budgets to take-home pay has been well-communicated by TEA and understood by lawmakers. Reasons include the gutting of the state minimum salary schedule in 2014 and half measures by the state board in subsequent years, additional healthcare liabilities for support professionals, increasing state unfunded mandates like RTI, differentiated pay plans, and a drop-off in local matching funds all have weakened or eliminated raises state increases should have fostered.

"It is time the Lee administration and General Assembly take control of the situation," Brown said. "We have seen in years past how good intentions aren't enough

to ensure teachers receive the raise that is promised. There are two ways TEA is proposing to close these loopholes."

One option is for the General Assembly to take control of the state salary schedule, as it did in 2004, to raise all salaries. This option has the benefit of generating local matches where there have been none in recent years. Another option is to put a mandate that all BEP salary dollars go to instructional employee salaries in the budget legislation. Either approach will boost teacher salaries, especially for rural teachers who have seen little or no increases in recent years.

The hiccup in raises was caused by the Haslam administration's push for differentiated pay, commonly known as "pay-for-test-scores." Local flexibility was necessary for this misguided idea, even when most systems didn't implement a test-based pay plan. Local flexibility often meant steering salary funds into other areas.

This is the year. Governor Lee's staff put the language in the budget document that if the salary funds went to who they were intended, there would be a 2.5 percent raise. It is up to all of us to push to see his wishes come true.

TEA Bill Tracker

The ones to watch

The Good:

HB66/SB373 (Moon/Swann)

Reduces weight of student achievement from 30% to 15% in teacher evaluations. Allows teacher to choose whether TVAAS growth or qualitative observation make up difference if in an untested subject.

HB1330/SB1058 (Haston/Dickerson)

Aligns TN community schools law with current research and seeks to raise awareness of funding sources to support initiatives and share best practices in the future.

HB215/SB259 (Clemmons/Kyle)

Requires placement of bleeding control kits in every TN public school and requires the department to develop training for school staff on their use.

HB949/SB805 (Lamberth/Johnson)

Governor's GIVE Act which seeks to expand student access to career and technical education opportunities.

HB946/SB802 (Lamberth/Johnson) Administration bill requiring school systems to submit a report on how they used teacher raise money provided by the state to the department of education and the BEP review committee.

HB947/SB803 (Lamberth, Ogles/Johnson)

Administration bill establishing school safety grants to assist LEAs in funding programs that address school safety, prioritizing SROs for schools without one.

The Bad:

HB18/SB38 (Reedy/Gresham)

Expands eligibility for the special ed voucher program to include homeschool and private school students who've not attended a TN public school.

A note on caption bills:

Often there are issues still evolving as the session progresses, but aren't assigned specific bill numbers until they are ready to run in committee. The finished product is then presented as an amendment to what is called a caption bill, a placeholder bill filed earlier in the session. TEA has its own caption bills, as do privatization groups. Captions make knowing bill numbers for certain ideas impossible, but it's still very important to call and speak to your legislators about the concepts themselves. The following are a few basic ideas that will very likely become bills this year:

Good ideas and efforts

- ✓ Ensuring teacher raise money reaches paychecks
- ✓ Reducing the emphasis on high-stakes tests
- ✓ Good faith revisions ensuring the PECCA process is strengthened and improved
- ✓ Providing due process to all ESPs.
- ✓ Changes to the evaluation of teachers, including the use of the pre-k/kindergarten portfolio

Bad ideas and efforts

- ✗ Any voucher, including ESAs
- ✗ Radical charter expansion absent local school board input or erosion of accountability standards for charter schools
- ✗ Attacks on the association

More updates:

If you are interested in more frequent updates via email about action in the General Assembly, please email asmirnov@tnea.org. The frequency of the email updates varies depending on legislative action.

CLIMBING SALARY RANKS, MORE TO BE DONE

Tennessee teaching salaries are moving in the right direction compared to other states. According to recent 2019 NEA estimates the state average teacher's salary is \$51,714, ranking 34th in the nation, up from 39th in 2015. The state has added an additional \$350 million state salary dollars (14 percent improvement) since 2016, yet the state average teacher salary increased only 7 percent over the same four-year period.

Had all state teacher salary funds gone into teacher paychecks the average teacher salary would be \$900 more.

Lost dollars are critical. After adjusting for inflation, the state average teacher salary has decreased by 4.1 percent over the past decade. The salary gap between teachers and other college-educated Tennesseans is one of the largest in the nation, more than 20 percent when adjusting for retirement and health benefits, according to EPI.