

TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION PUBLIC SCHOOL ADVOCATE

LEGISLATURE MOVING
TEA-BACKED BILLS
See pages 4-5.



LEGISLATIVE REPORT | March 20, 2017 | VOLUME 3, ISSUE 5

Backlash on TEA's election success

In Tennessee, most state legislators are actually elected during primary elections. TEA has placed increased emphasis on these races in recent years, educating members on our state's open primary system and the importance of showing up to vote in primary elections.

"We have had great success in electing friends of public education to the state house by getting educators to focus on primary elections," said Beth Brown, TEA vice president and vice chair of the TEA Fund for Children and Public Education. "Members of our political action committee have worked closely with educators in their districts to get public education advocates to the polls during primary elections."

In many legislative districts, the primary election is the only election. Tennessee is an "open primary" state – anyone can vote in the primary of either party. As a result, TEA has encouraged supporters of public schools to vote in the available primary no matter their personal



Primary Election
cont. page 7

Community schools model provides path to engaging students, parents

One of TEA's legislative priorities this session is to strengthen and expand existing state law on the creation and funding of community schools.

Expanding support and resources for community schools will give districts another option for improving student achievement.

"A community school is created in partnership with the school and other community resources to meet the unique needs of children

in one particular community," said TEA President Barbara Gray. "TEA is advocating for a transformational model that focuses on academics, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development which leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities."

Existing Tennessee state law authorizes districts to form community partnerships and create

Community Schools
cont. page 6



Voucher advocates object to forcing "disastrous" TNReady on private schools

TNReady has, quite frankly, been a disaster. I'm a little reticent to put a disastrous test onto a private school.



Private school vouchers in any form are dangerous for Tennessee students and public schools. A proposal moving through the legislature this session is even more unacceptable because of its lack of accountability.

Private schools and voucher advocates continue to push back on the need for voucher students taking the state test. Without data from the same state test their public school peers take, it will be impossible to determine how these students are performing.

"It is irresponsible to hand public tax dollars over to a private institution with no appropriate measure of accountability in place," said TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder. "If the state test is good enough for our public school students, why isn't it good enough

for voucher students attending a private school?"

Numerous research studies have proven vouchers to be damaging to student achievement. The key to identifying how the program is failing students is sufficient data to compare voucher students' performance to their public school peers.

Voucher sponsor Sen. Brian Kelsey revealed in a Senate Education committee meeting recently that he doesn't think taking the TNReady should be a requirement for participating private schools.

"It [TNReady] has quite frankly been a disaster...I'm a little reticent to put a disastrous test onto a school," Sen. Kelsey said.

"I would say it is the 'TN-not-Ready,'"

Vouchers
cont. page 7



THE STRONGEST VOICE FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS

State money means state tests for all voucher school students

By TEA President Barbara Gray



What's good for the goose, is good for the gander, right? The old saying doesn't seem to apply for privatization advocates.

When pressed about how the state will hold private schools that accept voucher students accountable, voucher sponsor Sen. Brian Kelsey said he didn't want to force a "disastrous" state test on private schools, but that they would be given other options to measure student achievement.

He also refers to the "disastrous" state test as TN-not-Ready. I never did hear him mention any concern for Tennessee's hundreds of thousands public school students who are forced to take the test.

Now, we have known since the "school reform" movement began that its advocates want voucher schools, charter schools and all of the

Vouchers without sufficient accountability would be - to use Sen. Kelsey's word - disastrous.

other reform initiatives to operate under a completely different set of rules than our public schools. Their rules allow flexibility, options and ways around the restrictions that tie public schools' hands.

These are the same people who pushed public education into this era of high-stakes testing, and now use the flawed data from the tests as justification for taking over public schools or stripping money from their budgets.

Vouchers in any form are bad for Tennessee children. Vouchers without sufficient accountability would be - to use Sen. Kelsey's word - disastrous.

Without data from the same test public school children are taking, there is no way to prove if vouchers are working, or more importantly, if students are falling behind.

A 2016 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research was able to identify significant problems with the Louisiana voucher program solely by comparing student performance on the state standardized test - which voucher schools were required to administer.

The Louisiana study found students who participated in the state's voucher program on average saw lower math scores and an increased likelihood of a failing score. Significant negative effects on reading, science and social studies were also identified.

Our children have been experimented on enough in recent years with one bad reform idea after another. When research from other states clearly shows a significant negative impact on student achievement, it would be irresponsible for Tennessee legislators to move forward with any form of private school vouchers - especially a program without accountability.

If private schools want state tax payer dollars, they must take the "disastrous" state standardized test.

The ghost of No Child Left Behind still lingers in Tennessee

By TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder



I love stories with a happy ending - like the one in the story of Ebenezer Scrooge. Ghosts of Christmas past, present and future let Scrooge see how he missed multiple opportunities to live a happy, purposeful life. Then at the point where he was filled with regret at a wasted existence - he woke up and realized it was all a bad dream. He was filled with joy at the realization he had a second chance to get things right.

Educators have been living in a bad dream called No Child Left Behind (NCLB). As you all know, NCLB is the national law that has been squeezing the joy out of teaching and learning in America since its passage in 2001. It turned our schools into testing factories instead of learning institutions. It labeled schools and teachers as failures based on factors beyond their control. Implementation of NCLB concepts were made even worse when the Race to the Top Fund was implemented in 2008. Race to the Top (called First to the Top in Tennessee) was a competitive grant program that awarded funds to states if they agreed to redo their teacher evaluation and testing programs to basically implement NCLB on steroids.

Then this past year the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed, replacing NCLB. ESSA allows states a second chance. It gives states the ability to re-look at teacher evaluation, student testing and school improvement programs without the federal mandates of NCLB. The state department of education has introduced a bill (SB 1198 / HB 0308) in the Tennessee General Assembly to implement ESSA in our state. While the bill contains some general positive suggestions - it misses the opportunity to give Tennesseans a second chance on the major issues mentioned above.

Basically, SB 1198 does not allow NCLB to stay a ghost in our past - instead, it will continue

to haunt us in the present and future as well. Our hopes at awakening out of the NCLB nightmare will not be realized with this bill.

The good news is, unlike the state department of education, TEA is

working to free Tennessee's educators and schools from NCLB once and for all. We are backing bills that take advantage of the flexibility allowed by ESSA. We're promoting one bill that addresses excessive testing; another that provides a vehicle to create a more equitable teacher evaluation system and another that allows priority schools the opportunity to become a transformational community school instead of being limited to the current school turnover options.

So stay tuned - keep reading the ADVOCATE - and contact your legislator when asked. We don't have to miss this opportunity. If we put our hopes and collective action together, as only TEA can do, we can finally kill the ghostly specter of NCLB. And in doing so, our happy ending will become a new beginning as Tennessee's teachers, schools and students got their second chance to get things right.

TEA is working to free Tennessee's educators and schools from NCLB once and for all...backing bills that take advantage of the flexibility allowed by ESSA.

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can be found on page 6.

Finding your “teacher voice”

By Amanda Kail, Metropolitan Nashville EA member



Two years ago, I decided to leave a profession that I loved passionately. I simply could not give another standardized test, or practice test, or practice

for the practice test. I was teaching EL1, and I was tired of making already traumatized, recently-arrived immigrant children cry over data that was completely useless and meaningless. Like so many others, I penned what I now call “another tragic teacher resignation letter” and informed my administrators. I was DONE.

Although I have been an activist for many years, I had not been involved in education politics at all. I knew nothing about it, but I was sure that whatever I was being directed to do in my classroom simply was not working. I joined TEA a few desperate weeks before I decided to quit, and it was then that I noticed this thing called *Civication*. If I was leaving teaching for good, why not go down to the legislature and tell the people who I felt were responsible why I was leaving?

A few weeks later, I walked into the TEA building in downtown Nashville for the first time. I told a few TEA staff members that I was here to do whatever they needed because I was quitting at the end of the year. I was going to start speaking out because, what could anyone do to me? Fire me?

That day at the legislature changed my life. I got to speak directly to the people making the decisions. I met lawmakers who work tirelessly on our behalf and others that I had the pleasure of making uncomfortable. I learned how education legislation is crafted and turned into law, and the men and women responsible for doing it. I learned that a significant number of them had about as much experience with public schools as Betsy DeVos. Suddenly, Tennessee’s education policies were not just a bunch of laws that made no sense; they were the direct result of human beings that I now knew, and whom I could help elect, or whom I could campaign against.

Through TEA, I made my first speech at the school board to push for tighter regulation and more transparency of charter schools. I have made many since then. I started meeting other teachers and community activists who were already in the fight. At a TEA leadership summit, my fellow Nashville teachers and I founded CAPE, the Coalition Advocating for Public Education, an organization that brings together individuals and community groups dedicated to action on public education’s behalf. We have launched campaigns for teachers to speak at school boards (“Use Your Teacher Voice!”), marched in

protests, lobbied against vouchers, and held activism workshops. I have joined campaigns to elect pro-public education leaders. I know my school board and my state reps’ names, and they know mine.

What I learned that was most important, however, was that in order to change the decisions, you have to change the decision-makers. And while we all need to vent sometimes, complaining alone does not make change.

It’s easy to become isolated and demoralized as a teacher. Too many of us face an overwhelmingly difficult task with very little support. We are forced to carry out laws we sometimes disagree with. We see the impact of hateful and misguided state and federal policies on our Hispanic, Muslim, refugee, immigrant, and LGBT students and their families every day. The friendly political debates we used to have with friends, family members and colleagues whose political identity differed from ours now feel completely polarized and angry.

So what do we do?

All I can say is if teachers won’t stand up for public education, who will? We have lost too much already to go on trusting that others will do it for us.

If teachers won’t stand up for fairness and respect for all, then what’s the point of asking our students to do the same?

If we can’t demand thoughtful, EDUCATED responses from our elected leaders, then why did we even enter this profession?

“Easier said than done,” you say. I agree. On a practical level, this isn’t something you can do alone. Getting active in your local is a great way to begin to meet friends and allies. Start attending local RAs, and participating in their events. Take advantage of the opportunities that TEA offers to get active at the state level. GO TO CIVICATION! Go to the TEA RA, and the NEA RA. You will meet many new friends who will help you along the way.

There is something even more important I want you to know. Once you start speaking out, people will listen because they remember the teacher who made a difference in their lives. They remember the teacher that was one of their greatest role-models. They will know, just by the fact that you have taken the time, on top of teaching, on top of coaching basketball, tutoring after-school, coordinating family literacy night, and buying your students schools supplies, socks, and lunch, that you care enough to come talk to them about what needs to change. Your voice is more important than you know.

So, the next time you find yourself thinking there is nothing you can do as a teacher, tell yourself this: There are over 76,000 of us in Tennessee. There are over 3 million of us nationwide. Teachers have enormous moral authority in society. Your teacher voice MATTERS. Don’t ever let anyone tell you otherwise.

ASK TEA

ANSWERS FROM THE EXPERTS AT THE TEA HOTLINE

Q: In addition to the 180 days we are required to work under our contracts, our school system adds an extra 30 minutes of instructional time during the school day. This extra time equates to 13 additional days, which can be used for snow make-up days. If only six of those days are used for snow, why are we not being compensated for the other seven days?

A: The mistake here is counting the extra 30 minutes per day as 13 extra days of work. The additional time is not accumulated or used for that reason. Under state law, a school system can add 30 minutes to the instructional day and accumulate the instructional time to be used for make-up days. However, teachers are required to provide 180 days of classroom instruction regardless of whether the school day is six-and-a-half hours or seven hours. So if the school day is only six-and-a-half hours, then any days missed for weather would require adding instructional time to the calendar in order to satisfy the 180 days required to meet the state minimum instructional time.

Q: After my second observation this year, I expected the evaluator to hold a post-conference within a few days because that’s what happened after my last observation. It’s been two weeks since my observation, and still no feedback has been provided. Can I file an evaluation grievance? Is there a specific deadline?

A: According to the State Board of Education Teacher and Principal Evaluation Policy 5.201, evaluators must provide written feedback and schedule an in-person debrief (post-conference) within one week of each observation. Based on the facts you related, it seems your evaluator failed to adhere to that timeline.

The policy provides for a local-level evaluation grievance procedure as a means for evaluated teachers and principals to challenge both the accuracy of the data used in the evaluation as well as the evaluator’s adherence to the State’s evaluation policies. With regard to grievance timelines, the policy provides that “grievances may be filed at the end of each of the three components of the evaluation model—1) qualitative appraisal; 2) student growth measures; and 3) other measures of student achievement.” In order to be timely, “grievance[s] must be filed no later than fifteen (15) days from the date teachers . . . receive the results for each component.” So you could wait to file a grievance until up to 15 days after you receive the overall results of your qualitative component, which is to say your “summative score;” however, you might consider filing now as there is no prohibition against filing prior to the above-referenced deadlines. And resolving any concerns sooner rather than later might prove beneficial moving forward.

Documentation can be critical to resolving observation and evaluation-related concerns, which is why members are encouraged to maintain a personal copy of any relevant emails and materials. TEA members can contact their association representative (AR) or UniServ coordinator for support and advice.



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.

MORE THAN A

Legislature moving TEA-backed bills that focus on

PE bill fixes problems with 2016 law, returns control to districts

Every elementary school teacher knows that physical activity is a good thing for students.

A new proposal this session could restructure physical activity requirements for Tennessee students after legislation passed in 2016 created more problems than it solved.

Sponsored by Rep. Bill Dunn (R-Knoxville) in the House and Sen. Jim Tracy (R-Shelbyville) in the Senate, HB45/SB662 would change physical activity requirements to 130 minutes a week in elementary schools and 90 minutes a week for middle and high school grades.

The 2016 bill prescribed specific periods of physical activity, some as short as 15 minutes, that proved difficult to schedule. Teachers across the state also struggled with the definitions of “structured” versus “unstructured” physical activity prescribed in last year’s bill.

Many elementary school teachers reported that 15 minutes was not enough time to get their students ready for activities outdoors, especially during winter months, and then actually complete any meaningful amount of activity.

Emily Mitchell, a Rutherford County elementary teacher, said she welcomes the proposed changes that will give schools the ability to decide how to best schedule the required physical activity time.

“Any increase in physical activity is a real asset to teachers and students,” Mitchell said. “You cannot teach standards and curriculum all day without some sort of a physical outlet. When students are given time to exercise, behavior problems go down and learning is improved.”

Mitchell said teachers notice the difference in learning and discipline especially on the days without scheduled physical activity.

Several bills were filed this year to address physical activity, with Rep. Dunn’s bill emerging as consensus legislation.

Mitchell said her teaching experience has taught her that physical activity should only be expanded, not reduced, especially in elementary schools. She noted that last year’s legislation was too disruptive to school schedule, while the proposed changes offer greater flexibility.

“We need it for everyone’s sanity,” Mitchell said. “We should be having PE every day.”

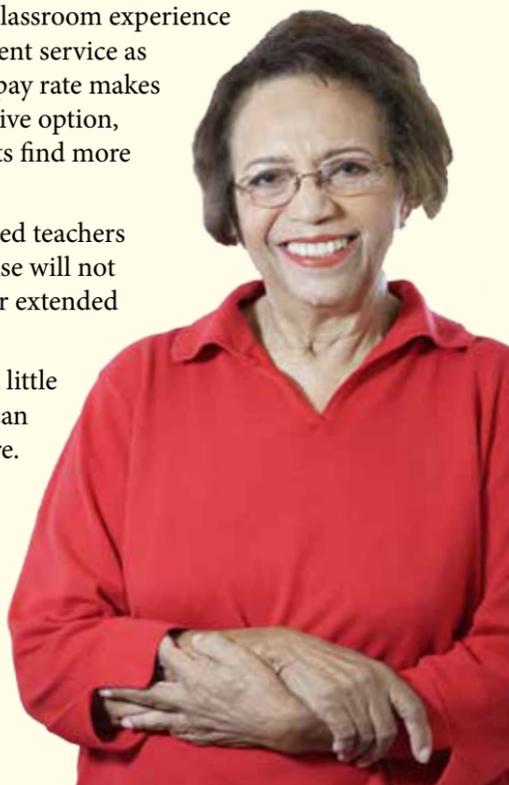
Increase in substitute pay for retired teachers

School districts across Tennessee report struggling to find substitute teachers. At the same time, many retired teachers would like to sub, but are paid a lower rate when their license expires. Legislation advancing at the Tennessee General Assembly would require that school districts pay retired teachers who serve as substitute teachers the same rate as subs with active teaching licenses.

This is a solution that just makes sense. Retired teachers have proven classroom experience and can provide excellent service as subs. Increasing their pay rate makes subbing a more attractive option, which can help districts find more qualified subs.

As in current law, retired teachers without an active license will not be able to substitute for extended periods.

Sometimes, with just a little push, common sense can prevail at the legislature. TEA supports this common-sense proposal that will mean both more pay for retired teachers who sub and a stronger pool of substitute teachers to serve our students.



Tennessee degrees

In his State of the State in J... announced a new higher ed... Reconnect, which would ex... scholarship model to adult...

The program is designed to... degree either attend college... to school to complete an un...

“As I listened to Gov. Hasla... opportunity for adults to g... degrees, I immediately tho... professionals,” said TEA Pr... ESPs already have a college... so many who do not and h... desire to earn a college deg... the Tennessee Reconnect s... eliminate or greatly ease th... of going back to school for...

The bill, HB 531/SB 1218, w... Tennessee the first state in... the offer of free community... adults. Like the state’s Tenn... Tennessee Reconnect is a “... means that state dollars wo... only after all available fede...

“We need to reach the worl... college but didn’t complete... own who like his dad never... that he needs to upgrade h... State of the State remarks. ... an obstacle anyone has to c...

Computer science bill creates opportunity for increased pay

Tennessee is moving toward online testing by way of the new TNReady tests. Our schools require more and more technology, which means we need teachers who can teach these skills. A proposal to address the issue is moving through the legislature. The bill requires the State Board of Education to create a certification in Computer Science, incentivizing teachers.

TEA supports the new certification in Computer Science. This proposal creates an opportunity for those with the skill and

ability to teach computer courses to earn better pay. The new certification will open more options for teachers. Additionally, this certification will allow school districts to better identify those with computer science teaching ability and get them in front of students.

House Bill 918, creating this certification, is about enhancing flexibility and expanding options for teachers.

The bill has already unanimously passed the Senate and is expected to be heard on the House floor this week.



TVAAS TEST SCORE

on students and educators - not high-stakes tests

See Reconnect puts college within reach for ESPs

In January, Gov. Bill Haslam announced an education initiative, Tennessee Reconnect, to extend the Tennessee Promise scholarship to help adults without a college degree for the first time or to go back to finish an unfinished degree.

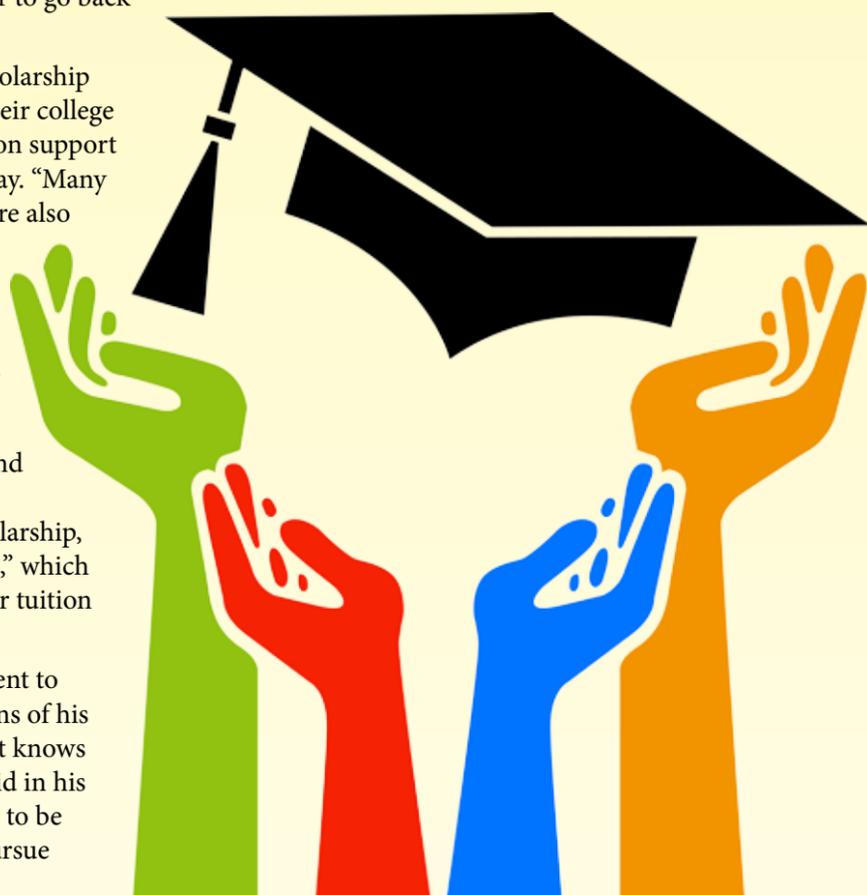
Haslam described this scholarship as a way to go back and finish their college education. He said, "The right of our education support is to get the job done. President Barbara Gray. 'Many people get a degree, but there are also people who have expressed a desire to get a degree. If passed, this scholarship will help ease the financial burden on our ESP members.'"

Haslam would make it easier for the country to extend the Tennessee Promise scholarship, which is a last-dollar program, which means that once all other financial aid is applied,

Haslam said in his statement, "We don't want cost to be a barrier as they pursue

their own generational change for themselves and their families."

The proposal would be funded through state lottery proceeds and is expected to help the state's 13 community colleges increase full- and part-time adult enrollment.



Improving evals for teachers in non-tested subjects

More than half of all Tennessee teachers teach in subjects or grade levels that do not generate TVAAS scores. Unfortunately, current state policy means that most of those teachers are evaluated based on TVAAS data from students or subjects they do not teach.

"TEA believes TVAAS is an invalid evaluation tool for all teachers," said TEA President Barbara Gray. "TEA has been working to reduce and ultimately eliminate its use in teacher evaluations. Teachers must be fairly evaluated based on students they teach and factors that measure a teacher's true impact on student achievement."

House Bill 67/Senate Bill 250 seeks to ensure that teachers have the opportunity to be evaluated based on students in their classrooms. The bill requires school districts to adopt an alternative growth model developed by the state for teachers in non-tested subjects and grades. It also requires the state to finish the work of developing alternative growth models for additional subjects. While the state has done some work on developing portfolio models, particularly in related arts, there is more work to be done.

The state is currently developing models for grades K-2, for example. This bill requires that the state deliver on the promise of alternative models available for all teachers in non-tested subjects. Once this work is complete, districts will have a complete set of options to use for teacher evaluation.

"It is simply unacceptable to evaluate a teacher on students or subjects they do not teach," Gray said. "This legislation is an important step toward a fair evaluation system."

The alternative growth model bill moved quickly through the House and now awaits action from the Senate Education committee. TEA supports holding districts accountable for adopting fair models of evaluation and holding the state accountable to develop appropriate, valid models for evaluating teachers.

School counselors free to help students without fear of liability

School counselors often fill one of the most important roles in schools – supporting students and ensuring they are mentally and emotionally prepared to learn in the classroom.

This can sometimes be as simple as listening when a child needs someone to talk to and offering advice. Counselors also guide students in decision-making and working out differences with their peers. Sometimes, though, it may be necessary to refer a child to an outside professional for specialized assistance with more complex issues.

In the past, those referrals were tricky, potentially creating liability issues for the school counselor and/or the school district. There was uncertainty across the state about the financial liability of recommending a student to an outside professional for additional help.

"Doing the job of a school counselor requires having every tool at your disposal to help kids," said Carolyn Crowder, TEA executive director. "This bill that just passed the Tennessee General Assembly will clear up policy around referrals and empower counselors to better assist students in need."

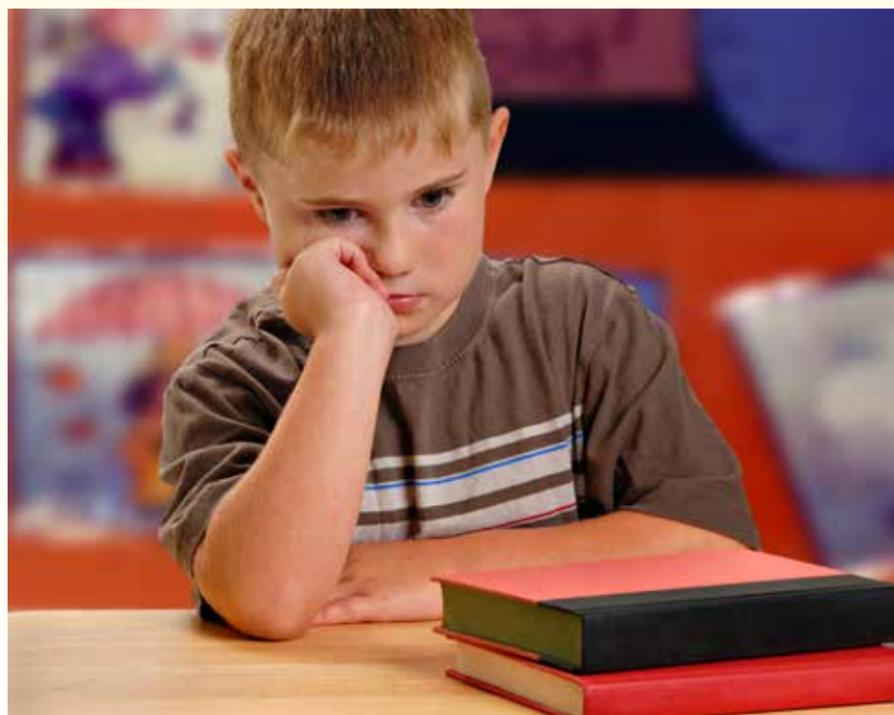
House Bill 720/Senate Bill 341 explicitly protects both school counselors and their school districts from financial liability if a student is referred by a school counselor to an outside professional for services.

"School counselors will now have the freedom and flexibility to do their jobs effectively. They'll have the tools available to meet the needs of their students," Crowder said.

A school counselor from Middle Tennessee put it this way, "When this bill becomes law, counselors will have greater clarity. That's what we want. The ability to do the job we're trained to do, even if that means helping a family

by referring them to an outside professional. This bill is good for counselors because it is good for kids."

TEA supported this bill, which passed unanimously in both the House and Senate. The bill now awaits Gov. Bill Haslam's signature.



Task force to study Pre-K, K suspensions

Legislation prohibiting suspension or expulsion of students in pre-K and kindergarten classes has resulted in the creation of a task force aimed at curbing out-of-school suspensions and developing alternative policies.

HB872, filed by Rep. Raumesh Akbari (D-Shelby Co.), originally proposed that “no student in pre-kindergarten through kindergarten (pre-K-K) shall be suspended or expelled from school until the student has been provided an opportunity for the student’s anger, fear, or anxiety to subside and the student’s teacher or principal or both have had a conversation with the student concerning the behavior and the underlying issues that may have precipitated the behavior.”

After some concern about the bill as-written, it was amended to give the Department of Education one year to

consult with juvenile officials to review the impact on student suspensions, exclusionary discipline policies and practices. From those findings, the department will develop alternative policies to be adopted by local districts.

“The amendment truly represents when the parties work together,” Rep. Akbari said during a subcommittee hearing. “Having almost 1,500 suspensions across the state and about 1,000 out-of-school suspensions, we need to see what’s going on, what’s leading to these expulsions and reach a solution involving stakeholders. When a child is not in school, they are not learning.”

Deliberations on the bill raised concerns that not being able to suspend a student could create separate issues for school personnel.

“Bathroom bill” stalls

The bill prohibiting transgender students from using restrooms or facilities that correspond to their gender identity faces an uncertain future in the statehouse this year.

“Schools have been handling this issue for years without a risk of depleting our school funding,” said TEA President Barbara Gray. “Whenever you can handle something at the local level, you don’t need a state law passed.”

Sponsored by Rep. Mark Pody (R-Lebanon) and Sen. Mae Beavers (R-Mount Juliet), HB771/SB888 was pulled off notice in the House and deferred in the Senate, making it unlikely to advance this year. The bill would have restricted the use of locker room and restroom facilities “for use by persons of the same sex as the sex indicated on the student’s original birth certificate.”

Opponents of the bill have noted the bill would jeopardize crucial school funding and would be harmful to transgender students.

“I just don’t think it’s appropriate, nor do I think it’s necessary,” Rep. Craig Fitzhugh (D-Ripley) said during the 2016 session.

Community Schools from page 1

community schools. The law directs the State Board of Education and Department of Education to support and encourage the formation and operation of community schools - including seeking funding and offering community school grants.

TEA has joined other education stakeholder groups, including Tennesseans Reclaiming Educational Excellence (TREE) and the Tennessee PTA to create state chapter of the Alliance to Reclaim our Schools (AROS).

“Tennessee AROS is focused on supporting and advocating for the creation of transformational community schools,” Gray said. “This alliance is already making great strides in talking with both urban and rural districts about how community schools could work in their districts.”

TEA’s proposal, in partnership with Tennessee AROS, would create a grant-based program that would allow schools and districts to apply for funding to create transformational community schools.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Harold Love (D-Nashville) and Sen. Steve Dickerson (R-Nashville), falls under the guidance provided in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act for school improvement plans.

“Transformational community schools are already seeing great results in communities nationwide,” Gray said. “We have the

opportunity now to create our own community schools program in Tennessee. Parents and educators know every school and every student has a different set of needs that must be met in order to succeed. The transformational community schools model will empower local communities to identify those issues and decide together how to best strengthen their public school and improve student performance.”

When implemented properly, a school must first complete an in-depth needs assessment with school staff, parents, students and the community. Based on the findings of the assessment, the school then develops its strategic plan to be executed by a community school coordinator and stakeholder community board.

“By following the transformational community schools model, schools are seeing lower absenteeism, less student mobility, increased parent engagement, and student participation in school activities,” Gray said. “As the state-run Achievement School District continues to struggle, it is important that schools have an additional option for improving school performance.”

The Department of Education includes community schools in its draft ESSA implementation plan. TEA’s proposal would take the state’s recommendations for community schools a step further and also clearly prescribes what factors have led to success for transformational community schools nationwide.

TRANSFORMATIONAL COMMUNITY SCHOOLS:

Provide a strong and proven curriculum, engaging students with culturally relevant and challenging material, and offering a robust selection of classes, AP and honors courses, as well as after-school programs in the arts, languages, and ethnic studies, ELL, Special Ed, GED preparation, and job training

Emphasize high-quality teaching instead of high-stakes testing, enabling teachers to identify and meet students’ needs

Offer community support services such as health care, mental-health counseling, and other support, before, during, and after school and on the weekends

Focus on positive discipline practices as well as social and emotional learning supports, resulting in fewer suspensions and harsh punishments

Feature extensive family and community engagement, involving the full community in planning and decision-making



Contact TEA

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TEA success in primary elections draws ire of anti-public education lawmakers

Primary Election from page 1

party preference.

TEA's success in increasing teacher turnout in primary elections has spurred a movement to change Tennessee's open primary law.

Legislation that would create a closed primary and force Tennesseans to declare a statewide party affiliation before voting is moving this session. This "closed primary" plan is a direct result of TEA's success in turning out pro-public education voters in primary elections.

"We know education issues cut across party lines, and we don't believe voters should be discouraged from voting in the primary of their choice," Brown said. "At the end of the day, what matters most is electing candidates who believe in a system of strong public schools and a quality education for all students."

TEA is the largest and most active voice for public education

in Tennessee. When members and public education advocates unite to elect friends of education, it is a powerful force.

"Legislators now understand that while teachers don't make large financial contributions to campaigns, they do show up to vote. All the money in the world from outside interest groups cannot offset a group of angry teachers and parents," Brown said. "TEA supports the open primary process because in many districts statewide, it is the only election that matters. Tennesseans have a right to vote for those who represent them in the statehouse and will set policy that affects our children, our classrooms and our profession."

TEA opposes this legislation that could silence the votes of public education advocates. Contact your legislators this week and ask them to vote "No" on HB 887/SB 772.



Damaging, unaccountable voucher program targets Memphis children

Sen. Brian Kelsey (R-Germantown), has been a driver in raising the stakes on testing, including voting to revoke teacher licenses based on TVAAS and expansion of the Achievement School District. Yet he condemned the state test when it came to voucher students in private schools.

Vouchers from page 1

the senator joked to the committee.

"Listening to Sen. Kelsey joke about the 'disastrous' state test with zero regard for the students forced to take that test every year was infuriating," Crowder said. "It was a lot like hearing Rep. Bill Dunn describe neighborhoods with under-performing schools as 'failing communities' during last year's voucher fight. These comments make it very apparent how out-of-touch some legislators are with their constituents and local public schools."

A statewide voucher bill has been defeated for four straight years. Proponents are hoping their "pilot program" targeting only Shelby County Schools will push the bill through the legislature this year.

"Fatigue on private school vouchers is at an all-time high in the General Assembly," said TEA Lobbyist Jim Wrye. "Legislators are tired of having the same argument and the constant attacks on our public schools. Calls and emails from constituents back home are overwhelmingly opposed to using public school money to fund private schools. As long

as legislators vote the way folks back home want, vouchers will fail again."

A sticking point for many legislators this year may be the lack of appropriate accountability.

"This year many legislators have picked up our talking point that if it is state money, then it must be state tests," Wrye said. "It is important that legislators continue to hear from teachers, parents and other public education supporters that taking tax dollars away from our public schools to fund private school tuition is unacceptable in any form."

Sen. Kelsey's voucher bill, SB 161/HB 126, is scheduled to be heard in the House Education Administration and Planning committee this week.

The voucher fight in Tennessee is also compounded by the push at the federal level for private school vouchers. The federal budget proposal released last week includes an unprecedented \$1.4 billion investment in "school choice," with \$250 million for vouchers.

"It is a critical moment for public education," said Wrye.



TEA Bill Tracker

Some of the ones to watch

TEA bills:

This year, as we negotiate with legislators and the administration on key issues such as teacher pay, community schools, insurance improvements, and evaluation reforms, among others, TEA did not file wholly drafted legislation as we have in the past. We asked friendly lawmakers to file a number of *caption bills*, placeholders that will be wholly rewritten with amendments when ready.

The Good:

HB45 (Dunn)/SB662 (Tracy) - Provides enhanced school flexibility to meet requirements for physical activity of students. Fix for scheduling problems created by the recess bill passed last year.

HB174 (Reedy)/ SB14 (Green) - Nicknamed "The Teacher Bill of Rights," this bill would create a list of rights and protections for educators, including the right to not be evaluated based on students not taught nor by someone who isn't experienced in the same content area.

HB441 (E. Smith)/SB859 (Dickerson) - This bill would increase funding provided for classroom supplies for first year teachers to \$50.

HB795 (Terry)/SB774 (Beavers) - As introduced, this bill would require the state department to annually prove the validity of teacher evaluations, including the use of TVAAS.

HB501 (Pitts)/SB481 (Green) - As introduced, adds funding for three Response to Instruction and Intervention positions within each public school to the BEP calculation.

HB1278 (Love)/SB805 (Dickerson) - Would establish a program and funding source for community schools in Tennessee.

HB1312 (Turner)/SB1300 (Yarbro) - The bill prohibits standardized tests for students in grades pre-k to 2.

The Bad:

HB460 (Kane)/SB395 (Gresham) - As introduced, the bill creates education savings accounts with no eligibility requirements, eventually opening vouchers to all students statewide.

HB1109 (DeBerry)/SB987 (Kelsey) - This proposal would expand the special education voucher program that has just last month begun issuing the first vouchers.

HB126 (Brooks, H)/SB161 (Kelsey) - This voucher bill differs in that it focuses solely on a Shelby County voucher pilot program.

HB336 (Dunn)/SB380 (Gresham) - This is almost an exact copy of the statewide voucher bill TEA has defeated for the past four years.

HB356 (Dunn)/SB404 (Gresham) - This would authorize LEAs to charge a 10 percent fee to collect dues through payroll solely for professional associations.

HB357 (Dunn)/SB4 (Gresham) - This bill prohibits the state from adopting standards or instruction for social and emotional learning.

HB1248 (Dunn)/SB1067 (Gresham) - The proposal would remove funding requirements for pre-k programs in the state. It could end up reducing pre-k statewide.

TEA MEMBERS - HOTEL ROOMS ARE GOING FAST! MAKE YOUR SPRING BREAK RESERVATION NOW!

Come to
CIVICATION

**Come to the Capitol!
Talk to your legislators!
Stand up for education!
Mileage reimbursed by TEA!**



TEAteachers.org/civication

Huge success of Civication!

Hundreds of members, students, retirees and parents flooded the capitol on Tuesday, March 13, participating in *Civication*. Packing the hallways, legislative offices, and committee rooms, the presence of so many pro-public school folks had a tremendous impact in the General Assembly.

"I can't stress enough how great it is when actual constituents from back home come and lobby *their* legislators on an important issue. It is the best lobbying there is," said Jim Wrye, TEA's chief lobbyist.

"What's even better, members and their families were having a great time."

The Memphis voucher bill was delayed in a House committee packed with members and parents.

From top left clockwise: members watch outside a packed committee room, members gather for breakfast at headquarters before the legislative day, Collierville members outside their legislator's office, Shelby County parents and teachers gather around Chairman Mark White (R-Memphis).

