



To: Florida District School Superintendents
From: Brian T. Moore, FADSS General Counsel
Subject: FADSS Legislative Update – Week of March 20, 2023
Date: Friday, March 24, 2023

Today, the Legislature will complete its third week of the 2023 Legislative Session. In addition to another full slate of committee hearings and more bills making their way through the process, the focus this week turned to the budget. Both the House *PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee* and Senate *Appropriations Committee on Education* introduced their proposed education budgets this week. The House version contains numerous revisions to the FEFP, including the elimination of several categorical allocations, including instructional materials, mental health, reading, and safe schools (without changing any of the underlying statutory requirements to provide those services).

As a reminder, FADSS has a spreadsheet that separates many of the tracked bills into categories for superintendents and their teams to review. We will continue to update it to highlight those bills that are moving. [The chart can be accessed here.](#) As we enter the fourth week of session, we will try to start paring down the chart to include only those bills that are moving and are likely to have a significant impact on district operations.

2023-24 Budget Discussions

As mentioned above, both the House and Senate introduced their first education budget proposals this week. The Senate proposal is easier to understand, as it does not include fundamental changes to the FEFP. The Senate proposes adding \$40 million to safe schools, \$20 million to mental health, \$200 million to the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation (TSIA), and \$182.02 per student to the Base Student Allocation (BSA). The Senate also created separate lines for vouchers, making it easier to track the funding as the State moves toward universal vouchers. There are links below to the Senate's proposal.

In addition to the House budget proposal, the House *PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee* presented its proposed conforming bill ([HB 5101 \(Tomkow\)](#) – Education) this week as well, and it definitely generated a lot of discussion in the short time people have had to digest it. In short, the House proposes repealing several categoricals and collapsing others into the BSA (but

retaining the statutory requirements related to those categoricals). Thus, while the mental health allocation would no longer exist, there are no changes to the statutory requirements to pay for and provide the services. Finally, among numerous other things covered in the bill, the House proposes replacing the district cost differential (DCD) with the comparable wage factor (CWF). However, the use of the CWF will only apply to districts with a CWF above 1.00. Ultimately, with the collapsing of several categoricals, the House projects an increase to the BSA of \$760.76. As of today, it is not clear exactly how this new FEFP works or what would happen if any of the enrollment estimates are significantly off the mark. However, the House released additional FEFP information will be released today (links provided below), and they have made it clear from the start of session that they intend to make sure that no districts are harmed *this year* by the changes. It appears that they accomplish this with the new Supplemental Academic and Support Services (SASS) allocation. I have attached a document that Merrill Wimberely prepared today that shows each district's allocation under this new categorical and how it compares to the state average.

If you have not already done so, please make sure that your CFO reviews both the House and the Senate information to see what they might mean for district finances both in 2023-24 and beyond. These links should be useful:

[Senate FEFP](#)

[Senate Implementing Bill \(SB 2502\)](#)

[Senate GAA \(SB 2500\)](#)

[House Initial FEFP](#)

[House Complete FEFP](#)

[House Conforming Bill \(HB 5101\)](#)

[House GAA \(HB 5001\)](#)

State Board of Education

In addition to all the legislative hearings, the State Board of Education (SBE) met this week in Tallahassee as well. Joe Taylor, the superintendent of Washington County Public Schools and also the Chair of the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, spoke to the SBE on behalf of FADSS. He spent some time using his background as a CPA to discuss some of the hardships districts face when the cost of doing business changes drastically while the district's budget is fixed by the Legislature (e.g., FRS, sovereign immunity and liability insurance, health insurance, etc.).

Also, on the topic of districts distributing the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation (TSIA) in a timely manner, the SBE members voiced support for the idea of inviting union representatives

to come to future meetings to explain why they will not agree to let teachers get their pay raises in a timely manner.

Bills Heard on the House or Senate Floor

[CS/CS/CS/CS/HB 1 \(Tuck and Plascencia\)](#) / [CS/CS/SB 202 \(Simon\)](#) – School Choice (Universal Vouchers)

HB 1 completed its journey through the House last week. As previously discussed, in addition to expanding eligibility to participate in the state’s voucher programs to just about all Floridians, it includes some of the deregulation language originally included in SB 202, including the waiver of cost per student station requirements for several years, removing the online course requirement for graduation, and allowing for more transportation flexibility. Last week, the Senate amended its bill to essentially match HB 1, and this week it took up HB 1 in place of SB 202. HB 1 was approved by the Senate by a party-line vote of 26-12, and it is now ready to be sent to the Governor for approval.

Both bills require the State Board of Education (SBE) to “develop and recommend . . . for adoption during the 2024 legislative session repeals and revisions to the Florida Early Learning-20 Education Code, chapters 1000-1013, Florida Statutes, to reduce regulation of public schools.” The SBE is required to “consider input” from multiple stakeholders, including teachers, superintendents, and administrators, and FADSS will be looking to all districts to help provide significant and meaningful input during this process.

[CS/CS/HB 837 \(Gregory and Fabricio\)](#) / [CS/CS/SB 236 \(Hutson\)](#) – Civil Remedies

These bills attempt to accomplish tort reform with limits on attorney fees, statutes of limitations, contributory negligence, and more. I will not spend a lot of time on this bill, but it could result in significant savings to district legal expenses. You may wish to share with your board attorney or risk manager for their input.

The House passed its version of the bill last week in a party-line vote of 80-31, and the Senate took up HB 837 in place of SB 236 this week. The Senate passed HB 837 this week, and it was immediately sent to the Governor who signed it into law today.

[HB 1445 \(Black\)](#) / [CS/CS/SB 256 \(Ingoglia\)](#) – Employee Organizations Representing Public Employees

These bills, among other things, would prohibit most public-sector unions from collecting their dues through payroll deductions (the bills exclude law enforcement and firefighter unions). There are also certain reporting requirements for the unions, which the Public Employee Relations Commission (PERC) can investigate. Finally, if a public-sector union has its membership drop below 60% in any given year, the union will have to petition PERC for recertification.

SB 256 was placed on the special order calendar for March 23, 2023, and is now awaiting a final vote on third reading. HB 1445 still has one committee hearing to complete.

[CS/HB 259 \(Brackett\) / CS/SB 190 \(Grall\)](#) – Interscholastic Extracurricular Activities

These bills would allow charter school students to make arrangements to participate in sports at a private school. In addition, as noted previously, the language in these bills has been incorporated into the larger FHSAA bills (HB 225 / SB 308). The Senate version completed the committee process and was approved by the full Senate by a vote of 38-0 this week. The House version has completed the committee process, but it has not yet been placed on the House’s special order calendar.

[CS/SB 150 \(Collins\) / CS/HB 543 \(Brannan and Payne\)](#) – Public Safety (concealed carry and Safe Schools)

The primary focus of these bills is to allow people to carry concealed weapons without needing a concealed weapon permit or license. The bills do not change the prohibition against possessing weapons, concealed or not, on school grounds. However, there are also some safe school provisions included in the bills. For example, they would allow private schools to hire safe schools officers and participate in the guardian program. The bills also require the Office of Safe Schools to “develop a statewide behavioral threat management operational process to guide school districts . . . through the threat management process. The process must be designed to identify, assess, manage, and monitor potential and real threats to schools.” This will include establishing the duties of threat management teams, using a Florida-specific threat management instrument, creating a statewide threat management portal, methods of continued monitoring of specific threats, and more. Finally, the bills would also create a Florida Safe Schools Canine Program to produce more firearm-detecting canines for schools to employ.

HB 543 nearly completed its journey through the House, with final approval likely to occur some time today. It underwent some additional amendments on the House floor that address the threat assessment process. Among other things, the Legislature authorized the SBE to adopt emergency rules to implement these statutory changes immediately, because the Legislature found that “school district discretion over reporting criminal incidents to law enforcement has resulted in significant under-reporting of serious crimes.”

SB 150 is still awaiting its second of two scheduled committee hearings.

High Impact Bills Heard in Committee

[CS/HB 857 \(Daniels and Garcia\)](#) – Charter Schools

This bill would amend the charter school statute to allow charter schools, at least in some circumstances, to dismiss students who are not doing well academically. It is based on current statutory language that allows charter schools to limit enrollment to target, among other things, “students who meet reasonable academic, artistic, or other eligibility standards

established by the charter school and included in the charter school application and charter or, in the case of existing charter schools, standards that are consistent with the school's mission and purpose. Such standards shall be in accordance with current state law and practice in public schools and may not discriminate against otherwise qualified individuals." Hopefully, there are very few charter schools where academic performance would be a condition of enrollment, and this change should not be interpreted to allow a charter school to unenroll a student simply because he or she is not doing well. It should only apply when academic performance is specifically part of the approved enrollment process.

The bill also prohibits the landlord of a charter school from being a member of the school's governing board unless the landlord is not-for-profit and placement on the board is approved by two-thirds of the other board members. Further, the bill would allow a charter board to assign the school to another charter board, subject to prior approval by the sponsor district.

Another provision of the bill would make struggling charter schools eligible to continue to receive capital funding for a longer period of time. Currently, pursuant to SBE rule, a charter cannot receive capital outlay funding after it receives a grade of F or two consecutive grades lower than a C. The bill would not cut off their access to capital outlay funding until after they obtained two consecutive grades of F or three consecutive grades below C. Finally, the bill requires the SBE to adopt a standard monitoring tool for districts to use when conducting annual charter school site reviews.

The House *Choice and Innovation Subcommittee* reported the bill favorably this week with several amendments. It still has two committee stops remaining, and there is no Senate companion.

Concerns: The most obvious concern with this bill is that it may permit a public, non-magnet school to dismiss a student for poor academic achievement. It is one thing to remove a student from a special program that has certain academic standards, but this bill could allow a charter school to avoid any consequences for its failure to educate a student by simply sending the child away. Almost certainly, that child will wind up at a district school where their academic struggles (and accountability consequences) will now be the responsibility of that school. Districts will need to review their charter agreements and current charter school enrollment practices in their charter schools to make sure that the only charter schools restricting enrollment for academic reasons are doing so for legitimate reasons, much like districts might have for certain CTE or magnet programs.

[CS/CS/HB 1069 \(McClain\)](#) / [CS/HB 1223 \(Anderson\)](#) / [CS/SB 1320 \(Yarborough\)](#) – Education (books and LGBTQ revisited)

As discussed in recent updates, these bills would expand upon last year's HB 1467 (books) and HB 1557 (LGBTQ). HB 1223 is focused more on the expansion of HB 1557, while HB 1069 has more provisions expanding HB 1467. The Senate version incorporates both.

Originally, HB 1069 focused almost exclusively on expanding on book and library issues. However, the House *Education and Employment Committee* put forth a proposed committee substitute this week to make it more like SB 1320, expanding on both HB 1467 and HB 1557 from last year. It was reported favorably and will now head to the House floor. In its current form, this bill would:

- Define “sex” to be the classification of a person as either male or female based on their genitalia at birth.
- Establish by law that every K-12 educational institution has a policy recognizing that “sex is an immutable biological trait and that it is false to ascribe to a person a pronoun that does not correspond to such person’s sex.”
- Prohibit the use of preferred pronouns.
- Expand the prohibition on classroom instruction about sexual orientation or gender identity from the current K-3 to PreK-8.
- Require health education classes to teach that “biological males impregnate biological females by fertilizing the female’s egg with the male’s sperm; that the female then gestates the offspring; and that these reproductive roles are binary, stable, and unchangeable.”
- Require schools to remove books that have been challenged until the objection is resolved.
- Discontinue using a book if the school board would prohibit someone from reading from a book at a school board meeting.
- Clarify that the law applies to classroom libraries and charter schools as well.

HB 1223 may not proceed further now that HB 1069 includes the same language.

SB 1320, which incorporates the major provisions of both HB 1069 and HB 1223 into one bill, has only been assigned to two committees. It is still awaiting its second committee hearing.

[CS/CS/HB 633 \(Salzman\)](#) / [SB 1236 \(Wright\)](#) – Class Size

As originally drafted, these bills would significantly reduce the penalty for non-compliance with class size requirements. Since then, the House has amended its bill to remove the financial penalty altogether. If passed, the law would leave only the requirement that districts report to the DOE how they intend to resolve the issue before the next October survey. The House *Education and Employment Committee* reported it favorably in its third and final committee hearing. SB 1236 has been scheduled for its first committee hearing next week.

With the difficulty districts are having finding enough certified teachers and the potential for much greater mobility issues with the expansion of school vouchers, the elimination of class size financial penalties would be a welcome change so that already scarce district resources could be put towards fixing the problem rather than paying a fine that may exacerbate it.

[CS/HB 733 \(Temple\)](#) / [SB 1112 \(Burgess\)](#) – Middle School and High School Start Times

These bills would change the earliest start time for middle and high schools, including charter schools, beginning July 1, 2026. No middle school could start before 8:00 am, and no high school could start before 8:30 am. HB 733 received its third and final committee hearing this week and was reported favorably by the House *Education and Employment Committee*. The only amendment that was filed during this process was one to exempt charter schools in the workplace from the requirement.

The Senate will be taking up its version of the bill for its first committee hearing next week.

Concerns: This one-size-fits-all approach to start times does not take into account unique local issues, such as local business needs, efficiency in transportation routes, etc. Some districts currently run only one or two bus routes, but this may require adding a second or third route, which would require buying more buses and hiring more bus drivers to run less efficient routes. Fortunately, the bill has a three-year planning period built into it, which will allow each district to look at its operational needs and capacities, engage the local community, and ultimately share all of those local concerns with the Legislature for potential fixes before July 1, 2026.

[HB 7039 \(Trabulsy\)](#) / [SB 1424 \(Calatayud\)](#) – Student Outcomes

These bills largely focus on reading and reading strategies but also establish a system for identifying deficiencies in math that mirrors the current system for identifying deficiencies in reading. They both embrace the Science of Reading and would prohibit certain reading strategies currently being used in many districts. Both of these bills are long and make extensive changes and should be shared with your Chief Academic Officer, reading specialists, and math specialists, as they may require some districts to radically change their current practices. They may wish to review the House’s [most recent staff analysis](#), as well.

HB 7039 was reported favorably by the House *Education and Employment Committee*. Fortunately for those districts that may need to make extensive changes to their reading programs or replace instructional materials, the bill was previously amended to provide \$150 million in funding to assist districts with implementation.

SB 1424 has not yet been heard in committee but is scheduled for its first hearing next week.

[HB 287 \(Plascencia\)](#) / [SB 294 \(Rodriguez\)](#) – Required Instruction in the History of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

These bills would add another new topic of required instruction for traditional public schools – the “history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, including the immigration, citizenship, civil rights, identity, and culture of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to American society.” HB 287 received its second of three scheduled committee hearings and was reported favorably by the *PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee*. SB 294 still has two additional committee stops left but was not heard this week.

[CS/HB 551 \(Benjamin and Fine\)](#) / [SB 804 \(Simon\)](#) – Required African-American Instruction

These bills add a new layer of bureaucracy for the required instruction statute that applies only to traditional public schools. They would require school districts to certify and provide evidence annually to the DOE “in a manner prescribed by the department” showing that they complied with the requirements of section 1003.42(2)(h). There are no parameters included to guide or limit the DOE in what it may require of districts in this process.

In addition, HB 551 includes language that applies to all 20 of the required instruction topics included in section 1003.42. It would require each district to submit an implementation plan to the Commissioner of Education and post the plan on the district website. The implementation plan must include:

- The methods in which instruction will be delivered for each grade level,
- The professional qualifications of the instructional personnel, and
- A description of the instructional materials.

The Commissioner must then notify a district if he believes the implementation plan does not meet the requirements of statute or rule, giving districts 45 days to submit a revised plan. Finally, the bill would give the State Board of Education full enforcement authority over any failures to comply with section 1003.42(2) or any SBE rules adopted pursuant to it.

HB 551 was reported favorably by the House *PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee*. It has one committee stop remaining. SB 804 has not been heard in committee yet but is scheduled for its first hearing next week.

[CS/HB 1537 \(Rizo\)](#) / [SB 1430 \(Avila\)](#) – Education (multiple subjects)

These comprehensive bills address numerous subjects. For example, they both would allow a high school student to replace the fine or performing arts graduation requirement with a career education course. They both also make amendments to teacher preparation program requirements. The current version of the House bill also focuses on acceleration courses, expanding the discussion to include more than just the College Board and its AP classes, and high schools would be able to offer the Classic Learning Test to 11th graders instead of choosing only between the ACT or SAT exam.

With respect to school grades, both bills would add a new category for the calculation of elementary school grades – the percentage of third graders who score a level 3 or higher. According to one of the sponsors, this change would have lowered the grade for 6% of elementary schools this year, increased the grade for 3%, and left 91% of elementary schools unaffected.

Finally, the bills make several changes to the teacher certification process as part of a shift in focus from “professional development” to “professional learning.” As with some other bills discussed this session, these bills would extend the temporary teaching certificate from 3 to 5 years. They also would allow someone who has completed at least 60 college hours and is currently enrolled in a state-approved teacher preparation program to obtain a temporary teaching certificate. Going forward, district inservice activities will need to align with this new shift to professional learning.

SB 1430 was reported favorably by the *Education Pre-K – 12 Committee*, but it was not amended to include the references to the Classic Learning Test and other language changes to remove specific references to the College Board and AP courses. HB 1537 was reported favorably, with those changes discussed above, by the *Education Quality Subcommittee*. For both of these bills, this was the first committee hearing. They both have two committee stops remaining.

SB 244 (Calatayud) – K-12 Teachers

According to the bill’s sponsor, this bill is designed to help with the recruitment and retention of teachers during this growing teacher shortage problem. It also addresses some other topics, such as authorizing the Department of Education’s Inspector General to “investigate allegations or reports of suspected violations of a student’s, parent’s, or teacher’s rights.”

With respect to teachers, the bill would create a dual enrollment program that would help current high school teachers obtain a graduate degree and be eligible to teach dual enrollment courses on their high school campuses. The bill also creates a Teacher Apprenticeship Program to create another alternative pathway to certification. People with at least an associates degree could join an apprenticeship program in which they would commit to spending two years in the classroom of a mentor teacher. During those two years, the apprentice would be hired and paid as a paraprofessional. There are several requirements to serve as the mentor teacher for an apprentice, and the mentor teacher could be eligible for a bonus, if appropriated by the Legislature. Because the mentor and apprentice would be employing team-teaching, the mentor teacher’s class would be allowed to exceed class-size restrictions by up to 1.5 times the allowable number.

As with other bills focused on teachers and teacher certification this year, SB 244 makes several changes to the certification pathways and requirements. However, unlike most of the others, it does not currently contain the language that would extend all temporary certificates from 3 to 5 years. However, someone participating in the new apprenticeship program would receive a 5-year temporary certificate instead of 3.

Next, the bill creates the “Heroes in the Classroom Bonus Program.” This would allow the DOE to provide a sign-on bonus to a retired veteran or first-responder who commits to becoming a full-time teacher. That bonus could be even higher if they commit to teach in a critical shortage area.

Finally, the bill takes numerous statutes within the Education Code and creates a new Chapter 1015, Florida Statutes, entitled the Teachers' Bill of Rights. This is modeled after the Parents' Bill of Rights created two years ago in Chapter 1014. It does add one provision that is not already enumerated elsewhere. The bill would provide that a teacher's actions in the classroom to maintain order and discipline has a rebuttable presumption of being necessary and appropriate if faced with litigation or professional practices sanctions.

Concerns: As mentioned in a previous update, the language about teacher authority within the classroom, which is copied from section 1003.32, often creates confusion in the difference between establishing and maintaining classroom rules of conduct and the much larger issue of infractions of the student code of conduct, including SESIR offenses. Teachers are not expected to interview all witnesses, refer to DOE guidance on SESIR reporting, and make the final decision about whether the offense had the necessary monetary value to rise to the level of vandalism, for example. Similarly, they may not have all of the background information on a student to know the appropriate consequence for more severe offenses. Hopefully, separating out these provisions in their own chapter will not create a false sense that individual teachers can now make final disciplinary decisions for all violations of the code of conduct.

[HB 141 \(Arrington\)](#) / [CS/SB 196 \(Jones\)](#) – Guidance Services on Academic and Career Planning

These bills would expand the notice to parents of incoming high school students to include information about academic and career planning options other than accelerated options like IB or AICE. The bills also include language that would require a middle-school student's personalized academic and career plan be "developed in consultation with a certified school counselor." The bill does not explain what "developed in consultation with" means.

SB 196 received its second of three committee hearings this week and was reported favorably by the *Commerce and Tourism Committee*. As discussed last week, similar language was amended into SB 240, but that bill would now require that districts provide students and parents with the contact information for a certified school counselor who can advise them on the various options. It does not require that every middle school student develop a plan "in consultation with" a certified school counselor. The House bill has only been assigned to two committees, but it has not been heard yet.

Concerns: In the absence of clarity about what "developed in consultation with" means, it is not clear that there are enough certified school counselors to meet this new requirement.

Other Bills of Note

[CS/HB 223 \(Bartleman\)](#) / [CS/SB 290 \(Jones\)](#) – Public School Student Progression for Students with Disabilities

These bills would allow the parent of a pre-K ESE student to retain the student in pre-K at age 4 in consultation with the IEP team. Those students who are retained at age 4 must then receive instruction in early literacy skills. The Senate version was reported favorably by the

Appropriations Committee on Education. The House version still has one committee stop remaining.

[CS/HB 563 \(Amesty\)](#) / [CS/SB 258 \(Burgess\)](#) – Prohibited Applications on Government Devices

HB 563, as originally drafted, prohibited any wireless communication device issued by a government agency other than law enforcement from having TikTok on it. SB 258 goes much further than just TikTok to include any application created or owned by certain foreign countries “of concern.” The Department of Management Services (DMS) would be responsible for maintaining the list of prohibited applications with quarterly updates. This week, the House amended its version to more closely resemble the Senate version.

HB 563 was reported favorably by the *Constitutional Rights, Rule of Law & Government Operations Subcommittee*. SB 258 received its second and final hearing and was reported favorably by the Senate *Fiscal Policy Committee* and will now go to the Senate floor.

[HB 699 \(Koster\)](#) / [SB 662 \(Bradley\)](#) – Student Online Personal Information Protection

These bills would create the “Student Online Personal Information Protection Act.” They would prohibit online education sites from:

- Engaging in targeted advertising if it is based on unique student information obtained from the student’s use of the service,
- Using information obtained to create a student profile for anything other than K-12 school purposes,
- Sharing or selling student information,
- Disclosing covered information to anyone, with limited exceptions.

The bills also prohibit these online education sites from collecting any covered information other than what is reasonably necessary, and they must have reasonable security procedures and practices.

HB 699 received its second of three committee hearings this week and was reported favorably by the House *PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee*. SB 662 also received its second of three hearings this week in the *Education Pre-K – 12 Committee*, and it too was reported favorably.

Concerns: Both the House and Senate have said that the burden of compliance falls on the content providers and that there will be no economic impact on districts. However, it will obviously fall on districts to spend extra time researching these companies and their programs to make sure that they comply with the law, and, to the extent that some applications’ current pricing is based on practices that would now be prohibited, the costs for using these online educational resources may increase.

[HB 795 \(Tant\)](#) / [SB 514 \(Hooper\)](#) – Private Instructional Personnel

These bills address which private personnel are permitted to enter schools to observe or provide services to students. Last year, behavior technicians working under behavior therapists were added to the statute, but only those who worked for an enrolled Medicaid provider. These bills would lift the restriction that the behavior tech work for a Medicaid provider and would apply to any and all behavior techs working under the supervision of a certified behavior analyst. HB 795 received its first hearing this week and was reported favorably by the *Education Quality Subcommittee*. SB 514 will receive its second of three hearings next week.

[HB 925 \(McClain\)](#) / [SB 1040 \(Burgess\)](#) – District School Board Direct-support Organizations

These bills would allow school districts to contract with a direct-support organization (DSO) for personal services or operations. They also raise the threshold for requiring an annual audit from \$100,000 in expenditures to \$250,000. Finally, the bills would allow the district to contract with a vendor to provide the required audit. HB 925 received its first committee hearing this week and was reported favorably by the *Education Quality Subcommittee*.

[HB 477 \(Rizo\)](#) / [CS/SB 1110 \(Ingoglia\)](#) – Term Limits for District School Board Members

These bills would reduce the term limits for school board members from twelve (12) years to eight (8). The House has already passed its version of the bill and sent it to the Senate for consideration. SB 1110 received its first committee hearing and was reported favorably by the *Ethics and Elections Committee*.

[CS/HB 1035 \(Gonzalez Pittman\)](#) – Teacher Training and Conduct

This bill requires the Commissioner of Education to review all teacher training requirements in federal and state law, as well as State Board rule or local district policy. He would then be required to “eliminate any classroom teacher training requirements not required by federal or state law.” The bill also creates a special magistrate process, similar to the one from HB 1557 last year (and also paid for by the district), for teachers to challenge district procedures or practices. In addition, the bill reinforces and perhaps even expands upon a teacher’s authority over discipline within the classroom. Finally, the bill establishes that there is a rebuttable presumption in any legal proceeding that a teacher’s (or principal’s or bus driver’s) actions, except in the cases of excessive force or cruel and unusual punishment, were necessary to restore or maintain safety or the educational atmosphere.

There is no direct corollary bill in the Senate, but SB 244 may have some overlap with its creation of a Teachers’ Bill of Rights. The House *Education and Employment Committee* reported the bill favorably, and it will now head to the House floor.

[HB 459 \(Giallombardo\)](#) / [SB 1654 \(Ingoglia\)](#) – Education (computer science instruction and Bright Futures)

These bills would require high schools to offer “computer science courses of sufficient rigor, as identified by the commissioner, such that two credits in such courses and the earning of a related industry certification or technical certificate satisfies two credits of sequential foreign language instruction.” They would also expand Bright Futures eligibility to an approved apprenticeship program.

Both bills received their first committee hearings this week. SB 1654 was reported favorably by the *Education Postsecondary Committee*, and HB 459 was reported favorably by the *Postsecondary Education & Workforce Subcommittee*.

[CS/HB 773 \(Holcomb\)](#) – Hernando County School District

This bill would repeal the Hernando County School Board’s decision to switch from elected to appointed superintendent and put the issue before the voters in 2024. If approved by the voters, Hernando would elect a superintendent in 2028. It was reported favorably in the House *Choice & Innovation Subcommittee*.

[HB 265 \(Plasencia and Lopez\)](#) / [SB 1004 \(Torres\)](#) – High School Equivalency Diplomas

These bills would prohibit districts from forcing students 16-years-old and older from taking any courses before they can take the GED examination if they pass the GED practice test.

HB 265 was reported favorably by the House *Education and Employment Committee*, which was its second and final committee hearing. SB 1004 still has two committee stops remaining.

[CS/HB 301 \(Alvarez\)](#) / [CS/SB 212 \(Collins\)](#) – Emergency Response Mapping Data.

These bills initially required the DOE to “procure a vendor to produce standard emergency response mapping data for every public school building in this state.” This data would then be shared with districts, counties, and appropriate first-response agencies. The data produced must be in electronic format and be compatible with the local software platforms used by the schools and the agencies.

HB 301 was reported favorably by the *Choice & Innovation Subcommittee* after being amended. Both versions have now been amended to create a School Mapping Data Grant Program. Districts, in consultation with their local Sheriff, could apply to receive funds to map their schools. In essence, instead of requiring the DOE to procure a vendor to do this work for every district, it would now leave it to districts to decide whether they wished to apply for a grant to do it. The mapping data produced would still have several requirements.

The Week Ahead

Hopefully, there will be more clarity with respect to the House and Senate education budget proposals, and it should start to become clearer as to which bills remain on track and which ones are not likely to have enough time to make it through the process this year.