

**OFFICE OF CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
Consent Agenda
December 16, 2021**

OFFICE OF SCHOOL FINANCIAL SERVICES

- U. Information: Annual Report of Findings and Recommendations from the Standing Commission on School District Efficiency

Information Only

Back-up material attached

Report to Mississippi State Board of Education – October 2021
 SB 2761 (2012 Session) – Standing Commission on School District Efficiencies

2021-1 Allow school districts to direct bill for eligible Medicaid services provided by the school district

Existing Condition:

In the past, school districts were allowed to direct bill Medicaid for services provided by personnel in their districts that qualified under the Medicaid program. Those services included but were not limited to speech pathology, nursing services, occupational and physical therapy, etc. Several years ago, the Medicaid plan was changed by the State which eliminated the ability for school districts to bill for these services. School districts lost this stream of revenue for services they are providing. The school districts need an avenue to be able to direct bill. When surveyed, 75% of



Yes - 75%

school districts responded that they would be interested in participating in a state program for reimbursement through Medicaid for direct billed services. Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana amended their state plans to allow for school districts to direct bill for Medicaid services.

Recommendation for change: The Mississippi Department of Education and the Office of Medicaid collaborate to build a bridge between the school districts and Medicaid to reinstate direct billing. MDE will need to lead the effort and

push for a resolution so the districts can begin receiving the Medicaid funding again. There is a national collaborative group that assists states in changing their plans to allow for districts to participate.

State Law Changes Needed: No state law needs to be changed. However, the state plan for the Office of Medicaid may need revisions.

2021 Update: Commission members and an MDE representative met with key employees at the Office of Medicaid to begin a collaboration. However, the Office of Medicaid informed those present that the state plan would need to be changed and there was no offer to change the plan or collaborate further.

2021-2 (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) Development of Employee Self Service Portal for State Health Plan

Existing Condition: This recommendation is a continuation of recommendation 2015-3. The Commission continue to carry this forward to stress the benefit school districts would receive from implementation.

Employee and dependent information required for participation in the state health plan administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield continues to be voluminous and growing each year with more requirements from the Affordable Care Act. Many districts have contracted with third party administrators or employed additional personnel to achieve compliance. Also, much of the required information is personal information regarding dependents which is information required only for the state health plan. Maintaining this information is not only inefficient, but this adds an additional layer of exposure for districts to

have to protect this information.

Recommendation for Change: The Commission reiterates the recommendation that the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) be encouraged to research and expand the use of an Employee Self Service System.

Benefit:

- Eliminate paper and labor intensive processes
- Improve accuracy of entered information
- Increase convenience for teachers and staff completing requirements and making changes
- Improved storage and retrieval of records
- Potential reduction in personnel
- Reduction in risk exposure of non-employee information

State Law Changes Needed: None

2021 Update: In 2018 the Commission met with Richard Self and Cindy Bradshaw with the Department of Finance and Administration to discuss this recommendation. DFA has been working to develop this type of system as a pilot with the University Medical Center before implementing with all agencies and school districts throughout the State. No information has been received on a possible date to expand the program.

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2021-3 (2017, 2018) Offering computers to outgoing seniors at fair market value

Existing Condition: Districts with one-to-one technology initiatives are allowed by law to sell the device to outgoing seniors for \$1 if the student is going to attend college and \$75 if they are not planning on attending college. All districts in the state have been required to provide devices to all students, so the law affects many more districts than in the past.

75% of the districts surveyed stated that they would be more likely to sell the devices to outgoing seniors if they were able to charge a fair market value across the board. There are currently no specifications on how districts should verify whether students are going to attend college to qualify for the \$1 sales price.

Recommendation for Change: The Commission recommends that the Mississippi Legislature allow school districts to offer devices to all outgoing seniors for a range of \$1 to fair market value.



Figure 8.10

Benefit:

- More devices will be offered to outgoing seniors
- Generates additional revenue for school districts to replace aging devices
- Eliminates the process of verifying college enrollment to offer the devices

State Law Changes Needed: Amend 37-7-459 to allow for the sale of computers, peripheral equipment and adaptive devices to all outgoing seniors for fair market value.

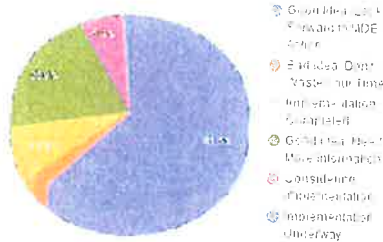
Each local district must verify actual teaching experience for all new potential candidates by requesting paper forms from all of the previous districts in which the teacher served every time they move to a new district. This process can be lengthy and time consuming for both the local district and teacher. Delays by districts in submitting this information often result in multiple contract corrections and back pay calculations for teachers as the verifications are received. If verification is not received, the teacher's contract pay may not reflect the credit they deserve.

Recommendation for change: The Commission recommends that the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) develop a database for local school districts to report annually the years of experience completed by all licensed employees.

State Law Changes Needed: None

2021 Update: The Commission met with Mr. John Kraman and Dr. Cory Murphy with MDE in August 2018 to discuss this recommendation. Both were receptive to the idea and are working to develop a report from MSIS to be utilized to verify teacher experience, but no update has been given to the Commission on progress. It is the recommendation of the Commission that this feature be incorporated into the new MSIS system currently being developed.

2021-4 (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) Development of Database of Teacher Years of Experience



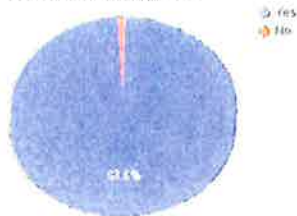
Existing Condition: This recommendation is a continuation of recommendation 2015-4. The Commission carried this forward to stress the benefit the districts would receive from implementation. The chart above indicates that approximately 83% of responding districts think favorably of the MDE developing a database to track teacher experience.

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2021-5 (2016, 2017, 2018) Automatic Licensure Expiration Notifications from MDE

incorporate this into the changes being made to ELMS. However, no updated has been received.

Teachers receive notification of pending licensure expiration directly from the MDE Office of Licensure, beneficial?



Existing Condition: As it stands now, many districts have developed internal processes to assist teacher staff on monitoring and maintaining licensure. As a by-product of the commission's research on item 2021-4, it was determined that this item should be highlighted. The Commission believes it warrants some consideration by MDE for the benefit the districts would receive from implementation. As indicated in the chart above, responding school districts were asked whether they thought it would be beneficial if teachers received licensure expiration notification directly from MDE. 98.9% responded yes.

Recommendation for change: The Commission recommends that MDE develop a standard notification of pending expiration of licensure.

2021 Update: The Commission met with Dr. Cory Murphy with MDE in August 2018 to discuss this recommendation. He was receptive to the recommendation and will

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OUTSTANDING PRIOR YEAR ISSUES

2015-3. Development of Employee Self-Service Portal for State Health Plan

2016 Update/Summary: Employee information required for participation in the state health plan administered by Blue Cross and Blue Shield can be voluminous and has traditionally been a paper process at the district level. This includes but is not limited to forms requests, employee enrollments, benefit selection, dependent changes, and address changes. In many districts, this information is manually provided by the employee to one or more departments and is often a duplication of efforts. Employee Self Service (ESS) is a combination of technology and organizational change that enables employees to interact directly with their personal data to inquire, review, and update allowed information. If implemented appropriately, ESS can provide a "paperless" experience, streamline processes, and reduce significantly the local district responsibility for "pushing paper" by allowing transactions via computer that were formerly completed on paper forms and then processed by district staff.

The use of ESS by State of Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) is limited to only beneficiary management for life insurance. The Commission recommends that the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) be encouraged to research and expand the use of ESS to minimize the paperwork burden on local districts and shift responsibility to employees. This topic will remain a focus of the Commission as additional requirements for the Affordable Care Act continue to increase for the districts and their employees.

2015-4 Development of Database of Teacher Years of Experience

2016 Update/Summary: Each local district must verify actual teaching experience for all new potential candidates by requesting paper forms from all of the previous districts in which the teacher served every time they move to a new district. Utilizing the definition of teaching experience in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-5 (m), each local district collects submitted information and makes a determination of the contracting annual salary amount for each teacher. This process can be lengthy and time consuming for both the local district and teacher. Delays by districts in submitting this information often result in multiple contract corrections and back pay calculations for teachers as the verifications are received. If verification is not received, the teacher's contract pay may not reflect the credit they deserve. The Commission recommends that the MDE develop a database for local districts to report annually the years of experience completed by teaching staff or all licensed employees. The Commission also recommends that software interfaces be developed to allow data to be imported directly from school district software packages to maximize and leverage technology. This topic will remain a focus of the Commission in an effort to ease the burden on teachers to contact past districts for verification of information.

2013-1. Implement Plan for Efficiency Audits of School Districts

2016 Update/Summary: The Commission recommends a coordinated effort between the State and school districts to share in the cost of performance audits by a reputable nationally recognized firm to evaluate current issues and recommend improvements from which all school districts could benefit. This topic will remain a focus of the Commission.

2013-2. Study the Bridging of Software Systems between Local District and State Data

2016 Update/Summary: School districts continue to spend unnecessary effort to manually input information required by the State. It has been recommended that the MDE develop bridging software. This topic will remain a focus of the Commission in an effort to increase the accuracy of data and reduce the unnecessary efforts of districts.

2013-3. Re-Establish the Office of Purchasing at the MS Department of Education for a Resource for School Districts

2016 Update/Summary: Most school districts do not have a trained, dedicated purchasing agent on staff. It has been recommended that the MDE re-establish the Office of Purchasing to provide experience in the area of RFP's and promote competition among vendors to assist school districts with procuring the best goods and services for the best value. This topic will remain a focus of the Commission in an effort to assist School Districts with increasingly challenging federal and state purchasing requirements.