LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

March 6, 2024

The bill numbers are hyperlinked for quick access. If you have questions, please contact Holly Spivey at hspivey@mdek12.org.

HOUSE EDUCATION

HB73 – To clarify the name of the Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement and Dropout Prevention within the State Department of Education.

- Transfer the School Attendance Officers from the MDE to the local school district.
- All funds appropriated to the MDE for SAOs will be transferred to the local school district on the same schedule as MAEP disbursements.
- If the local school district currently shares an SAO, all shared school districts will have to enter into an agreement for the purpose of sharing an SAO. For the 2024-2025 school year, the sharing will be the same as the 2023-2024 school year.
- SAOs will retain PERS benefits.
- MDE has requested a 25% salary increase.

HB1194 – To authorize the State Department of Education to report aggregate data concerning public school expulsions which does not disclose students personally identifiable information.

- Amends code section 37-15-6 to authorize MDE to report aggregate data that does not disclose any personally identifiable information.
- This change will allow MDE to respond to more data requests about expulsions, while still protecting individual student information.
- The existing law prohibits MDE from reporting on the number of expulsions at the state, district, or school level. MDE is required to report this information in our report card by Federal law, but we cannot fill any other data requests for the information.
- HB1194 passed the House (Y – 103/N – 7)

HB1604 – To provide that the single list of nationally recognized industry certifications shall only be used for reimbursement under section 37-153-15 and not in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System.

- The proposed revision to the language would ensure that only those national certifications found on the SWIB list would receive this reimbursement for the costs of these assessments.
MDE would retain the authority to consider non-sector related certifications (certifications not on the SWIB list) in accountability and the CTE diploma endorsement.

MDE is asking for language to be added to this bill that allows for the purchase of equipment that will support the needs of these programs.

A committee substitute was added.

**HB1668** – To provide for an appeals process for certain employees of the four public special purpose schools regarding disciplinary decisions of the State Board of Education concerning their employment.

- Amends code section 37-3-2 to appropriate funding for the Mississippi Teacher Residency.

**HB1669** – To revise the qualification for an assistant teacher to include a high school diploma/GED and a Child Development Associate credential, a Montessori certification, or an equivalent certification.

- Amends section 37-21-3 to revise the qualifications for an assistant teacher to include a high school diploma/GED and a child development associate credential, a Montessori certification, or an equivalent certification.
- This language addition will help with the shortage of qualified assistant teachers serving in this capacity.
- Some of the ELC’s are struggling to find assistant teachers with an AA degree. There are people that would qualify to be an assistant if the language in the was changed.
- The proposed language in the technical amendment is the current requirements in the other funded pre-K programs in the state. The other prek programs do not have as much trouble finding qualified assistant teachers.
- **HB1669 passed the House (Y – 118/N – 0)**

**HB1670** – To clarify the classification of exceptional children in preschool for reporting and purposes of funding teacher units by removing the reference to those children’s ages under MAEP.

- Amends code section 37-151-81 to make a change to the provisions that establish the preschool reporting requirement for special education students to ensure the reporting of all ages of preschool children.
- Special education students enrolled in preschool range from the ages of 3-5. The existing law that specifies only 3- and 4-year-olds means that preschool enrollment reporting is restricted to only students of that age.
- It is more likely to have exceptional/special education students in preschool who are 5 years old due to delayed starts in their educations, so that’s another reason to use the term “preschool” rather than “3- and 4-year-olds”.
- **HB1670 passed the House (Y-120/N-0)**

**HB1692** – To exempt the statewide coordinator for Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) employed by the State Department of Education from the State Personnel Board qualification.

- Language requested in prescribes specific classification title for JROTC statewide coordinator.
- Strikes through old language from HB454 (2014 legislative session) when certain positions within the MDE were not subject to the MSPB.
Addition of this specific title will provide MDE with the authority to provide a salary commensurate with the JROTC employee’s duties and responsibilities at a level that exceeds what the individual would make in a local school district (without the statewide oversight responsibilities enumerated in statute).

**HB1696 – An act to provide for the administrative transition of school districts that have been placed into the Mississippi Achievement School District into Districts of Transformation.**

- Repeals Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-17 - standalone Mississippi Achievement School District (MASD)
- Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6: Consolidates/Combines MASD concepts into Districts of Transformation (DOT)
  - Utilizes the MASD language for eligibility based on school district’s achievement/performance
  - Three paths for Districts of Transformation
    - 1) Extreme emergency situation which includes full investigative audit report brough before the Commission on School Accreditation, recommendation to the State Board of Education, and recommendation to the Governor requesting declaration of a state of emergency (already in law)
    - 2) Folds in the MASD option for a District of Transformation based on student achievement/performance, which only requires SBE action because it is based on data. Eliminates the State of Emergency step currently in law.
    - 3) Separates option for DOT eligibility based solely on financial circumstances (serious lack of financial resources in a district), with only SBE action required.
  - Provides transition year for the two current MASD districts to transition and separate into two DOTs
  - Provides an extra year of interim superintendent in place as a consultant when a district returns to local control to aid in transition of the new board working alongside the new superintendent
  - Removes recall language (no longer elected superintendents), and removes recall language of board (SBE abolishes board)
  - Removes the MS Recovery School District (not utilized/implemented)
- Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-13
  - Removes option of elected board members following return to local control
  - Also includes parallel language where there is an extra year of interim superintendent in place as a consultant when a district returns to local control to aid in transition of the new board working alongside the new superintendent.

**BILLS TO WATCH:**

**HB297** – An act to bring forward code sections for the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services

**HB346** – An act to establish the Seizure Safe Schools Act.

**HB595** – An act to authorize school principals to permit the Boy Scouts of America and the Girl Scouts of the United States of America to speak with students about civic involvement and their participation.
HB695 – Prohibit the MHSAA from requiring member schools from charging more than $2.00 for admission into athletic events.

HB765 – Extend the repealer on the Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Act.

HB867 – Remove the requirement for current districts of attendance to approve release of student transfers.

HB1037 – To revise the process for state agencies to avoid or limit the need for any additional deficit or supplemental appropriations (PEER Bill)

HB1106 – To require National Board Certified Occupational Therapists who are employed by a school district or the State Department of Education to be paid an annual salary supplement.

HB1192 – An act to bring forward code sections relating to Districts of Innovation and MS Virtual Public School Program for the purpose of possible amendments.

HB1204 – Revise the eligibility of the Mississippi Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship for Students with Dyslexia to begin with kindergarten.

HB1229 – An act to bring forward sections which are the Equal Opportunity for Students with Special Needs Act for purposes of amendment.

HB1258 – To authorize a local school board of a certain school district to extend the long-term lease of a holder of 16th section land.

HB1299 – An appropriation to the Piney Woods School to assist with campus improvements.

HB1341 – To clarify the school enrollment choices of children whose parents are active members of the United States Armed Forces or civilian military personnel.

HB1379 – An act to create “The Students Safe At School Act.”

HB1396 – To require school districts that have an identified student percentage of 25% or more of enrolled students receiving free lunch to apply to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for participation in the Community Eligibility Programs.

HB1398 – An act to establish the Mississippi Community Schools Grant Program for the purpose of allowing schools or school districts established as a District of Innovation to create Community Schools.

HB1449 – An act to create the “Mississippi Student Freedom Act” for the purpose of establishing Magnolia Scholarship Accounts (MSA) for parents of eligible students on a phased-in basis.

HB1450 – An act entering the state of Mississippi into the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact for the purpose of facilitating the mobility of teachers across member states to the compact.

HB1453 – Create the “Investing in the Needs of Students to Prioritize, Impact, and Reform Education (INSPIRE) Act of 2024.”

HB1548 – Require the local school district to implement a cardiac emergency response plan.

HB1662 – Bring forward code sections related to workforce development.
HB1683 – Revise to expand opportunity for establishment of charter schools.

SENATE EDUCATION

SB2245 – To authorize the Department of Education to report aggregate data that does not disclose any personally identifiable information of students.

- Amends code section 37-15-6 to authorize MDE to report aggregate data that does not disclose any personally identifiable information.
- This change will allow MDE to respond to more data requests about expulsions, while still protecting individual student information.
- The existing law prohibits MDE from reporting on the number of expulsions at the state, district, or school level. MDE is required to report this information in our report card by Federal law, but we cannot fill any other data requests for the information.

SB2246 – To make a technical change to the provisions that establish the preschool reporting requirement for special education students to ensure the reporting of all ages of preschool children.

- Amends code section 37-151-81 to make a change to the provisions that establish the preschool reporting requirement for special education students to ensure the reporting of all ages of preschool children.
- Special education students enrolled in preschool range from the ages of 3-5. The existing law that specifies only 3- and 4-year-olds means that preschool enrollment reporting is restricted to only students of that age.
- It is more likely to have exceptional/special education students in preschool who are 5 years old due to delayed starts in their educations, so that’s another reason to use the term “preschool” rather than “3- and 4-year-olds”.

SB2348 – To revise the State Workforce Investment Board’s list of nationally recognized industry certifications to ensure reimbursement funds only apply to certain priority sectors.

- The proposed revision to the language would ensure that only those national certifications found on the SWIB list would receive this reimbursement for the costs of these assessments.
- MDE would retain the authority to consider non-sector related certifications (certifications not on the SWIB list) in accountability and the CTE diploma endorsement.
- MDE is asking for language to be added to this bill that allows for the purchase of equipment that will support the needs of these programs.

SB2407 – To revise the educational and certification requirements of assistant teachers.

- Amends section 37-21-3 to revise the qualifications for an assistant teacher to include a high school diploma/GED and a child development associate credential, a Montessori certification, or an equivalent certification.
- This language addition will help with the shortage of qualified assistant teachers serving in this capacity.
- Some of the ELC’s are struggling to find assistant teachers with an AA degree. There are people that would qualify to be an assistant if the language in the was changed.
The proposed language in the technical amendment is the current requirements in the other funded pre-K programs in the state.

**SB2693** – To provide the procedure by which the State Board of Education may place a failing school or school district into a District of Transformation.

- Districts that are placed into a District of Transformation are eligible to return to local control when the district has attained a “C” rating or higher for three consecutive years.
- Provides for a timeline for Yazoo and Humphreys to transition into the District of Transformation.
- (See notes for HB1696)

**BILLS TO WATCH:**

**SB2062** – An act to enact the Artificial Intelligence in Education Task Force Act for the purpose of evaluating potential applications of artificial intelligence in K-12 and higher education and to develop policy recommendations.

**SB2169** – To provide that no school district shall reduce the local supplement or pay an individual assistant teacher less than the state minimum salary in a year in which the state minimum salary is increased.

**SB2232** – To provide for the election of school board members in the Newton Municipal School District beginning with the November 2024 election.

**SB2232** – To revise the MAEP funding formula to provide that for each fiscal year between the recalculation of the base student cost, the base student cost shall be increased by an amount equal to 25% of the base student cost.

**SB2339** – To provide that the State Department of Education shall develop a curriculum related to the study of sign language which shall count as an academic credit for foreign languages for the purposes of high school graduation requirements.

**SB2343** – An act to establish the Mississippi Modified School Calendar Grant Program to be administered by the Department of Education for the purpose of incentivizing public school districts to maintain or consider adopting a modified school calendar.

**SB2349** – An act to require school boards and charter schools to support, adopt and implement a cardiac response plan that addresses the appropriate use of school personnel to respond to incidents.

**SB2470** – To move the back-to-school sales tax holiday from the last Friday in July to the second Friday in July.

**SB2556** – To require the Department of Education to provide certain data metrics relating to achievement and non-achievement effects of the Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013.

**SB2572** – To allow proxy participation in meetings of the State Workforce Investment Board in order to meet a quorum.

**SB2681** – To expand the Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship for Students with Dyslexia Program by making Certified Academic Language Therapists (CALT) eligible to be employed by school districts to provide dyslexia services.

SB2684 – To require the Department of Education to aid school districts in creating technology and disaster recovery plans.

SB2685 – Authorize retired teachers to receive PERS benefits and work full-time in certain critical shortage areas.


SB2689 – An act to require the discontinuation of end-of-course subject area testing in public high schools for 11th and 12th grades.

SB2690 – Set certain school accreditation rating requirements for renewal of charter schools.

SB2691 – To provide that a child may be lawfully transferred from the school district of his residence to a school in another school district upon a petition of a parent or guardian if the district to which the child is attempting to transfer consents.

SB2695 – To provide that the school board of any school district maintaining a secondary school shall establish and maintain driver education and training programs for pupils enrolled in the secondary schools in that district.

SB2715 – To relocate the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science to the campus of Mississippi State University by the 2026-2027 school year.

SB2889 – Expand preschool and prekindergarten tax credit contributions to programs serving three-year-old children.