

2013 Legislation Passed by the Georgia General Assembly

The following is a brief summary of key pieces of education related legislation passed by the Georgia General Assembly during the 2013 legislative session. Governor Nathan Deal will review these bills and either sign them into law or veto them. All bills will go into law unless they are actually vetoed by the governor. Meaning, **a bill that Governor Deal does not sign will go into law unless he officially vetoes the bill.** The governor has 40 days (until May 7th) to sign or veto legislation. The entire text of the listed bills may be found through the legislative search Web site available at <http://www.legis.state.ga.us/>.

Budget

HB 106 (FY 2014 Budget):

The Fiscal Year 2014 Budget appropriates \$19.8 billion in state funds. The budget fully funds the Quality Basic Education for the first time in several fiscal years and restores the sparsity grants for education. However, it fails to address the continued \$1 billion deficit in education funding that has led to budgetary cuts in many school systems. It also continues to increase the employee share of healthcare costs while failing to authorize a cost-of-living adjustment for the fifth consecutive year. [Click this link for a copy of the full budget.](#)

House Bills

HB70: Special Education Vouchers

This bill reintroduces the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship (GSNS) by providing an expedited Individualized Education Program (IEP) process for medically fragile students in order to participate in the program. Under the provisions of the bill, the State Board of Education (SBOE), at its sole discretion, can require the local boards of education to expedite the development of an IEP and waive the attendance requirement for students if the parent requests such action. Currently, all students receiving the special needs voucher must attend public school for at least one year. The SBOE is also required to provide an annual report on the number of waivers that have been requested. Parents would be permitted to apply for the scholarship program three times annually (September 15, December 15 and February 15). Scholarship voucher payments would be made directly to parents on a quarterly basis.

HB 115: School Board Lawsuits

This measure mandates that no tax funds from school districts can be used by school board members to challenge removal by the governor. The bill revises provisions of the law related to the suspension and removal of school board members in cases where the system is placed on probation by an accrediting agency. Students in systems that lose accreditation between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2015 would still be eligible for HOPE scholarships if their school system had been accredited within the previous two years.

HB 241: Atlanta Public Schools Board Redistricting

This bill allows for the continuation of the Atlanta Board of Education as currently structured with three at-large members and six education districts serving four-year terms. The six education districts were configured to be in alignment with the city council districts. Members of each of the six education districts must reside within this zone and shall be elected by residents of their respective areas. Those at-large members shall be elected at-large by all voters of the school district. The at-large members will continue to have residency requirements. The district's seven members must reside within districts one or two. The district's eight members must reside within districts three or four. Finally, the district's nine members must reside within five or six. This bill must be submitted to the Federal Justice Department for preclearance under the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

HB 244: New Statewide Teacher Evaluation

This bill revises provisions related to annual performance evaluations of teachers and administrators. The bill also permanently changes the teacher contract date from April 15th to May 15th and acceptance of such contract from May 1st to June 1st. All public schools (including charter schools) must implement an evaluation system as defined by the SBOE for teachers, assistant principals, and principals by the 2014-2015 school year. For the purposes of the evaluation system, the SBOE will define and designate the teacher of record, assistant principals and principals. This evaluation system will be developed with the input of stakeholders such as teachers and principals. The evaluation system requires the use of multiple measures, prioritizing growth in student achievement. This system will be evaluated using multiple, rigorous, and transparent measures aligned with impacts on student achievement results.

HB 283: Title 20 Clean-up and Private School Voucher Extension

This bill has been described as the “cleanup” of Title 20, which governs education laws in Georgia. It also establishes certain transparency rules for the existing Student Scholarship Organization statute (SSO), which fund private education through tax credits and extends eligibility for tax credits to more students. IE2 systems are also provided extended flexibility related to meeting their contracted goals.

The bill also increases the SSO cap from \$50 million to \$58 million, but removes the automatic escalator to end future increases without legislative action. Funding would be provided on a first come, first served basis. The bill strengthens transparency for the operation of the SSO program. The bill is a revision of the Student Scholarship Organization (SSO) legislation passed several years ago. The bill calls for increased accountability, by requiring the family gross adjusted income of recipients.

HB 284: Return to Play (Student Athletes and Concussions)

The bill known as the “Return to Play Act of 2013,” requires recreation leagues, public and private schools that host athletic activities, to provide information to parents of children ages 7-19 (excluding higher education institutions) regarding the risks of concussions and head injuries. The Georgia Department of Health is also directed to endorse one or more concussion recognition education courses that are available online. The bill requires local boards of education to adopt and implement a concussion management and return to play policies for students with concussions.

Senate Bills

SB 100: Career and Technical Education Advisory Commission

This bill creates the Career and Technical Education Advisory Commission, which is made up of appointed members from the Georgia General Assembly and three other non-elected officials, which will be appointed by the State School Superintendent.

SB 212: CPR Training

This bill requires schools (grades 9-12), to provide training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator to students, in health or physical education courses, beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. This training can be provided by the American Red Cross or American Heart Association. Schools are also permitted to use another nationally recognized instructional program if it is based on current national evidence based emergency cardiovascular care guidelines for CPR and the use of defibrillators. Teachers would not be required to receive training certification because the course would not result in certification for students. The GADOE is required to establish monitoring procedures for local boards of education to ensure adherence to the statute.