March 12, 2015

The Williamson County Board of Education met in special session Thursday, March 12, 2015, to discuss legislation being considered by the Tennessee General Assembly.

The Board took action on three resolutions. The group voted to:

- Oppose HB 138/SB 27
  

FISCAL SUMMARY
Not Available

BILL SUMMARY
This bill creates an individualized education account for eligible students, whereby funds will be provided for the student to be educated at a nonpublic school. An "eligible student" is a resident of this state who:

1. Has an individualized education program (IEP) in effect at the time the request for participation in the program is received by the department; and
2. Meets at least one of the following requirements:
   A. Was previously enrolled in a Tennessee public school during the two semesters immediately preceding the semester in which the student receives an individualized education account (IEA) under this bill;
   B. Is attending a Tennessee public school for the first time; or
   C. Received an individualized education account (IEA) in the previous school year.

A parent of an eligible student will qualify to participate in the program if the parent signs an agreement promising:

1. To provide an education for the qualified student in at least the subjects of reading, grammar, mathematics, social studies, and science; and
2. Not to enroll the parent's participating student in a public school and to release the LEA in which the student resides and is zoned to attend from all obligations to educate the student. Participation in the program will have the same effect as a parental refusal to consent to the receipt of services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Parents must agree to use funds deposited into a student's individual education account (IEA) for education-related expenses. This bill details the allowable expenditures, such as textbooks and certain fees. Funds in an IEA may not be used to purchase computer hardware or other technological devices.

Students who enroll in the program will remain eligible until the participating student returns to a public school, graduates from high school, or reaches 22 years of age by August 15 for the next school year, whichever occurs first. Any funds remaining in a student's IEA upon graduation from high school may be used to attend or take courses from an eligible postsecondary institution, with qualifying expenses subject to the applicable conditions stipulated in this bill. Upon the participating student's graduation from a postsecondary institution or after any period of four consecutive years after high school
graduation in which the student is not enrolled in an eligible postsecondary institution, the participating student's IEA will be closed and any remaining funds will be returned to the state treasurer to be placed in the basic education program (BEP) account.

This bill prohibits a school, private tutor, eligible postsecondary institution, or other educational provider that serves a participating student from refunding, rebating, or sharing funds from an IEA with a parent or participating student in any manner. The funds in an IEA may only be used for educational purposes. Participating schools, postsecondary institutions, and education providers that enroll participating students must provide parents with a receipt for all qualifying expenses at the school or institution.

The maximum annual amount to which an eligible student is entitled under this bill will be equal to the amount representing the per-pupil state and local funds generated and required through the BEP for the LEA in which the student resides and is zoned to attend plus the special education funds from the BEP that the participating student would otherwise be entitled to under the student's particular IEP. The department may deduct an amount up to a limit of three percent from appropriations used to fund IEAs to cover the costs of overseeing the funds and administering the program.

This bill specifies that participating nonpublic schools and education providers will be given the maximum freedom to provide for the educational needs of their students without governmental control. No participating nonpublic school and education provider will be required to alter its creed, practices, admissions policies, or curriculum in order to accept participating students.

- Support HB 108/SB 119
  

Fiscal Summary

Increase State Expenditures - Not Significant Other Fiscal Impact - Local expenditures may be impacted as a result of teachers receiving different teaching evaluation scores by utilizing different percentages then currently required. Any change in local expenditures for teacher salaries or bonuses cannot be reasonably determined because any such change is dependent upon several unknown factors such as how each LEAs differentiated pay plan will be impacted by these proposed changes; how many teachers will receive a higher or lower evaluation score than they would have received under current law; and student test data in future academic years.

Bill Summary

This bill revises provisions related to teacher evaluations.

TEACHER EVALUATION CRITERIA

Generally under present law:

(1) All teachers and principals employed by local education agencies (LEAs) undergo annual evaluations pursuant to guidelines and criteria approved by the state board of education. The evaluations are a
factor in employment decisions, including promotion, retention, termination, compensation, and the attainment of tenure status;
(2) 50 percent of the annual evaluation is comprised of student achievement data with 35 percent of such criteria based on student growth data as represented by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) or some other comparable measure if no TVAAS data is available and 15 percent based on other measures of student achievement;
(3) For teachers without access to individual data representative of student growth, 40 percent of the evaluation criteria is comprised of student achievement data with 25 percent of such criteria based on student growth data as represented by the TVAAS or some other comparable measure if no TVAAS data is available; and
(4) The remaining 50 percent of the annual evaluation is based on other mandatory criteria such as prior evaluations, personal conferences, and classroom observations.

This bill revises the provisions described above in (3) and enacts new provisions to apply in future school years, as follows:

(A) For teachers described above in (3), 30 percent instead of 40 percent of the evaluation criteria will be composed of student achievement data with 15 percent of the evaluation criteria based on student growth data as represented by TVAAS or some other comparable measure if no such TVAAS data is available. However, in the 2015-2016 school year, no more than 10 percent of the evaluation criteria will be based on TVAAS data;
(B) In the 2015-2016 school year, the student growth component of the evaluation criteria, described above in (2), will be adjusted so that student growth data generated by assessments administered in the 2015-2016 school year will account for 10 percent instead of 35 percent of the overall evaluation criteria;
(C) In the 2016-2017 school year, the student growth component of the evaluation criteria will be adjusted so that student growth data generated by assessments administered in the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years will account for 20 percent of the overall evaluation criteria;
(D) In the 2017-2018 school year and thereafter, the student growth component of the evaluation criteria will account for 35 percent of the overall evaluation criteria pursuant to the present law provisions described above in (2); and
(E) For the 2015-2016 through 2017-2018 school years, the most recent year of student growth data will account for the entire percentage of growth data required in a teacher’s evaluation if such use results in a higher evaluation score.

This bill additionally specifies that the provisions of (1) above do not require an LEA to use student achievement data based on state assessments as the sole factor in employment decisions.

TEACHER EVALUATION MODELS

Present rules of the state board of education require the department of education to develop and recommend a model plan for teacher evaluation to the state board for approval. The rules additionally:

(1) Require that local boards of education use either the model plan for teacher evaluations approved by the state board or evaluation models adopted by the local board of education and approved by the state board; and
(2) Specifies that evaluation models approved by the state board may, with local approval, be used in any LEA.
This bill codifies the provisions described above in (1) and (2).

TENURE ELIGIBILITY

Under present law, teachers must undergo a mandatory probationary period prior to becoming eligible for tenure status. A teacher must also meet certain requirements in order to be eligible for tenure, including the requirement that the teacher receive evaluations demonstrating an overall performance effectiveness level of "above expectations" or "significantly above expectations" during the last two years of the probationary period as provided by the evaluation guidelines described above.

Under this bill, a teacher who has met all other requirements for tenure eligibility but has not acquired an official evaluation score during the last one or two years of the probationary period due to an approved extended leave, transfer to another school or position within the school district, or invalidated data due to a successful local level evaluation grievance may utilize the most recent two years of available evaluation scores achieved during the probationary period to meet the above requirement.

- Support HB 598/SB 562

Fiscal Summary

Not Available

Bill Summary

Abstract summarizes the bill.
Basic Education Program (BEP) - As introduced, requires the state to provide sufficient funding so that each LEA will receive no less than a 65 percent state share of funding in the BEP instructional components. - Amends TCA Title 49.

More information can be found at http://www.legislature.state.tn.us/
The next regular meeting of the Williamson County Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, March 23 beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Administrative Complex.
Board packet information can be found on the school district’s website www.wcs.edu. Select About WCS; select Board Meeting Schedule; select the meeting date; and then select Agendas. Supporting documents are linked from the agenda.