



Weekly Legislative Update

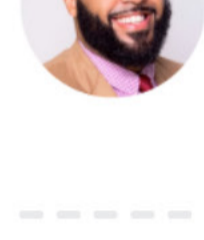
2.18.22

Education issues continued to represent a key segment of legislative deliberations in Tennessee this week, with significant bill discussions and funding formula reform developments making headlines across the state. Top of mind for most public education stakeholders this General Assembly session is the much-awaited redesign of our state's antiquated school funding formula, and it appears we finally have a date for when we can expect to see legislative language unveiled: February 24. It was [announced](#) earlier this week that the bill for the new student-based funding formula, known as TISA, or the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement, will be debuted on Thursday by Governor Bill Lee and Commissioner of Education Dr. Penny Schwinn. In addition to the introduction of bill language on the new school funding formula, next Thursday is sure to hold much significance for public education conversations in Tennessee for yet another reason: school vouchers/education savings accounts (ESAs). The Tennessee Supreme Court is set to hear [oral arguments](#) in the ongoing saga around school vouchers in the case of *Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, et. al. v. Tennessee Department of Education, et. al.* at 9 a.m. Former associate solicitor general and newly-confirmed state Supreme Court Justice Sarah Campbell, an appointee of Governor Lee, has [recused herself from the case](#) over the voucher program, which has remained blocked since 2020.

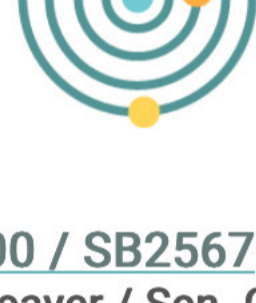
At the General Assembly this week, budget hearings continued and bills on both P-12 issues and higher education are making their way through the committee structures in advance of upcoming TISA funding conversations, which are sure to dominate legislative deliberations in the days ahead. In the Senate, a floor vote on former Education Committee Chairman Brian Kelsey's [SB1815](#), which would require public institutions of higher education to mandate applicants' submission of SAT or ACT scores, was delayed yet again to March 17. The Age-Appropriate Materials Act of 2022 ([SB2407](#)), an Administration bill carried by the Majority Leaders in each chamber that would require each LEA in Tennessee to review materials in their school library collections and make their findings public for inspection, passed out of the upper chamber's education committee on a 7-1 party line vote, with its House companion set to be heard in the K-12 Subcommittee Tuesday.

In the House, the Education Instruction Subcommittee engaged in significant discussion around Rep. Cepicky's [HB2116](#), which would revise teacher evaluation criteria by placing more emphasis on the proficiency measure and decreasing the weight of the observation component. Bipartisan concerns were expressed in the debate about the elimination of available teacher and district overrides related to student growth criteria, but the bill advanced to the full Ed Administration committee though four members voted in opposition. In the K-12 Subcommittee, House Ed Instruction Committee Vice Chair Terri Lynn Weaver's [HB1901](#), which would allow for the extension of waivers related to teacher endorsement exemption and permits, commanded the majority of the panel's time in debate. There were lengthy discussions among Representatives and the Department of Education on the importance of maintaining teacher quality, particularly in state-tested subjects such as reading, despite the looming teacher shortage. The Department committed to working with Vice Chair Weaver on the contents of the bill related to these concerns, thus rolling consideration to February 22. Another bill she's carrying, [HB1900](#), which would allow for the reimbursement of fees for successfully passed educator licensure and endorsement exams, passed to full committee with much less fanfare. In the postsecondary space, the Higher Education Subcommittee advanced [HB2670](#), led by Speaker Cameron Sexton, which would prohibit a public college or university from promoting or taking action regarding "divisive concepts" and reassign the duties of DEI officers and staff, among other actions. This legislation, which Ed Trust opposes, comes amidst a national wave of similar bills introduced across the country, with a number of aligned legislation on committee calendars for review next week.

To see all of the legislation up for consideration next week as well as the key bills Ed Trust is actively tracking, please be sure check out the "On Our Radar" section, our updated bill tracker, and the committee calendars each linked below.



Reggie Nash
External Relations Manager for Tennessee



On Our Radar

[HB1900 / SB2567](#)

Rep. Weaver / Sen. Crowe
Requires the Department of Education to establish a fund to reimburse educators in an amount equal to the cost of an assessment required for licensure if the educator receives a qualifying score on the required assessment.

[HB2670 / SB2290](#)

Rep. Sexton / Sen. Bell
Prohibits a public institution of higher education from taking certain actions with regard to divisive concepts and the ideologies or political viewpoints of students and employees; revises the duties of an institution's employees whose primary duties include diversity; requires each institution to conduct campus climate survey.

[HB2166 / SB2416](#)

Rep. Lamberth / Sen. Johnson
Revises and eliminates various reporting requirements, including mandatory reporting of corporal punishment occurrences in LEAs and public charter schools.

[HB2417 / SB2283](#)

Rep. Smith / Sen. Bell
Prohibits employees of, and courses of instruction or units of study at, public institutions of higher education from compelling or addressing certain tenets; creates a cause of action and loss of state funding for violations.

[Review Our Bill Tracker](#)



What's Happening

House Higher Education Subcommittee
Tuesday, 2/22/22, 12:00pm
House Hearing Room III [Subcommittee Homepage](#)

House Education Instruction Subcommittee
Tuesday, 2/22/22, 3:00pm
House Hearing Room II [Subcommittee Homepage](#)

House K-12 Education Subcommittee
Tuesday, 2/22/22, 4:30pm
House Hearing Room II [Subcommittee Homepage](#)

House Education Instruction Committee
Wednesday, 2/23/22, 11:00am
House Hearing Room I [Committee Homepage](#)

Senate Education Committee
Wednesday, 2/23/22, 3:00pm
Senate Hearing Room I [Committee Homepage](#)

House Education Administration Committee
Wednesday, 2/23/22, 3:30pm
House Hearing Room I [Committee Homepage](#)

[House Committee Calendars](#)

[Senate Committee Calendars](#)



Noteworthy

Ed Trust SEAD Scan

The Education Trust released a new tool that reviews policies in all 50 states in order to highlight how each state supports their students' social, educational, and academic development (SEAD), and where state policies threaten equity and diversity, including state efforts to limit the accurate teaching of history and current events.

[Learn more](#)

TN State Board of Education Educator Preparation Report Card

Last Tuesday, the TN State Board of Education released its annual [Educator Preparation Report Card](#), a tool that evaluates educator preparation providers (EPPs) in Tennessee, indicating progress on the state's key priority metrics including teacher effectiveness, employment outcomes, and recruitment of diverse candidates.

[Read here](#)

The Criminalization of Black Children Webinar

There's been a rise in school suspensions, expulsions, and disciplinary actions due to social isolation, poor mental health, and traumas induced by the pandemic, but Black children are disproportionately disciplined. Join Ed Trust and the [NAACP Legal Defense Fund](#) on Thursday, February 24, at 5:00pm for a discussion on the criminalization of Black boys and girls, and what we can do to make schools safe and nurturing.

[Register here](#)

Video: Teacher Diversity & Student Success Roundtable

The Education Trust, in partnership with Khan Academy, hosted a virtual roundtable on February 16 on teacher diversity and its importance in elevating student learning. The expert panel including Tennessee's own Dr. Diarese George, Founder and Executive Director of the Tennessee Educators of Color Alliance (TECA).

[Watch here](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Check Out Our Policy Agenda](#)



The Education Trust