



Texas PTA

87th LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP-UP

JUNE 17, 2021

During the 87th Session a total of 6,927 House and Senate bills were filed and a total of 1,073 bills were passed (not including resolutions)

Of these, 587 House bills were passed, and 486 Senate bills were passed. This was the least amount passed by the House chamber since the 72nd Regular Session in 1991 when 528 House bills were passed. More Senate bills passed this session compared to last but less than what was passed in the 85th Regular session when 511 Senate bills passed into law.

Gov. Abbott has until June 20 to sign, veto or allow bills to become law without his signature. The status of the bills below is as of June 17th and will be updated after the 20.

SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

FUNDING

SB 1 by Senator Jane Nelson/ Representative Greg Bonnen, the General Appropriations Act Pending certification by the Comptroller, as finally passed SB 1 appropriates \$116.4 billion in General Revenue and \$248.6 billion in All Funds.

Pending certification by the Comptroller, SB 1 provides education funding:

- Full funding of the state's commitment to the public education investments made in HB 3 (from the 86th Legislature), including \$3.1 billion for enrollment growth for FY22-23;
- \$60 million for supplemental special education services;
- \$464 million for increases to FSP formula funding and various student allotments; and
- \$2 billion in funds to address the costs of COVID-19 and Winter Storm Uri, including \$664 million for targeted programs to help students and schools affected by the pandemic; and
- \$5.0 million in General Revenue funds for the creation of the state broadband development office and to carry out duties such as, the development of a state broadband plan and broadband coverage maps.

HB 1525 by Representative Dan Huberty/Senator Larry Taylor, relating to the public school finance system

NOTE the sections below deal with items of particular relevance to TX PTA. For a more comprehensive analysis of HB 1525, please contact TX PTA.

As finally passed HB 1525:

SECTION 2 - PTA Donations. Requires districts to accept PTA/PTO donations for supplemental education staff positions, and to spend the donation for the purpose for which it was designated. This requirement expires Sep. 1, 2025.

SECTION 7 - Local School Health Advisory Councils. Requires SHAC meetings to have minutes of the meetings that state the subject and content of each deliberation and each vote, order, decision, or other action taken during the meeting. There must also be an audio or video recording of the meeting. Both the minutes and the audio or video recording must be posted on the school district's website. Allows a grievance process.

Requires school boards to adopt a policy establishing the process for adoption of human sexuality curriculum and lays out the required components of the policy.

Requires parents to opt-in via written consent prior to a student receiving human sexuality instruction. Prior to this, parents who didn't want their student to participate in human sexuality instruction to opt their students out. NOTE: this provision sunsets 8/1/24.

SECTION 9 - Autism Grant. Update and revision of the Autism Grant. NOTE: this section expires 9/1/23.

SECTION 10 - Dyslexia Grant. Update and revision of the Dyslexia Grant. NOTE: this section expires 9/1/23.

SECTION 12 - One-time COVID-19 Educational Supports. PTECH, Supplemental Instruction, Acceleration Supports.

SECTION 24 – Comp. Ed. Establishes homeless student comp ed. weight at the highest comp-ed weight based on determination by the advisory committee. Compensatory education funds can be used to pay instructional coaches (Guillen, Amendment 5).

SECTION 27 - Gifted & Talented. Reinstates the Gifted and Talented Allotment.

SECTION 28 - CCMR Bonus. Includes associate degree as college ready. Associate degrees that qualify for CCMR must come from THECB approved institutions. (Raymond, Amendment 8)

SECTION 42 - Special Education Commission. Established the Texas Commission on Special Education Funding. Set up very similarly to the Commission on Public School Finance from the 85th Legislative Session.

The bill as finally passed DID NOT INCLUDE:

- The requirement that districts "reserve" 40% of ESSER III funds until the 2024-25 school year and supplant with local funds.
- Outcomes-based funding tied to STAAR results.

HB 3456 by Representative James White/Senator Sarah Eckhardt, relating to inclusion of funds received by certain educational institutions or programs in foundation school program funds for purposes of certain budget reductions.

As finally passed the bill amends the education code to establish that for any budget reductions requested by the governor, cuts shall not be made to funding for the Texas School for the Deaf, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Texas Juvenile Justice Department for the operation of their schools or development of juvenile justice alternative education programs, or the Goodwill Excel Center Adult High School. Any money received by the district or appropriated to the department for purposes of operating the schools is part of the foundation school program and is not subject to those budget reductions. Additionally, for purposes of any budget reductions requested by the LBB or governor, any money received by a nonprofit entity granted a charter under this section or appropriated to the agency for purposes of operating an adult education program is part of the foundation school program and is not subject to those budget reductions.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

HB 5 by Representative Trent Ashby/Senator Robert Nichols, relating to the expansion of broadband services to certain areas.

Pending action of the governor, as finally passed HB 5 establishes the Broadband Development Office that would be tasked with preparing a state broadband plan, creating a map of areas with limited access to broadband service, and awarding financial incentives in those eligible areas to expand access to and adoption of service. The bill requires the state broadband office and the state broadband plan to include digital literacy and skilling initiatives; also authorizes the broadband development fund to be used for digital literacy and skilling, and requires the broadband coverage maps to include the connectivity status of each public school and pre-school; projects that connect public schools and institutions of higher education will be prioritized under the state broadband development program.

VIRTUAL EDUCATION

HB 3643 by Representative Ken King/Senator Larry Taylor, relating to the creation of the Texas Commission on Virtual Education.

As finally passed the bill establishes the “Texas Commission on Virtual Education” to develop and make recommendations regarding the delivery of virtual education in the public school system and state funding for virtual education under the Foundation School Program. The bill states that there will be 13 members on the commission and establishes requirements for any appointees by the governor, speaker of the house, and lieutenant governor. The three leaders shall coordinate to ensure that the membership of the commission reflects, to the extent possible, the ethnic and geographic diversity of this state. Additionally, the governor will

designate the presiding officer of the commission. The bill establishes that a member of the commission is only entitled to reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in performing their duties but not for their service on the commission. The commission will be funded by the legislature and will receive administrative support from the Texas Education Agency. The commission has the authority to create working groups that will study, discuss, and address specific policy issues related to the delivery of and funding for virtual education. The working groups will make recommendations for the commission to consider. A report is due by December 31, 2022, with the commission's final recommendations. The commission may hold public meetings as needed and may accept gifts, grants, and donations from any source to complete their work. The commission is abolished and this subchapter expires January 1, 2023.

INDIVIDUAL GRADUATION COMMITTEE PROGRAM

HB 999 by Representative Diego Bernal/Senator Jose Menendez, relating to individual graduation committee qualification requirements for certain students.

As finally passed HB 999 establishes that an individual graduation committee is not required to consider criteria relating to a student's performance on an end-of-course assessment to determine whether a high school senior in the 2020-2021 school year is qualified to graduate. This bill expires September 1, 2022.

HB 1603 by Representative Dan Huberty/Senator Kel Seliger, relating to the use of individual graduation committees and other alternative methods to satisfy certain public high school graduation requirements.

As finally passed the bill removes the expiration date of September 1, 2023 of the IGC program making this program permanent. Additionally, the bill allows the commissioner to authorize special accreditation investigations to be conducted when 10 percent or more of the students graduating in a particular school year from a particular high school campus are awarded a diploma based on the determination of an individual graduation committee.

HB 1147 by Representative Dan Huberty/Senator Kel Seliger, related to military readiness for purposes of the college, career, or military readiness outcomes bonus under the Foundation School Program.

As finally passed this bill amends the education code to add enlistment in the Texas National Guard as a qualifying activity for College, Career, or Military Readiness outcomes bonus under the Foundation School Program.

ACCELERATED INSTRUCTION

HB 4545 by Representative Harold Dutton/Senator Larry Taylor, relating to the purchase of certain-instruction-related materials, the establishment of a strong foundations grant program, providing accelerated instruction for students who fail.

As finally passed, HB 4545 lowers the high-stakes nature of the STAAR exams for students in the 5th and 8th grades, establishes a grant program to assist schools with implementing high-quality instruction, materials, and support structures, and provides extra funding to schools that successfully improve student achievement.

The bill removed the requirement that students in grades 5 and 8 pass their STAAR reading and math exams for promotion to the next grade. The bill would establish requirements for districts to provide accelerated learning to students who had failed a STAAR exam. Certain requirements for repeated testing of a student who failed to perform satisfactorily on the exams would be repealed.

In addition, this legislation requires a school district to establish an accelerated learning committee for each student who did not perform satisfactorily on the state grade 3, 5 and 8 math or reading exams. Accelerated learning committees would replace the required grade placement committees in current law for certain students in grades 5 and 8. The accelerated learning committee would be composed of the principal or designee, the student's parent or guardian, and a teacher of the relevant subject. It would develop an educational plan for the student that provided the necessary accelerated instruction not later than the start of the subsequent school year. The plan would be provided to the student's parents. Districts would be required to provide a student in grades 3 through 8 who failed to perform satisfactorily on an exam with accelerated instruction in the applicable subject during the subsequent summer or school year and either allowing the student to be assigned a classroom teacher who was certified as a master or recognized teacher for the subsequent school year in the applicable subject area or provide the student supplemental instruction as required by the bill. Each school district shall establish a process to allow for parents or guardians of a student who did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument, to make a request for the district consideration that the students be assigned to a particular classroom teacher in the applicable subject area for the subsequent school year, if more than one classroom teacher in the applicable subject area for the subsequent school year. Finally, the bill would require the education commissioner to establish and administer a Strong Foundations Grant program for campuses serving students enrolled in prekindergarten through grade 5 to implement a rigorous school approach that combines high-quality instruction, materials, and support structures. The bill specifies requirements for the components of the grant program.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

SB 2081 by Senator Jose Menendez/Representative James Talarico, relating to the average ratio of students and teachers in a prekindergarten class.

Pending action by the governor, as finally passed the bill establishes that a school district may not enroll more than 22 students in a prekindergarten class. This regulation applies to prekindergarten programs provided by a private school or any private entity a school district contracts with for their prekindergarten program. However, charter programs and open-enrollment charter schools are not subject to the class size restrictions established for prekindergarten classes.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

SB 179 by Senator Eddie Lucio/Representative Dan Huberty, relating to the use of public school counselors' work time.

Pending action by the governor, as finally passed the bill requires that a school counselor spend at least 80 percent of their total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program developed under the Comprehensive School Counseling Program. Time spent administering assessment instruments or providing other assistance, except time spent interpreting data from those assessments, is not considered time spent counseling. The bill goes on to state that if the board of trustees of a school district determines that, because of staffing needs, a school counselor must spend less than 80 percent of their time counseling then they must adopt a policy with specific guidelines. This includes reasons why the counselor needs to spend less than 80 percent of their work time on duties that are components of the counseling program, a list of the duties they are performing that are not counseling, and a set percentage of work time that they are required to spend counseling. The bill establishes guidelines that restrict a school or district from making an employment contract that is not in line with the required counseling policies established in this legislation. Finally, each school district shall annually assess the district's compliance with these policies and, on request by the TEA commissioner, provide a written copy of the assessment to the agency on or before the specified date.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

HB 785 by Representative Alma Allen/Senator Judith Zaffirini, relating to behavior improvement plans and behavioral intervention plans for certain public school students and notification and documentation requirements regarding certain behavior management techniques.

As finally passed HB 785 requires a review at least annually of behavior improvement or behavioral intervention plans for students with disabilities who are receiving special education services. The bill also requires a behavioral assessment when a disciplinary action regarding such a student resulted in a change in the student's placement under federal law. It requires a school district to provide written notice to a parent when a school used a restraint on such students.

SB 1716 by Senator Larry Taylor/Representative Greg Bonnen, relating to a supplemental special education services and instructional materials program for certain public school students receiving special education services.

Pending action by the governor, as finally passed the bill establishes that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) shall create and administer a supplemental special education services and instructional materials program for students who meet the eligibility requirements. The agency shall provide each approved student a grant of not more than \$1,500 to purchase supplemental special education services and instructional materials. In administering the program, the agency shall maintain a system of online accounts to provide access to the grant to an eligible student's parents. The commissioner shall set aside an amount not to exceed \$30 million from the total amount of funds appropriated for each state fiscal year to fund this program, and establishes eligibility criteria including that the student must be enrolled in the current school year and in a school district's or charter school's special education program, account uses and restrictions (may only be used by the qualifying student's parents to buy supplemental special education services or materials), and the criteria for an agency-approved provider (vendors must be appropriately licensed or accredited in Texas). Finally, the bill ends by discussing the duties of the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee who will develop a student's individualized education program and provide materials to qualifying students' parents (information regarding the types of supplemental special education services available, instructions on accessing the online account, etc.). The program expires 9.1.2024.

SB 89 by Senator Jose Menendez/Representative Mary Gonzalez, relating to supplemental information required for inclusion with a written statement of an individualized education program developed for certain public school students who received special education services. As finally passed the bill establishes that for each child who was enrolled in a school district's special education program during the 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 school year, the district shall prepare a written supplement to be included with a student's individualized education plan. The supplement must include whether the written report of the child's full individual and initial evaluation were completed or developed during the specific school years and by the required date. Additionally, the supplement must include whether the provision of special services to the child under an individualized education program was interrupted, reduced, delayed, suspended, or discontinued and whether the child needs compensatory educational services. The information previously mentioned does not need to be in the supplement if it is already included in the child's individualized education program. This law expires September 1, 2023.

HB 1252 by Representative Joe Moody/Senator Bob Hall, relating to the limitation period for filing a complaint and requesting a special education impartial due process hearing.

As finally passed the bill states that the commissioner of the Texas Education Agency may not adopt or enforce a rule that establishes a period for filing a due process complaint alleging a violation of state or federal special education laws shorter than two years, the maximum timeline designated by federal law under 20 U.S.C. Sections 1415(b)(6) and (f)(3).

HEALTH & SAFETY

HB 699 by Representative Jon Rosenthal/Senator Judith Zaffirini, relating to public school attendance and promotion requirements for students diagnosed with or undergoing related treatment for severe or life-threatening illnesses.

As finally passed HB 699 requires school districts to excuse an absence resulting from life threatening illness or related treatment with certification provided by a physician. A student may not be referred to truancy court or considered to have failed to meet attendance requirements. These excused absences may not be considered in determining whether the student has satisfied the attendance requirements to move on to the next grade.

SB 239 by Senator Beverly Powell/Representative Nicole Collier, relating to the provision of educational materials regarding disease prevention during a disaster.

As finally passed the bill establishes that the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) shall develop and implement a disease prevention information system for the dissemination of immunization information during a declared state or local state of disaster, and shall ensure that educational materials regarding immunizations are available to local health authorities in this state for distribution to places like public and private schools, child-care facilities, community centers, and more. The educational materials must include the most recent immunization schedules by age as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and the locations of local health care providers that offer immunizations.

SB 2158 by Senator Donna Campbell/Representative James Frank, relating to authorizing the Texas Education Agency to provide identification kits for certain children.

As finally passed the bill establishes that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) shall provide public schools, including open-enrollment charter schools, inkless, in-home fingerprint and DNA identification kits to be distributed through the schools on request to the parent or legal guardian of a child in kindergarten, elementary, or middle school. A parent or legal guardian who receives a fingerprint and DNA ID kit may submit the kit to federal, state, tribal, or local law enforcement to help locate and return a missing or trafficked child.

SCHOOL SAFETY

SB 168 by Senator Cesar Blanco/Representative Claudia Ordaz Perez, relating to active shooter drills conducted by public schools.

Evidence suggests that active shooter drills may be harmful to the mental health of students and school staff. According to a recent study, active shooter drills are associated with increases in depression (39 percent), stress and anxiety (42 percent), and physiological health problems (23 percent) for children as young as five years old up to high schoolers, their parents, and teachers. As finally passed S.B. 168 requires a school district to adopt trauma-informed methods and policies regarding active shooter drills prior to conducting a drill.

SB 741 by Senator Brian Birdwell/Representative Scott Sanford, relating to the carrying or storage of a handgun by a school marshal.

As finally passed authorizes a school marshal appointed by the board of trustees of a school district, or the governing body of an open-enrollment charter school to carry a concealed handgun on the physical premises of a school or possess the handgun on the physical premises of a school in a locked and secured safe or other secured location. A handgun carried or possessed by a school marshal may only be loaded with frangible duty ammunition that has been approved for that purpose by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement. A school marshal may use a handgun the school marshal is authorized to carry or possess under this section only under circumstances that would justify the use of deadly force.

VAPING REGULATION AND FLAVOR BAN

SB 248 by Senator Nathan Johnson/Representative Shawn Thierry, relating to the regulation of cigarettes, tobacco products, and e-cigarettes and the administration of taxes imposed on the sale or use of certain of those products.

Pending action by the governor, as finally passed SB 248 requires retailers of e-cigarettes to obtain a permit to sell the products, adds e-cigarettes to the existing penalty structure for tobacco retailers, and increases penalties for selling e-cigarettes to minors.

BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING

SB 2050 by Senator Jose Menendez/Representative Steve Allison, relating to the prevention of and the reporting of incidents of bullying committed by public school students.

Pending final action from the governor, as finally passed the bill establishes that the board of trustees of each school district shall adopt a policy on bullying that prevents and mediates bullying incidents between students that interferes with one of their educational opportunities or substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a classroom or other school related activities. In addition, each district's bullying policies must be in compliance with the minimum standards set by the Texas Education Agency. These minimum standards include an emphasis on bullying prevention by focusing on building healthy relationships between students and staff, require each district campus to establish a committee to address bullying, require students at each grade level to meet periodically for instruction on building relationships and preventing bullying (including cyberbullying) and more. Finally, the TEA commissioner shall require each school

district and open-enrollment charter school to annually report through the Public Education Information Management System the number of reported incidents of bullying that have occurred at each campus. The commissioner's rules shall require a district or school to specify the number of incidents of bullying that included cyberbullying.

MENTAL HEALTH

HB 1080 by Rep. Jared Patterson/Senator Jane Nelson, relating to the eligibility for participation in UIL activities of certain public school students who receive outpatient mental health services.

As finally passed the bill requires the UIL to ensure that its rules do not exclude from eligibility for participation in a UIL activity a student who meets the following criteria: received outpatient mental health services from a mental health facility and was enrolled in a school district or open-enrollment charter school or otherwise received public education services from a district or school.

CHILD AND YOUTH TRAFFICKING

HB 390 by Representative Senfronia Thompson/Senator Joan Huffman, relating to requirements for human trafficking awareness and prevention in commercial lodging establishments.

As finally passed the bill establishes training requirements for owners of a commercial lodging business to raise awareness of human trafficking. Requires posting of signage in lodging establishments with a phone number to call to report a suspected act of human trafficking. Adds civil penalty for an operator who fails to comply with training, signage, or reporting.

HB 465 by Representative Matt Shaheen/Senator Joan Huffman, relating to changing the eligibility for release on parole of certain inmates serving sentences for trafficking offenses involving one or more child victims.

As finally passed persons who are convicted of continuing trafficking children or benefiting from the trafficking of children are not eligible for release on parole until their actual calendar time served, without consideration of good conduct time, equals one-half of the sentence or 30 calendar years, whichever is less.

HB 2633 by Representative Ann Johnson/Senator Joan Huffman, relating to resources provided to human trafficking victims and the establishment of the trafficked persons grant program.

As finally passed the bill establishes a "Trafficked Persons Grant Program" for the purpose of supporting publicly operated treatment centers, raising awareness, preventing the recruitment of human trafficking victims, and more. The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) will

administer the account. HHSC may use the funds in this grant program to establish, maintain, and operate facilities to provide care and to ensure the general well-being of youth who are victims of human trafficking, and/or to fund providers that do so. The bill creates a “Public Awareness Campaign for Trafficked Persons Program” account where the Secretary of State will use up to \$100,000 of funds to inform residents on human trafficking in the state. In addition, a juvenile board may also establish a trafficked persons program for the treatment and rehabilitation of children who are suspected to be victims of human trafficking or have been referred to the program by the Child Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit. The bill creates a Voluntary Contribution for Trafficked Persons Program Account where residents can donate to the account when they register or renew the registration of their motor vehicle. The bill authorizes “Stop Human Trafficking” license plates and voluntary contributions to the Trafficked Persons Program account.

SB 1831 by Senator Larry Taylor/Representative Senfronia Thompson, relating to the increase of penalties for those who engage in the crime of solicitation or trafficking on school premises. Pending final action by the governor, as finally passed the bill starts by establishing that schools must post signs informing people about the increased penalties for human trafficking and requiring that information relating to human trafficking prevention be included in the curriculum of any driver education course or driving safety course. The bill then moves on to enhance the punishment for an offense of human trafficking from a second-degree felony to a first-degree felony. This offense is punishable by a term of imprisonment no less than 25 years if proven that the offense was committed on the premises of or within 1,000 feet of a public or secondary school, or at or within 1,000 feet of a UIL sanctioned function. Additionally, the bill increases the punishment for online solicitation of a minor to the punishment for the next higher category of offense if it is shown at trial that the actor committed the offense during regular public or private primary or secondary school hours and that the actor knew or reasonably should have known that the minor was enrolled in school during the offense. Finally, the bill increases the punishment for prostitution if the offense was committed on the premises of or within 1,000 feet of a public or secondary school, or at or within 1,000 feet of a UIL sanctioned function.

HB 725 by Representative Patterson/Senator Judith Zaffirini, relating to the eligibility of certain children who are or were in foster care for free prekindergarten programs in public schools.

As finally passed the bill establishes that a child is eligible for free prekindergarten programs if the child is at least three years of age and is or has ever been in foster care in another state or territory but now resides in Texas.

JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

HB 30 by Representative James Talarico/Senator John Whitmire, relating to educational requirements for certain incarcerated students

As finally passed the bill seeks to address the fact that minors in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) who are certified as adults and those who are eligible for special education services, unlike individuals in juvenile facilities, do not have access to a high school diploma program and instead must pursue a high school equivalency.

TDCJ's Windham School District must develop and provide an educational program that includes the curriculum requirements for a high school diploma or a course of instruction that prepares the person for a high school equivalency test to each imprisoned person who is not a high school graduate and is younger than 18 years old or 22 years old if student qualifies for special education. In developing a person's education program, the school shall consider the person's duration of confinement, education level, education goals and preferences and recommendations of the person's admission review and dismissal (ARD) committee.

HB 2669 by Representative Ryan Guillen/Senator Judith Zaffirini, relating to the confidentiality of a child's criminal records related to certain misdemeanor offenses.

As finally passed the bill establishes that all records, files, and information stored that relates to a criminal case for a fine-only misdemeanor (other than a traffic offense) that is committed by a child and is appealed are confidential and may not be disclosed to the public).

HB 3165 by Representative Morgan Meyer/Senator John Whitmire, relating to an affirmative defense to an allegation of truant conduct.

As finally passed HB 3165 changes current law that allows a child who is truant due to an abusive situation in their home to be arrested and face civil penalties. This bill establishes an affirmative defense to an allegation of truant conduct that the student's absence was due to their voluntary absence from their home because of abuse.

HB 1401 by Representative Ann Johnson/Senator Joan Huffman, relating to methods to send applications and orders for sealing juvenile records.

As finally passed HB 1401 allows applications for sealing juvenile records to be submitted by electronic means.

HB 4544 by Representative Valoree Swanson/Senator John Whitmire, relating to the issuance of personal identification certificates to youths committed to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department.

As finally passed HB 4544 requires that children waiting to be released under supervision or final discharge from the Juvenile Justice Department be provided with documents that are necessary after release or discharge including identification papers that include a person's identification certificates, if available. The Juvenile Justice Department, The Department of Public Safety and the vital statistics unit of the Department of State Health Services shall adopt a memorandum of understanding that establishes their respective responsibilities with issuance of identification certificate to a child. The department may also charge the child's parents or guardian for the cost. In addition, before releasing a child under supervision, the department must determine whether the child has a certified birth certificate and a copy of a child's social security card. If the child does not have these documents, the department shall submit a request for the issuance for documents. The department shall submit a request before the discharge of the child and provide the child with such documents when the department releases the child. This does not apply to a child who is not legally present in the U.S. or not a resident of the state before the child was placed in custody of the department.

MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

HB 773 by Representative Gary VanDeaver/Senator Beverly Powell, relating to indicators of achievement under the public school accountability system for students who successfully completed a program of study in career and technical education.

While Texas meets certain requirements of the federal Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act by offering programs of study leading to industry-based certification and work-based learning, public school districts are not currently evaluated under the public school accountability system for offering these same programs of study. These programs prepare students for high-demand, high-skill, and high-wage professions within Texas and provide coursework and practical experience that align students' education with the state's economic needs. H.B. 773 seeks to align state indicators with federal indicators, giving credit to campuses and districts that offer these programs, and to incentivize other districts to offer more of these programs by creating an indicator of achievement under the public school accountability system for students who successfully complete a program of study in career and technical education.

As finally passed, the bill establishes that when evaluating the performance of high school campuses and districts that include high school campuses, indicators that account for students who successfully completed a program of study in career and technical education should also be considered.

HB 3261 by Representative Dan Huberty/Senator Larry Taylor, relating to the electronic administration of assessment instruments in public schools and to certain measures to support Internet connectivity for purposes of those assessment instruments.

Pending action by the governor, as finally passed the bill implements the transition plan for electronic assessment that was set in motion last session with the passage of HB 3906 directing TEA to study the feasibility of electronic assessment of STAAR and develop a plan. The bill requires that STAAR exams be administered electronically unless the commissioner determines otherwise and includes a temporary matching grant to ensure schools are prepared for electronic testing for the next biennium. Additionally, the bill allows districts to spend funds from the Technology & Instructional Materials Allotment (TIMA) on Internet connectivity and training for online assessment.

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

VOUCHERS

No voucher legislation passed this session.

OTHER LEGISLATION

TAXPAYER FUNDED LOBBYING PROHIBITION

No legislation was passed to restrict how political subdivisions (cities, counties, school districts) use public money on lobbyists.