



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB
DURING THE 2021 REGULAR SESSION,
CLICK BELOW



Strong K-12 Education Budget Package Goes to House

With five legislative days left in the session, the House plans to vote on the FY22 \$7.65 billion education budget package Tuesday. By a unanimous vote, the House Ways & Means Education Committee approved the ETF budget and accompanying bills. The package is a significant investment in public K-12 schools. It increases education salaries with both a pay raise and salary matrix boost and prevents a decrease of state-funded teachers due to a loss of student enrollment during the pandemic. The budget directs funds to local school systems for critical cybersecurity needs and provides \$100 million to create a lucrative alternative career pathway to grow highly credentialed math and science teachers.

\$7.65 Billion Education Budget

The House Ways & Means Education Committee approved the FY22 ETF budget with a \$440 million increase over the current budget. As approved, the committee substitute for [S.189 \(Orr\)](#) tweaked only a few items. See the [budget spreadsheet](#) and an [SDE breakdown](#).

Pay Raise & Salary Matrix Bump

[S.188 \(Orr\)](#) - The budget includes a two-percent pay raise for education employees, an estimated \$86 million investment. The budget also bumps up (\$30 million) the salary matrix for teachers with nine years or more experience.

This increase addresses the discrepancy between competitive starting salaries and subsequent lag in salaries over time.

Teacher Stabilization Program

The budget protects school systems that would face a funding loss after COVID-related declines in student enrollment. A one-time \$95.3 million appropriation will safeguard 900 teacher units to ensure teaching staff are in place for students returning to in-person instruction next school year.

Network Administration & Services

Thanks to Alabama Leaders in Educational Technology (ALET) and local school board members, the budget includes \$3.6 million for cybersecurity. Lawmakers responded to school systems' immediate need to protect technology networks, thousands of devices, web programs and software used by staff and students. The sudden shift to remote learning exacerbated schools' demand on technology and exposure to cyber-attacks. The investment flows directly to school systems for boots-on-the-ground protection for sensitive school data.

Remote Learning Hub Pilot (STEM)

The committee substitute adds \$2 million to create a pilot program for STEM learning pathways for students. The initial emphasis will target mathematics.

Bold and Innovative: TEAMS Act

The math and science career program [S.327 \(Chesteen/Baker\)](#) is an aggressive and innovative investment to attract and reward highly credentialed math and science teachers in public education. The Act invests \$100 million to provide more competitive salaries for incoming or existing teachers willing to seek advanced credentials as part of an alternate career path. House sponsor Rep. Alan Baker said the

Thanks go to...

Special thanks to guest speakers Sen. Chris Elliott and Minority Leader Rep. Anthony Daniels for joining us at AASB's Advocacy Day.

Lawmakers who met with local school board members in Montgomery included:

Speaker McCutcheon
Rep. Mike Ball
Rep. Mike Holmes
Rep. Parker Moore
Rep. Rex Reynolds
Rep. Proncey Robertson
Rep. Chris Sells
Rep. Andrew Sorrell
Rep. Kyle South
Rep. Andy Whitt
Sen. Gerald Allen
Sen. Del Marsh

USDA Extends Free School Lunches

The USDA announced it will extend universal free lunch through the 2021-2022 school year. [See article.](#)

Advocacy Day Lite

AASB will host another event with limited capacity on May 4. Click [HERE](#) for details.

2021 Regular Legislative Session

5
days remain

Act aims to recruit new math and science teachers while allowing existing teachers to voluntarily opt-in to the non-tenure track.

Lawmakers recognize many math and science classes are taught by out-of-field teachers or teachers with emergency certificates. Chairman **Bill Poole** said while there is a general teacher shortage, the math and science teacher shortage is even more acute. He said the TEAMS Act is as necessary for education as for the state's economic competitiveness for future technology and STEM jobs. The Act provides an additional salary matrix with aggressive raises for one math and one science position for every 105 students in grades 6 through 12. The formula will distribute TEAMS teachers throughout the state. TEAMS teachers still would be eligible for the current \$5,000 incentives for NBCT certification and for teaching in underserved areas. Committee members unanimously approved the committee substitute showing strong support for the cutting-edge approach to grow excellence in math and science education and invest in the state's economic future. See [TEAMS overview](#).

Advancement & Technology Fund

The HWME Committee approved [S.193 \(Orr\)](#) to release half the ATF funds available in the Rolling Reserve account. The bill provides \$246 million to K-12 public schools to use for authorized purposes, including: repairs and maintenance; classroom instructional support; insurance for facilities; transportation; acquisition/purchase of education technology; and school security.

To date, the ATF supplemental appropriations:

- **2021:** \$246 million (proposed)
- **2020:** \$178.9 million
- **2019:** \$128.7 million
- **2018:** \$41.2 million

AAA Expansion Out of Committee

By a 7-6 vote, the House Education Policy Committee approved [H.559 \(Meadows\)](#) to expand the dollar-for-dollar tax credit individuals and corporations may claim for private school scholarship donations. Proponents of expanding the Alabama Accountability Act are pursuing the increase because statewide donations to the program fall short of the annual cap each year. By allowing the few in the donor base to invest greater amounts with larger tax credits, more public funds to pay private school tuition would be collected more easily. AASB opposes using public funds via tax credit to pay tuition for private schools.

Committee members approved the bill by the slimmest of margins in a roll call vote. Voting YES: Reps. Collins, Garrett, Easterbrook, Ellis, Meadows, Rich and Robertson. **Voting NO:** Reps. Dismukes, Drummond, Estes, Fincher, Morris and Stringer. **Absent:** Reps. Scott and Daniels.

Local School Leaders Oppose Vouchers

School leaders testified to oppose [H.633 \(Meadows\)](#) during a public hearing this week. The bill proposes a

voucher program for military dependents, special education students and foster children who are adopted or under permanent guardianship. It provides a state-funded education savings accounts to allow parents to use tax dollars to homeschool or enroll their child in private school. In a public hearing, Hoover City school board member **Craig Kelley** said the bill lacks accountability and transparency.

The program allows taxpayer funds intended to flow to public schools to be spent on private tutors, online vendors and private schools that have no obligation to accept students or provide required services. To participate in the program, special education students would relinquish federally protected IDEA rights and no longer be entitled to services in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). In states with similar voucher programs, special education students often fall behind and return to a public school that received no funding for services they are obligated to provide. State tax dollars ensure public education is available to every child whether or not an individual chooses to send their child to public school.

House Declines to Consider Charter School Bill

The procedural vote needed to consider [H.487 \(Collins\)](#) on the House floor failed 60-36. See [BIR Vote](#). Bill sponsor **Rep. Terri Collins** said the bill would provide equitable funding and fair treatment for public school students who opt to attend charter schools. Collins said she was disappointed about misinformation being disseminated about the legislation. **Rep. Barbara Boyd** said legislative initiatives should work to benefit every public school student across the state. The charter school law was enacted in 2015. There are five public charter schools operating in the state. See [ADN article](#).

Education Bill Activity

[H.88 \(Hollis\)](#) - **Feminine hygiene products** - would require local school boards to have feminine hygiene products available for grades 5-12 at no cost to students. Approved as substituted by House committee.

[H.175 \(Lovvorn\)](#) - **Student loan repayment** - would add computer science teachers to the Alabama Math and Science Teacher Education Program (AMSTEP) and repay student loans for STEM teachers who work in underserved areas. Approved by Senate committee.

[H.305 \(Hall\)](#) - **Drugs near schools** - would prohibit sale of drug paraphernalia within three miles of schools. Approved by House.

[H.385 \(Hall\)](#) - **Sex education** - would revise content, course materials and instruction in public schools regarding sex education or the human reproductive process. Awaiting Governor's signature.

[S.225 \(Stutts\)](#) - **Alabama Teacher Initiative** - would provide scholarships for education students who commit to teach grades 7-12 for five years in special education or STEM fields in underserved, rural areas of the state. Approved as [amended](#) by Senate committee.