

advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB
DURING THE 2026 REGULAR SESSION,
CLICK ON BILL TRACKER BELOW:



BILL TRACKER

View Legislature In Session

Did you know you can watch what is going on at the State House? The League of Women Voters of Alabama Education Fund, a nonpartisan advocacy group, hosts [The Alabama Channel](#), an online resource library that allows you to search and view live and recorded video footage of the Alabama Legislature including committee meetings and floor action.

AASB Advocacy Days

Don't miss out. Join us in Montgomery for AASB Advocacy Days. The dates listed are open to board members, superintendents and CSFOs. If you are unable to make your district's Advocacy Day, feel free to sign up for the date that works for you.

Tuesday, Feb. 24
Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
[REGISTER NOW](#)

Wednesday, Mar. 18
Committee Day
All Districts
[REGISTER NOW](#)

2026 Regular Legislative Session
20 Days Remain

Religious Release Time Bill Resurrected

It's back...a revised version of last year's proposed religious release time mandate was introduced this week in the Senate. [S.248](#), sponsored by **Sen. Shay Shelnutt**, would require the State Board of Education (SBOE) and each local school board to allow a parent or guardian to choose for his or her student to attend a religious release time program. Like last year's proposal, **S.248** would amend existing state law which already permits school boards to adopt local policy for religious release time. The bill would now require the sponsoring entity of religious release time to meet certain conditions. It also would allow local boards to establish additional requirements for the sponsoring entity through local board policy. Since school boards already have the authority to set reasonable restrictions on religious release time (and most states do not write these provisions into law) these additions are ways to sweeten the bitter pill of a state mandate.

☞ **NOTE:** Last session, a similar bill mandating all school boards adopt a religious release time policy cleared the Senate but was defeated in House committee. Its companion House bill also was defeated in committee.

Alabama law is clear that school boards have always had the authority to adopt local policy to implement religious release time programs. School board members believe the existing law is working for their schools and the communities they serve.

AASB opposes any efforts to limit local school board authority in statute.

Changes To State Report Card

House Education Policy Chair Rep. Terri Collins has introduced a bill that would propose significant changes to the Alabama State Accountability System and require the State Superintendent of Education to update the design and content of an improved A-F

grading system by Dec. 31, 2026. [H.396](#) would change the current school and school system state report card weights and indicators and establish additional accountability measures and reporting requirements. The current state report card weighs performance based on four primary indicators, heavily focusing on student growth and achievement. Changes to the state report card would include replacing both chronic absenteeism and English Language Learner (ELL) proficiency as report card measures with growth among the lowest performing 25% of students. The bill also would require the state-authorized assessment to be both criterion-based and summative.

Current and Proposed State Report Card Indicators and Weights

Schools with a Grade 12 (High Schools)	Current Weight	Proposed
Academic Achievement	20%	30%
Academic Growth	25%	20%
New: Growth for Lowest Performing 25%	—	10% (5% ELA + 5% Math)
Graduation Rate	30%	30%
College and Career Ready Indicator (CCRI)	10%	10%
Chronic Absenteeism	10%	0%
ELL Progress	5%	0%
Schools without a Grade 12 (Elementary and Middle Schools)	Current Weight	Proposed
Academic Achievement	40%	40% (20% ELA + 20% Math)
Academic Growth	40%	40%
New: Growth for Lowest Performing 25%	—	20% (10% ELA + 10% Math)
Chronic Absenteeism	15%	0%
ELL Progress	5%	0%

The State Department of Education (SDE) organized a task force in 2024 to explore ways to change the state report card's indicators and weights. Lawmakers in recent years have made several changes to the state's accountability system. In 2022, the legislature passed a law excluding ELL student test scores from counting in the academic achievement indicator until six years of enrollment in an Alabama public school. In 2024, another law was enacted excluding nonpublic school transfer students from a private or homeschooled from being counted in the academic achievement indicator until they have been enrolled for four years. **REMINDER:** There are two separate report cards: state and federal. Only the state report card assigns a letter grade of A-F.

School Board Consolidation Bills

House Ways and Means Education (HWME) Chair

Rep. Danny Garrett and **House Education Policy Committee Chair Rep. Terri Collins** have sponsored legislation that would authorize city-to-city and county-to-county school board consolidation, reflecting recent conversations by lawmakers about reducing school system administrative overhead, operational costs and facility needs.

[H.178](#), sponsored by **Rep. Garrett** and unanimously passed in the House Tuesday, would create a process for the consolidation of two or more contiguous city school systems under one remaining controlling city school board. [H.396](#) by **Rep. Collins** would propose a constitutional amendment, which, if approved by voters, would allow two or more county boards of education to consolidate.

Unfunded Mandate Raises Concerns

The **HWME Committee** raised concerns about a bill that would require school boards and public charter schools to equip designated employees who have access to students during the school day with mobile emergency rapid response systems by Oct. 1, 2030. [H.187 \(Baker\)](#) would require the State Superintendent of Education to develop a list of approved vendors for school boards to purchase this technology. The bill would allow school boards to use **Education Advancement and Technology (EAT) Funds** for the purpose of meeting this requirement. It is important to note that school safety and technology already are eligible expenses of **EAT Funds**.

After several committee members questioned creating an unfunded mandate for school boards and if this bill would essentially require school systems to use their **EAT Funds** to meet the new requirement, **Chairman Garrett** carried the bill over to address these concerns. **No dedicated funding has been proposed for this new school board requirement.**

House Committee Action

The **House Education Policy Committee** approved three House bills:

➤ **Advanced Math Pathways [H.353 \(Butler\)](#)** would require each school system to develop an Advanced Math Pathway to prepare students for Algebra 1 in middle school and college credit-bearing math courses in high school. The bill also would require school boards to pro-

vide additional instruction support beyond core math instruction for these students.

- **Campus Chaplains, [H.8 \(Gidley\)](#)**, would allow local boards to vote on whether to allow schools to permit chaplains to assist teachers on a volunteer basis.
- **Computer Science, [H.329 \(Faulkner\)](#)**, would require all public school students complete an approved high school or college level computer science course, beginning with the graduating class of 2032.

House Floor Action

The following education-related bill was passed by the full House:

- [H.183 \(DuBose\)](#), would authorize homeschooled students to attend public school career and technical education (CTE) programs, and schools would receive Average Daily Membership (ADM) for these students beginning in the 2027-28 school year.

Senate Committee Action

The **Senate Education Policy Committee** approved the following bills:

- **Education Job Postings, [H.225 \(Smith\)](#)**, would reduce the mandatory job posting window for certain school board personnel from 14 to seven days.
- **Screen Time Limits, [H.78 \(Ross\)](#)**, would require the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the SDE to collaboratively develop standards and implement guidelines regulating the amount of screen time children may have in Alabama First Class Pre-K, DHR-licensed childcare and public school kindergarten classrooms.
- **Cooperative Purchasing Agreements, [S.75 \(Chesteen\)](#)**, would add K-12 systems to an exception to the public works law for purchasing materials and equipment over \$100,000 through a cooperative purchasing agreement.

Bill to Watch

- **Living Organ Donors, [H.361 \(Daniels\)](#)**, would require public sector employers to provide paid medical leave to employees who donate organs, and would establish a tax credit for private employers that allow employees similar paid leave to donate organs.



AASB's first Advocacy Day of the year was a success!

Huge thanks to **House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter, HWME Chair Danny**

Garrett, Rep. Chris England and Rep. Jeana Ross for participating in a legislative panel to discuss education policy and budget priorities for this legislative session, as well as areas for growth in the next quadrennium. Legislators shared with school board members, superintendents and Chief School Financial Officers (CSFOs) in attendance their goals for this session, including CTE expansion and emphasized the need for change and innovation in public education.

AASB LEGISLATIVE TEAM



Sally Smith, J.D.
Executive Director

ssmith@AlabamaSchoolBoards.org



Ada Katherine van Wyhe, MPA
Director of Governmental Relations

akwyhe@AlabamaSchoolBoards.org



Tracey Meyer
Governmental Relations Coordinator

tmeyer@AlabamaSchoolBoards.org