

advocate for SCHOOLS



TO SEE A LIST OF BILLS TRACKED BY AASB
DURING THE 2025 REGULAR SESSION,
CLICK ON BILL TRACKER BELOW:



Advocacy Days
Don't miss your last
chance to register...

AASB held the first of its three 2025 Advocacy Days Wednesday. Local school board members and CSFOs from across the state had front row seats to the legislative committee process, an important step in the passage of bills.

Our next Advocacy Day is full, but spots still remain for the third and final Advocacy Day, **Wednesday, April 30.**

This all-day event (8 a.m. to 3 p.m.) is open to board members, superintendents and CSFOs from all districts. Lunch will be provided. Claim your spot before capacity is reached.

REGISTER NOW

**Fast-paced
Legislative Days**

Lawmakers are kicking into high gear with another three-day, in-session week planned. Typically, lawmakers are in session two days a week, with one committee day. Moving at this fast pace could signal the session ending sooner than anticipated. Stay tuned...

**2025 Regular
Legislative Session**

9 Days Remain



Senate Passes ETF Budget Package and New Student Funding Model

The hefty \$9.9 billion FY26 Education Trust Fund (ETF) budget, related appropriations package and a bill to modernize current school funding moved at lightning speed this week with approval by the Senate Finance and Taxation Education (SFTE) Committee Wednesday and unanimous passage in the full Senate Thursday. As expected, changes were made to Gov. Kay Ivey's recommendations for the ETF budget and ETF and Education Advancement and Technology (EAT) Fund supplemental appropriations.

ETF Budget (FY26)

The Senate approved ETF budget (**S.112**) would appropriate \$6.7 billion to K-12 education, a 6% increase over the current year. The primary spending bill for education includes expected increases in key legislative initiatives such as the Numeracy Act as well as new funding for the recently-enacted paid parental leave law.

Increases from FY25 include:

\$143 million - Foundation Program

\$39.9 million - Transportation

\$27 million - Numeracy Act

\$14.4 million - Summer/Afterschool Programs

\$9.6 million - Paid Parental Leave for Education Employees

\$9.1 million - Alabama Reading Initiative

\$5 million - Special Education Certified Behavior Analysts

\$3.3 million - Distance Learning

\$2 million - Career Tech

\$2 million - Jobs for Alabama Graduates

\$2 million - School Safety

\$1.7 million - Principals Act

\$1.3 million - Special Ed Preschool Program

\$275,000 - Speech Pathologist Stipend Program

New Line Items for FY26:

\$101 million - CHOOSE Act Vouchers

(initially appropriated in the FY24 and FY25 supplementals)

\$2.5 million - Mental Health Tele-counseling Pilot

\$2 million - Multi-tiered System of Supports

\$750,000 - Pre-K pilot Program for Montgomery County Schools

The ETF budget also consolidates **\$58 million** from existing line items for a new student-weighted funding model:

\$21.2 million - Local Boards At-risk

\$16.5 million - English Language Learners (ELL)

\$10.9 million - Gifted Students Program

\$9.1 million - State At-risk

ETF Spreadsheet, Senate Passed

☛ OF NOTE: The Senate approved ETF budget removes Common Purchases at \$100 per teacher unit and adds that amount to Classroom Materials and Supplies, increasing it per teacher unit from \$900 to \$1,000. Chief school finance officers (CSFOs) advocated for common purchase money to be restored in the current (FY25) ETF budget to allow more spending flexibility without the constraints associated with classroom materials and supplies purchases.

Supplemental Appropriations

► ETF Supplemental (**S.113 Orr**)

Of this \$524 million supplemental appropriation (excess ETF receipts), K-12 would receive just **\$162.6 million**, with **\$28 million** allocated to local boards for textbook adoption and **\$134 million** to the State Department of Education (SDE). The Senate redistributed more than \$130 million from the governor's recommended K-12 supplemental, including \$100 million originally slated for fleet renewal, to higher education, state agencies and other groups.

ETF Supplemental funding includes:

\$50.5 million for the CHOOSE Act

\$37.5 million for the new State House

\$30 million - Summer/Afterschool Programs

\$16 million - Ed Farm

\$14 million - Principals/Assistant Principals
\$15 million - School Security Act
\$10.3 million - Charter School Capital Grants
\$10 million - College & Career Readiness
\$10 million - Struggling Readers Beyond 3rd Grade
\$7.5 million - North Alabama STEM Center
\$7.3 million - School Breakfasts
\$5 million - Heman Drummond Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center
\$1.5 million - Social Studies Course of Study Development.

► **EAT Supplemental (S.114 Orr)**

The \$1.25 billion EAT supplemental appropriates **\$807.8 million** to K-12, plus **\$32 million** from last year's EAT fund that was not drawn down. Local school boards can use EAT monies for repairs and maintenance; classroom instructional support; insurance for facilities; transportation; technology and school security. This year, the EAT supplemental also includes earmarks for several local board specific projects. **OF NOTE:** The Senate decreased local board EAT funding by \$100 million to create an SDE grant program for school systems to develop regional CTE centers throughout the state.

Education Opportunities Reserve Fund

The Legislature plans to appropriate for the first time funds from the Educational Opportunities Reserve Fund (EORF) which currently totals \$1.12 billion. The Rolling Reserve Act was amended in 2023 to create the EORF which contains 20% of ETF surplus funds. **S.111** by **Sen. Arthur Orr**, would distribute **\$375 million** from the EORF over three years for a new student-weighted funding model **-\$100 million** in year one, **\$125 million** in year two and **\$150 million** in year three.

New Student Funding

The Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellent (RAISE) Act, **S.305**, sponsored by **Sen. Arthur Orr**, would create a new hybrid K-12 funding model and accountability system. Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, school systems would receive funding to supplement the current the Foundation Program. The RAISE Act establishes a statewide base and uses weights multiplied by the number of a school system's students in these classifications:

- **Poverty** - up to 20% in additional funding
- **Special Education** - maximum of 25%, 50% or 150% depending on the child's disability
- **ELL** - up to 15%, plus up to 5% more in systems with high concentrations of ELL students
- **Gifted** - up to 5%
- **Charter Schools** - up to 10%, depending on local tax revenue amounts

Students classified in more than one student group would generate funds for each classification.

The RAISE Act appropriation for the 2025-26 school year is estimated to be \$158 million, combining \$100 million from the EORF with an additional \$58 million from consolidated line items in the ETF budget. **Both the SFTE Committee and the full Senate unanimously approved this new funding plan without discussing what this would look like for their schools or what type of accountability measures.**

No financial details or modeling have been provided to show what individual school systems could expect to receive under the RAISE Act.

More Money, More Accountability, More Reporting

► **In return for funding student needs, the RAISE Act would establish multiple, new accountability provisions to monitor system spending and student outcomes.** It would require additional reporting from school systems on student data and outcomes and RAISE Act fund expenditures. Systems would be required to annually submit accountability plans showing how RAISE Act funds are allocated and analyze how these funds impacted student progress. A new category on RAISE Act expenditures would be added to the state report card for each school, system and the state-at-large, with disaggregated data by student group.

► **Two new oversight groups would be created to provide compliance and issue corrective action to schools and systems. The RAISE Act Review Committee** would be composed of several legislators and legislative appointees to annually monitor progress and recommend changes to weighted student allocations.

The RAISE Act Accountability and Implementation Board would monitor the progress of schools and systems in improving student achievement and effectively spending additional funding. This new board would have the authority to hold hearings for schools and systems showing inadequate progress after five years and could recommend corrective action such as state intervention, loss of spending authority for RAISE Act funds, conversion to a charter school, school restructuring or "any other relevant academic interventions," which are not detailed, **but could even mean loss of funding.**

► **The SDE would be tasked with additional responsibilities in administering the RAISE Act, beginning immediately upon the bill's enactment.** This would include training school officials on all new financial data reporting and compliance requirements. In addition, the state superintendent would conduct an audit of all "out-of-date, unnecessary, or otherwise burdensome" state laws, regulations, reports and processes that apply to public schools, reporting the audit's results and recommendations by November 2026. The SDE also would develop a new unified application to align policy priorities, planning, and budgeting for school systems and streamline all state and federal funding applications and reporting into one single application no later than February 2028.

Temporary Pause on Religious Release Time

The **Senate Education Policy Committee** held a public hearing Wednesday on **S.278**, sponsored by **Sen. Shay Shelnett**, the Senate companion bill that would mandate all school boards adopt a religious release time policy. Local school leaders testified in opposition, citing the bill would impose another unnecessary mandate when current law already permits local boards to have a religious release time policy. The bill sponsor erroneously argued that local boards would be able to adopt a policy under this bill that doesn't allow for religious release time. "It's completely optional...They have a right to make a policy, and they could decide if they want to have a policy, to not allow this," said **Shelnett**. **S.278** removes the authority of local boards to decide to adopt the policy. Commit-

tee member **Sen. Rodger Smitherman** said he vigorously opposes mandating a policy and any infringement on individual rights and local control. **Chairman Sen. Donnie Chesteen** told committee members a vote will take place next Wednesday.

Please **CALL** Senate Education Policy committee members and ask them to vote “NO” on S.278!

HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION

House Education Policy

► **Transfer Students, Ten Commandments, Don't Say Gay, AEDs**

H.56 (Simpson) - **Transfer Student Records** - would prohibit any public or nonpublic K-12 school from refusing to transfer student records based on a student's unpaid balance. **Favorable Report**

H.178 (Gidley) - **Ten Commandments** - would require each local board to display the Ten Commandments in a common area of every public K-12 school under its jurisdiction. **Favorable Report**

H.244 (Butler) - **Don't Say Gay** - would expand the state's existing law prohibiting any classroom discussion or instruction of sexual orientation or gender identity from grades K-5 to grades PreK-12 and would prevent employees from displaying a flag/insignia relating to sexual orientation or gender identity. **AMENDMENT: Removes provision about pronouns. Favorable Report as amended**

H.416 (Oliver) - **AEDs at Sporting Events** - would require the placement of automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) in athletic event venues on school property and at any school-sponsored athletic event or practice in which students are participating. **Favorable Report**

House Ways and Means Education

► **Local Board Transportation Policy**

H.447 (Garrett) - **Transportation Policy** - would repeal existing law requiring public school buses provide transportation to community college students. **SUBSTITUTE: Clarifies transportation is for enrolled students only. Favorable Report as substituted**

SENATE COMMITTEE ACTION

Senate Education Policy

► **Ten Commandments, Juvenile Courts, Panic Buttons**

S.166 (Kelley) - **Ten Commandments** - would require each local board to display the Ten Commandments in a common area of every public K-12 school under its jurisdiction. **Favorable Report**

H.232 (Baker) - **Juvenile Court Notification** - would require juvenile courts provide written notification to the local K-12 public school superintendent if a student is charged with or adjudicated for certain serious crimes. **Favorable Report**

H.234 (Baker) - **Panic Buttons** - would require every local board of education to have at least one designated adult on each school campus who will carry a mobile

emergency rapid response device during the school day. The response system would be required to be in place by 2030 and funded with annual dedicated school safety funds. **AMENDMENT: Makes the SDE responsible for developing the approved vendor list. Favorable Report as amended**

Senate Finance & Taxation Education

► **Principals Act Revision**

S.303 (Orr) - **Principals Act** - would amend the definition of a high-poverty school to only apply to schools with a free and reduced federal lunch student percentage of 75% or greater, instead of using the existing community eligibility provision. **Favorable Report**

HOUSE FLOOR ACTION

The House passed the following:

H.61 (DuBose) - **CTE for Nonpublic School Students** - would authorize nonpublic school students to enroll in public school CTE programs and for public schools to receive Average Daily Membership (ADM) for these students.

SENATE FLOOR ACTION

The Senate passed the following:

S.289 (Orr) - **Success Sequence Instruction** - would require the State Board of Education (SBOE) to develop a success sequence curriculum for local boards to implement for all grades which focuses on sequential milestones to help students achieve economic prosperity.

SELECT BILL INTRODUCTIONS

H.553 (Oliver) - **K-12 Athletic Physicals** - would authorize a certified registered nurse practitioner or certified nurse midwife to complete the physical examination form for student participation in K-12 school athletics.

H.558 (Garrett) - **RAISE Act Updated** - would align the Senate-approved changes made to the RAISE Act in **S.305 (Orr)**, to create a hybrid student-weighted funding model with additional allocations for specific student groups.

H.559 (Kiel) - **Mask Policies** - would allow local boards of education to adopt policies related to the use of masks during any protest, demonstration or other public assembly on school property.

H.560 (Givens) - **School Library Acquisition and Collection Policy** - would require local boards to adopt a policy prohibiting, after Oct. 1, 2025, the possession, acquisition or purchase of library materials that are harmful to minors and require approval of any school library materials. It also would require the establishment of a five member school library advisory council to recommend the acquisition of new and removal of challenged library materials. The bill would establish a mechanism for parents, employees or any residents - regardless of whether they are parents of school children - to challenge the appropriateness of library materials. **AASB has called a Public Hearing**

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