

GOVERNOR:

Commissioner of Education – On Wednesday, Governor Greg Abbott reappointed Mike Morath as the State’s Commissioner of Education for a term set to expire on January 16, 2023.

Mike Morath of Austin has served as the Commissioner of Education since January 2016. During that time, he has worked to refocus the Texas Education Agency around four key strategic priorities in support of Texas students: Recruiting, Supporting, and Retaining Teachers and Principals; Building a Foundation of Math and Reading; Connecting High School to Career and College; and Improving Low-Performing Schools. Prior to his appointment, he served on the Dallas Independent School District Board of Trustees for more than four years, and previously was chairman of Morath Investments and president and chief operating officer of Minute Menu Systems, a company that provided information systems to help manage a federal child nutrition program. Morath received a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in finance from George Washington University. He is married with four young children, the oldest of which is a kindergartener in Austin ISD.

SENATE:

The Senate was in session Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of this week conducting routine business. On Wednesday, they recessed until Friday for first reading and referral of bills to committees.

On Wednesday, the Senate adopted **SR 300**, which increased the Senate Higher Education Committee from seven to nine members. Lt. Governor Dan Patrick named Senators Pete Flores (R-Pleasanton) and Jose Menendez (D-San Antonio) to the two new slots on the committee.

Next Week: The Senate will reconvene at 3:00 p.m. on Monday, March 4, 2019.

HOUSE:

The House was in session on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of this week conducting routine business.

Next Week: The House will reconvene at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 4, 2019. Speaker Dennis Bonnen announced that next week, the House will be in session on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. On Wednesday, the House will take up the session’s first Congratulatory and Memorial Resolutions Calendar. Next Friday, March 8, 2019 is the bill-filing deadline. The Chief Clerk’s office will be open until 6:00 p.m. on that day to receive bill filings.

PUBLIC EDUCATION:

On Monday, the **Senate Finance Committee** took up:

SB 3 by Jane Nelson (R-Flower Mound) would provide a salary increase for teachers. Specifically, it would:

- Establish a new Classroom Teacher Salary Allotment;
- Directs that each classroom teacher is entitled to a \$5000 salary increase above their 2018-19 school year salary;
- Specify that the raise is paid for by the state;
- Clarify that it does not preclude districts from offering merit raises; and
- Ensure that districts may not use these dollars to supplant current salaries.
- Also, SB 1, the Senate's base budget, includes \$3.7B for SB 3. SB 3.

It was reported out favorably as substituted. It is on the Senate Intent Calendar for Monday, March 4, 2019.

Senator Jane Nelson said, "The most important investment we can make in education is in our teachers. They are the key factor in preparing our students for success. It has been ten years since our teachers have received a pay raise from the state. Meanwhile their health care costs are going up. They are dipping into personal funds to pay for classroom items. And their overall cost of living is more expensive. We need to provide this salary increase in order to both attract and retain the very best educators for our Texas students."

Lt. Governor Dan Patrick said, "I congratulate Senator Nelson and the Senate Finance Committee for passing out SB 3 with a 15 to 0 unanimous vote. Teachers currently receive only a third of the funding we send to our schools. That's why I first proposed an across-the-board pay raise for teachers in 2017 and why the \$5,000 across-the-board pay raise for teachers in SB 3 is my number one education priority this session. It will provide an immediate financial boost for teachers, assist in retaining good teachers, and recruit the best and the brightest to this critical profession. I will be moving this bill to the floor and out of the Senate at the earliest possible date."

Texas American Federation of Teachers President Louis Malfaro commented, "Today we heard from numerous teachers expressing the dire need for higher pay as they face rising health-care costs and struggle to make ends meet with a salary that is \$7,000 less than the national average. Our legislators also got to see other faces from the entire team that works to educate our schoolchildren - librarians, counselors, diagnosticians, and others - who supported a pay raise for teachers, but asked that their essential role be considered as well. The enormous support for the bill from senators is a welcome start in addressing the need for an overall investment of new funding for our schools. Do our teachers want a pay raise? Of course they do. But they are not going to turn their backs on the team members that are crucial to making their work successful, and they're going to be pushing for a pay raise for all school employees."

On Tuesday, the **House Public Education Committee** took up:

HB 76 by Dan Huberty (R-Katy) would require high school **student athletes** to receive a physical exam that includes an **electrocardiogram** before being allowed to participate in a sports activity. *It was left pending.*

HB 92 by Eddie Rodriguez (D- Austin) would allow a **campus turnaround plan** to operate as a **community school** that provides strategies and programs to coordinate academic, social, and health services that reduce barriers to learning including:

- early childhood education;
- after-school and summer school academic and enrichment programs;
- college and career preparation;
- service learning opportunities including internships and community service programs;
- leadership and mentoring programs;
- activities to encourage community and parent engagement in students' education;
- health and social services for students and their families; and
- parenting classes.

It would prohibit the commissioner from ordering the closure of a campus without giving the campus the opportunity to operate as a community school. *It was left pending.*

HB 129 by Diego Bernal (D-Sab Antonio) would require campuses in which 90 percent of the **students are educationally disadvantaged**, homeless, or in foster care to have at least one licensed counselor, audiologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, physician, nurse, social worker or speech language pathologist assigned to the campus; and would provide state aid to assist the district in employing the required licensed professionals. *It was left pending.*

HB 198 by Shawn Thierry (D-Houston) would add **mental health services** to the list of services that a school district provides through a cooperative health care program and school-based health centers. *It was left pending.*

HB 199 by Diego Bernal (D-San Antonio) would expand the permissible uses of the **instructional materials and technology fund** to include the salary and other expenses of an employee who is directly involved in student learning or addressing the social and emotional health of students. *It was left pending.*

HB 204 by Shawn Thierry (D-Houston) would **add mental health** and the relationship between physical and mental health in the **health curriculum** in public schools. *It was left pending.*

HB 239 by Jessica Farrar (D-Houston) would authorize a social worker to provide **social work services** to students and families in a school district. *It was left pending.*

HB 314 by Donna Howard (D-Austin) would allow **compensatory education allotment** funding to be used to provide **child-care services** or assistance with child-care expenses for **students at risk of dropping out** of school or pay the costs associated with services provided through a life skills program; and would require the Commissioner of Education to adopt rules including pregnancy as a reason a student withdraws from or otherwise no longer attends public school in

the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). *It was left pending.*

HB 330 by Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would exclude students who have suffered a condition, injury or illness that requires substantial medical care and leaves the student unable to attend school from the **dropout and completion rate calculations**. *It was left pending.*

HB 391 by Cesar Blanco (D-El Paso) would require school districts to provide **instructional materials** to a student in printed book format if the student does not have reliable access to technology at the student's home. It would also require school districts to report to the Texas Education Agency the number of requests by parents to allow a student to take home instructional materials that were denied by the school district; and require TEA to aggregate that information annually to report to the legislature. *It was left pending.*

HB 396 by Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would prohibit money in the **instructional materials and technology fund** to be used to pay the expenses associated with intrastate freight and shipping; and would allow funding to be used to pay for inventory of software or systems for storing and accessing instructional materials. *It was left pending.*

HB 397 by Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would allow money in the **instructional materials and technology fund** to be used to for inventory of software or systems for storing and accessing instructional materials. *It was left pending.*

HB 403 by Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) would require **training** for school **superintendents and trustees** regarding **sexual abuse**, human trafficking, and other maltreatment of children. *It was left pending.*

HB 422 by Alma Allen (D-Houston) would require school boards to annually certify to the Texas Education Agency that the board has established the required district- and campus-level **planning and decision-making committees**. *It was left pending.*

HB 455 by Alma Allen (D-Houston) would require Texas Education Agency to develop **model policies on the recess period** during the school day that encourages constructive, age-appropriate outdoor playtime that maximizes the effectiveness of outdoor physical activity; and would require school districts to adopt a recess policy based on the model policies. *It was left pending.*

HB 638 by Giovanni Capriglione (R-Keller) would establish procedures for a high school **diploma to be issued posthumously** to a student that dies while enrolled in the school district. *It was left pending.*

HB 663 by Ken King (R-Canadian) would require the State Board of Education (SBOE) to **review and revise the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)** to narrow the number and scope of student expectations for each subject and grade level and require less time for a demonstration of mastery. The SBOE would be required to ensure that a revision of the TEKS does not result in a need for the adoption of new instructional materials. *It was left pending.*

HB 674 by Jared Patterson (R-Frisco) would require school districts to report to the Commissioner of Education information on the district's **reliance on education service centers in complying with federal and state education**

laws and rules and indicate the specific federal or state education laws or rules for which compliance is the most burdensome and expensive. *It was left pending.* **HB 678** by Ryan Guillen (D-Rio Grande City) would add a course in **American Sign Language** completed at an elementary school to count for one credit toward an **elective course** for graduation. *It was left pending.*

Mental Health and Public Schools – On Wednesday, State Representative Four Price (R-Amarillo) filed **HB 18** and **HB 19**, which seek to provide impactful resources, support and other solutions to positively address the heightened mental health concerns in Texas public schools. Representative Price said, "This legislation is designed to raise the awareness of mental health in public school settings, address the needs of students with mental health challenges and provide resources and training for educators. The Texas Legislature, during the 2017 legislative session, made tremendous strides on raising the awareness and decreasing the stigma of mental health conditions. We also provided significant funding to address these concerns, which impact every Texas community and almost every Texas family. Despite significant progress, one area where we need to do more concerns children's mental health. Given that approximately ninety percent of Texas children attend public schools that is where a real and impactful nexus can be had with emphasis on early intervention."

Student Testing and Assessment Reform Act – Also on Wednesday, Representative Matt Krause (R-Fort Worth) filed the Student Testing And Assessment Reform Act, **HB 2113**, which would bring reforms to the STAAR and end-of-course (EOC) assessments currently being administered by public schools in Texas. Specifically, the bill would:

- Eliminate all STAAR exams that are not federally required – including 4th and 7th grade Writing, as well as 8th grade Social Studies; and ^[1]_{SEP}
- Remove all end-of-course exams for high school students and comply with federal reporting standards by administering post-secondary education entrance exams – including SAT, ACT, and TSI. ^[1]_{SEP}

Representative Krause said, "It is imperative that our teachers focus on educating our students and not teaching to a test. As legislators, we need to craft a solution to eliminate the high stakes testing scheme our schools currently operate under, and I believe the Student Testing and Assessment Reform Act leads our education system down the right path."

Next Week:

The **House Public Education Committee** will meet on Tuesday, March 5, 2019 at 10:30 a.m. or upon adjournment in E2.036 of the capitol extension to take up: **HB 525** by Tony Tinderholt (R-Arlington) would eliminate the requirement for fourth and seventh grade **writing assessments** and eighth grade **social studies assessments** and the end of course exams for English II and United States history.

HB 671 by Ken King (R-Canadian) would **eliminate end-of-course exams** and other assessments not required by federal law.

HB 843 by Drew Springer (R-Muenster) would allow **postsecondary readiness** assessment instruments to be used by Texas Education Agency for **accountability** purposes and would add students who successfully complete an internship, students who are awarded an associate degree and students who satisfy performance standards on Algebra II or English III to be considered for accountability purposes.

HB 851 by Dan Huberty (R-Humble) would eliminate the sunset date (September 1, 2019) on statutes authorizing the use of **individual graduation committees** and alternative methods to satisfy high school graduation requirements.

HB 1244 by Trent Ashby (R-Lufkin) would require school districts to administer a **civics test** to a student in the foundation high school program and make it a **requirement for high school graduation**. The civics test would consist of all of the questions on the civics test administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services as part of the naturalization process.

HB 1480 by Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) would require school districts to establish an **accelerated learning committee** for each student who does not perform satisfactorily on the third grade mathematics or reading assessment.

BUDGET

On Wednesday, the **House Ways & Means Committee** took up:

HB 2 by Dustin Burrows (R-Lubbock) is the House version of the **property tax reform** bill. *It was left pending.*