



2021 Legislative Agenda

TSBA firmly believes in the success of Tennessee’s public schools and the opportunities they have provided and continue to provide to children. The Association acknowledges the challenges that public schools face as well as the need for continued improvement, and its member boards of education are dedicated to reaching the goal of every child achieving his or her highest potential. We believe we can help accomplish this goal by focusing our legislative efforts on the following areas:

Local Control of Schools

- TSBA believes that local boards of education are the best equipped and informed to make decisions to address the needs and challenges of their local schools. TSBA opposes any efforts to diminish or impede upon this local control.

Testing and Accountability

- TSBA urges Governor Lee to use emergency powers to extend the provisions of Public Chapter No. 652. If that is not possible, TSBA urges the General Assembly to place a moratorium on state standardized testing and accountability for the 2020-2021 school year, or if testing does occur, pass legislation that holds districts, schools, teachers, and students harmless on all accountability measures. Further, TSBA urges the General Assembly to pass legislation that waives the 180 instructional day requirement and the six and one-half (6 ½) hours of instructional time each school day.

Basic Education Program (BEP) Hold Harmless

- TSBA urges the General Assembly to hold districts harmless and provide BEP funding for the 2021-2022 school year in an amount equal to or greater than the amount of BEP funding provided in the 2020-2021 school year and asks that any BEP allocations are not negatively impacted or reduced due to 2020-2021 student enrollment. Further, TSBA urges the General Assembly to include growth funds in an amount equal to or greater than the amount received for the 2019-2020 school year and assist with holding districts harmless for any potential loss of federal and child nutrition funds due to reduced enrollment or meal participation.

Student Technology and Textbook Adoption

- TSBA urges the General Assembly and the Textbook and Instructional Materials Commission to amend the Adoption and Implementation Cycle approved in June 2019 by deleting “CTE only” for Section “A” and 2022-23 implementation year and instead substituting “student technology devices”.

Alternative Licensure Pathways and Professional Development

- TSBA urges the General Assembly, the State Board of Education, and the Tennessee Department of Education to improve licensure reciprocity for out-of-state teachers and create alternative pathways for licensure attainment, advancement, and professional development, including, but not limited to, micro-credentialing and alignment with other professional licenses.

Stakeholder Input for Accountability Changes

- TSBA urges the General Assembly to require the Tennessee Department of Education to ensure meaningful consultation with stakeholders including, but not limited to, school board members, administrators, teachers, and parents prior to recommending any changes to the State's accountability model to the State Board of Education for their approval.

Changes to Student Discipline Laws

- TSBA urges the General Assembly to amend student discipline laws to create additional exceptions to the requirement that all suspensions and expulsions for students in grades 7-12 result in alternative school or alternative program assignment if there is space and staff available.

Teacher Leave and Virtual Learning

- TSBA urges the General Assembly to add clarifying language to TCA § 49-5-716 to specify that a school district is not closed for purposes of the statute when teachers have the ability to work remotely or are providing virtual learning for students.

Electronic Participation in School Board Meetings

- TSBA urges the General Assembly to add qualifying criteria to TCA § 49-2-203(c)(1)(A) to allow school boards to conduct electronic meetings during a pandemic or other state of emergency as declared by the Governor of Tennessee.

Child Abuse Investigation and Reporting Laws

- TSBA urges the General Assembly to make necessary changes in the law to ensure that parental notification requirements are clear and consistent in situations of harassment, child abuse, bullying, and Title IX issues.

Local Prosperity Councils (LPC)

- TSBA urges the General Assembly to promote the concept of a LPC through Joint Economic and Community Development Boards and remove existing barriers and facilitate their formation and function through legislation.

The Tennessee School Boards Association will actively support legislation relative to these and other issues as determined by its Resolutions and Position Statements.