
GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Serving secondary school administrators across Georgia
Weekly Legislative Update-January 16, 2009



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Governor Sets the Tone for 2009 Session reported by Skip Yow

Governor Sonny Perdue put education at the forefront in his 2009 State of the State address delivered on Wednesday of this week.

The Governor announced three proposals to match the state's educational spending with its desired outcome. The first proposal recognizes the important role of leadership at the school level. Under the proposal, high school principals who demonstrate improvement in graduation rate, SAT scores and End of Course Tests compared to their school's most recent 3-year average will be eligible for a \$10,000 performance bonus. Principals could also qualify by leading a school that is in the top 5 percent of high schools in the state in these three areas.

The second proposal recognizes the role that quality teachers play in producing positive educational outcomes. The proposal for teachers is based on the Master Teacher program and would allow exceptional teachers who are willing to serve as instructional leaders and mentors in their schools to be eligible to receive pay increases of ten to fifteen percent.

In response to a shortage of math and science teachers and increased demand in these content areas, the Governor proposed

taking a business-like approach to recruiting these teachers. The Governor's proposal, based on recommendations by the Alliance of Education Agency Heads, would start new fully-certified math and science teachers at the same salary as a fifth year teacher. Teachers in these fields with less than five years experience would also be brought up to the fifth year pay level. In an effort to encourage and reward elementary teachers who increase their competency in math and science, the Governor's proposal will also provide a \$1,000 annual bonus to any elementary teacher who holds a math and science endorsement. The three proposals all call for the incentives to be available beginning in 2010-11 school year, which would be the Fiscal Year 2011 state budget.

The Governor also proposed school board legislation to ensure that every student has the benefit of responsible leadership at the school system level. The legislation will standardize board ethics policies and board training, clarifies law delineating the roles and responsibilities of superintendents and board members, creates minimum qualifications for board candidates and gives the state the ability to find responsible citizens to serve on school boards when existing member fail to serve the interest of their students.

Budget continues to hang like a dark cloud

The \$2 Billion shortfall for FY09 continues to hang like a dark cloud over the Legislature and throughout State Government. There seems to be little initiative to set aside the Governor's mid year budget cuts or to make changes to those cuts. From our friend Sally Fitzgerald at GaPTA:

FY09, the changes are pretty much as has been announced in July.

- Any salary increased to be started in January 2009 is revoked.
- Reserves for the state Health Benefit Plan will be drawn down by reducing the premium that employers have to pay, including local school districts, from 18.5% to 8.6%. Costs reduced to local school systems of \$250.8 million this school year.
- Graduation coach funding decreases by \$1 million
- Increase 1500 slots for the Georgia Virtual School, a DOE entity for HS courses
- Governor's Honors program cut \$105,000
- Special Ed Vouchers cut \$113,135.
- Reduce all elements of the QBE formula by 2%, \$135.8 million
- Eliminate the \$50 million reduction in austerity cuts. Total for 08-09 is now \$141.5 million.
- Fund increases in school enrollment of .23%, \$77.9 million
- Fund dual enrollment courses, \$1.4 million
- Home tax relief grant is not funded \$434 million

FY 10, Recommendations are more draconian.

- Fund the current salary increase of 2.5% for July and August, \$32.4 million
- Eliminate the Academic Coach program, \$1.4 million
- Eliminate the Mentor Teacher component of the Academic Coach program, \$200,000
- Eliminate state funded teacher liability insurance, \$300,000
- Charter School Commission one-time start up fund eliminated, \$260,000
- Charter School planning and implementation and facility grants zeroed, \$895,000.
- **School nurses, eliminate, \$30 million.**
- Equalization grants to be funded only for 12 mills, not 15 mills, \$112.4 million
- Graduation coaches funded for middle schools feeding high schools with graduation rates at 85% or lower. Current funding is for rates lower than 95%
- Local 5 Mill Share increases for local districts, \$6.7 million
- National Board Certification grants eliminated, \$12.3 million
- Teacher gift cards to be operated under QBE, \$11.5 million. How is not addressed.
- Fund enrollment growth of .23% and training and experience, \$66.5 million
- **Total austerity cuts this year, \$275,267,608.**
- Severely Emotionally Disturbed program, cut \$2 million
- Home tax relief grant is not funded

Education bills introduced this week

- HB 3** **Makes Veteran’s Day, November 11, a school holiday**
HB 6 **Extends sales tax holiday to include water and energy related items**
HB 33 **Mandates forums based on religious freedom issues at all student assemblies including graduation**
HB 63 **Provides enabling legislation for TADs approved last year**
HR 1 **Introduces constitutional amendment that will freeze property assessments**
SB 8 **Permits students with asthma to carry prescription epinephrine pens**
SB 14 **Prohibits documented sex offenders from serving as Superintendent or members of Boards of Education**

(A number of pre-filed bills were reviewed in the *Pre-Legislative Review* of January 6 but those bills have yet to be formally introduced.)

Hot Button Issues

1. **HB 33, formally introduced this week, mandates forums at all school programs in which students speak including graduation ceremonies. Aimed at insuring religious freedom, the bill is highly prescriptive and very burdensome for school administrators and is similar to legislation passed last year in Texas.**
2. **The *Bridge Bill* which was defeated last year on the last day of the session is destined for re-introduction this year. The bill mandates**

career educational programs and procedures that are inferior to those currently in place. It will be most interesting to see what, if any, modifications are made to last year's bill.

3. Teacher pay raises appear to be highly unlikely. The incentives introduced by the Governor take the place of across-the-board raises.

4. HR 1 which caps property assessments most certainly poses a threat to many local systems that are caught in a financial bind caused by increased austerity cuts.

5. The Governor's recommendation imposes significant financial restructuring on RESAs. Smaller school systems vitally depend on RESAs for services that they cannot provide by themselves.