**Legislative Summary 2019**

***All bills listed have been signed into law.***

**State Funding** *(House Bill 2)*

Provides $6.2 billion in state funding for public school districts and DESE, including:

* $3,553,211,885 for the foundation formula ($61.4 million increase)
* $107,547,713 for transportation ($10 million increase)
* $194,567,259 for early childhood special education programs
* $15,000,000 for the small schools grant
* $300,000 for active shooter training and school safety grants
* $25,000 for school board member training

**School Start Date** *(House Bill 604)*

Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, no district may start school earlier than 14 calendar days prior to Labor Day.

**Board Training** (*House Bill 604)*

• If trained after August 28, 2019, increases state-mandated school board training to 18.5 hours, with 2.5 hours devoted to information on identifying signs of sexual abuse in children and potentially abusive relationships between children and adults.

• After initial training (16 or 18.5 hours), Board members must complete one hour of refresher training on the same topic for every additional year they are in office.

**Student Training on Identifying and Reporting Sexual Abuse** *(House Bill 604)*

• Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, school districts will provide trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate sexual abuse training to students in grades 6-12. DESE will provide guidance and training materials.

• The district will notify parents or guardians of the content of the instruction, and the student will be excused upon the request of a parent or guardian.

**Sexual Misconduct** *(House Bill 604)*

• Before offering employment, districts and charter schools must contact DESE for a list of districts or charter schools for which an applicant previously worked. Districts are required to contact the most recent school to request information about the employee, including information regarding sexual misconduct with a child, if any.

• Districts and charter schools must notify another public school or charter school that requests information on a former employee regarding any actual violation of regulations related to sexual misconduct, if determined after a due process hearing by the Board or the charter school board.

• Defines “sexual misconduct” for at least some part of the law as the crime of sexual misconduct under §566.083, RSMo.

**Child Abuse** *(House Bill 604)*

Expands the definition of a person “responsible for the care, custody and control of a child” under child abuse and neglect laws to include school personnel, contractors and volunteers if the relationship with a child was established through the school or school-related activities, even if the alleged abuse or neglect occurred outside of school hours or off school grounds.

**Criminal Background Checks**

• Requires volunteers who may periodically be left alone with a student or have access to student records to receive a criminal background check as employees. *(House Bill 604)*

• Clarifies requirements for entities that provide care or educational services to children (i.e. bus contractors, OT/PT providers, daycare centers, churches, etc.) to participate in the Missouri and National Rap Back program, which automatically notifies an employer when a registered employee or volunteer is arrested or charged with a crime. Among other requirements, these employers must keep records confidential and may only use the records for screening purposes. Failure to keep records confidential is a Class A misdemeanor. *(House Bill 694)*

**Make-Up Days** *(House Bill 604)*

* “Inclement weather” days includes days missed due to excessive heat.
* Beginning in 2020-21, a district may have a plan for alternative methods of instruction approved by DESE to implement when school is cancelled due to exceptional or emergency circumstances. These alternative methods may be used in lieu of making up 36 hours.
* Districts are only required to make up the first six days cancelled due to inclement weather in the 2018-19 school year. *Note: Because the emergency clause did not pass, this provision has no effect.*

**A+ Scholarships** *(House Bill 604)*

If funding is available after reimbursing community college or vocational or technical school students, high school students may use A+ scholarship funds for the cost of tuition and fees for dual credit or dual enrollment courses. Funding will be based on financial need, a student must have attended a Missouri high school for at least two years, and the student must meet the eligibility requirements immediately prior to taking the course.

**Teacher Externship** *(House Bill 604)*

DESE and the Department of Economic Development shall develop requirements for teacher business externships and a schedule that equates the externship experience with a number of graduate-level credit hours. School districts or charter schools will recognize a certified externship in the same manner as graduate credit hours for movement on the salary schedule.

**Construction**

• Amends construction bidding statute to only require formal advertising and sealed bids if the construction may exceed $50,000 (currently $15,000). *(House Bill 604)*

• Expands the definition of contractors that must obtain a performance bond for public works construction projects to include persons or businesses that arrange for construction services and those that act as a lessee, agent, designee or representative of a public entity when constructing nongovernmental projects. The definition excludes construction managers that are not construction managers at risk and that do not otherwise provide labor, materials or services for the project. *(Senate Bill 167)*

**School Turnaround Expert** *(House Bill 604)*

* Beginning September 1, 2020, and subject to appropriation, DESE will identify schools in need of intervention.
* If a district has a school identified, it must establish a committee to select an independent school turnaround expert approved by DESE who meets the specific requirements of the statute. The expert will work with the committee to create a school turnaround plan.
* When the school board or charter school board approves the school turnaround plan, it is sent to DESE for approval.
* DESE will contract with at least two school turnaround experts that meet the requirements of the statute and negotiate a contract that pays an average of $650,000 per project, which may be differentiated based on student enrollment, and increased for schools in the lowest-performing one percent of schools.
* Subject to appropriation, DESE will establish a School Recognition and Reward Program to provide incentives to schools and teachers to improve schools in need of intervention.

**Elementary Pilot Programs** *(House Bill 604)*

* Requires DESE to establish a voluntary pilot program to provide for social and emotional health education in a minimum of 16 elementary schools.
* Requires DESE to establish a pilot program to provide for agricultural education in a minimum of 16 elementary schools.

**Religion**

* Prohibits public schools from discriminating against any person on the basis of religious viewpoint or religious expression. First Amendment already prohibits! (*House Bill 604)*
* Encourages school districts to offer elective course on the Bible in high school. (*Senate Concurrent Resolution 13)*

**School Finance**

• Allows school districts and charter schools that contract for early childhood education services to collect state aid for attendance if state standards are met. *(House Bill 604)*

• Requires DESE to make additional payments to school districts that lose income from taxes against financial institutions due to corporate income tax reductions. *(House Bill 604)*

• Sets fines for poaching wildlife, which will be transferred to the state school moneys fund, distributed to public schools. *(House Bill 260)*

**Unaccredited School District/School Transfers** *(House Bill 604)*

* Students may transfer to another public school in the student’s resident district if the student is enrolled in and has attended for a full semester immediately prior to the transfer a school that is 1) located within an unaccredited district, and 2) has an annual performance report (APR) score consistent with a classification of unaccredited.
* If there is not a school within the unaccredited district that a student may transfer to, the student may apply to DESE to transfer to 1) a school in an accredited district with an APR score consistent with a classification of accredited, or 2) an approved charter school, located in the same or an adjoining county.
* If a student is eligible to begin kindergarten or first grade at a school that is 1) located within an unaccredited district, and 2) that has an APR scored consistent with a classification of unaccredited and 3) that offers classes above the second grade level, the student may apply to DESE for a transfer to a school in an accredited district or an approved charter school located in the same or an adjoining county. The student must have resided in the school’s attendance area on March 1 preceding the school year of first attendance. Otherwise, the student must enroll in the unaccredited district and attend for one semester before transferring.
* A student’s transfer cannot result in a class size and assigned enrollment that exceeds the MSIP standards, and the student must meet enrollment criteria if the school is a magnet school or a selective school. Receiving school districts are not required to hire additional classroom teachers or construct additional classrooms.
* The tuition the unaccredited district must pay to the receiving district is limited to the lesser of 1) the tuition set by the receiving district, or 2) the state adequacy target plus the average sum produced per child by the local tax effort above the state adequacy target of the sending district.
* The unaccredited district will pay the costs for providing special education and related services if the costs exceed the tuition.
* DESE will determine which school districts or approved charter schools to which the sending district will provide transportation.
* DESE will collect information from eligible receiving districts and charter schools, will provide information and assistance to parents and guardians, and will assign students who seek to transfer to an accredited district or charter school based on set criteria.
* DESE may deny a transfer to a student who has been suspended from school two or more times in the most recent school year or who has been suspended for an act of school violence as defined by law. However, a student may be allowed to transfer on a probationary basis, subject to no further disruptive behavior.
* A student who moves from an attendance area or withdraws from a school he or she transferred to will lose eligibility to transfer.
* If a school district regains accreditation or a school’s APR score improves to be consistent with a classification of provisionally accredited or accredited, a student who has transferred to another district or approved charter school may remain to complete middle school, junior high school or high school, whichever occurs first.
* DESE will compile and maintain student performance data scores of all students transferring under this section.

**K-8 Districts** *(House Bill 604)*

Amends statute so that students transferring to another district after completing the highest grade offered in the resident district no longer have the option of transferring to a charter school.

**Hardship Transfer** *(House Bill 604)*

Allows for an eligible student residing in an unincorporated area of Maries County to apply to the Commissioner of Education to be assigned to another school district.

**Military Student Enrollment** *(Senate Bill 306)*

If one or both of a student’s parents are being relocated to the state of Missouri under military orders, the school district must allow remote registration of the student and cannot require the parent, guardian or student to physically appear to register the student. Proof of residency shall not be required at the time of remote registration, but will be required within 10 days of the student’s attendance in the school district.

**Bus Drivers** *(Senate Bills 368) Signed*

Beginning January 1, 2020, all applicants for a commercial driver's license must complete an entry-level driver training program approved under federal law.

**Retirement**

* Exempts retirees from Public School Retirement System of Missouri (PSRS) who are employed by a public community college from the wage limitations of retirement law. *(House Bill 77and Senate Bill 17)*
* A retiree in PSRS and the Public Education Employee Retirement System of Missouri (PEERS), who elected a reduced retirement allowance with his or her spouse as the beneficiary may have the retirement allowance increased if the retiree got divorced by September 1, 2017. *(Senate Bill 17)*

**Charter Schools** *(House Bill 604)*

Allows charter schools to give admission preference to students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

**Governance** *(House Bill 604)*

* When a district has financial difficulty the state board of education (State Board) may lapse the corporate organization of the district and appoint a special administrative board (SAB) or allow the school board to govern under terms and conditions set by the State Board.
* Allows the State Board more choices in governing an unaccredited district such as dividing up the district or appointing members of the elected Board to the SAB.

**Sex Offenders** *(House Bill 397)*

Modifies criminal statute that prohibits a person with a record of certain sex offenses from residing within 1,000 feet of any school to clarify that “resides” does not include presence in medical treatment facilities or nursing homes for the purposes of receiving services.