

HCS HB 712 -- ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Pollitt

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 21 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Administrative by a vote of 8 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 712.

This bill defines "Grade-level equivalence", a metric developed and used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) or a not of profit 3rd party, to show a student's proximity to doing grade-level work for grades three to eight. The bill identifies and describes the performance level descriptors as: advanced, proficient, grade level, basic, and below basic, with specified characteristics for each level.

The school accountability report card must provide each student's grade-level equivalence as measured on the statewide assessment. Data relating to the grade-level equivalence must be searchable on a building-by-building, school-by-school, district-by-district, and statewide level. The data must display a percentage of students at grade level or above for each level, provided that no data will disclose personal identification of any student except to a student's parent (Sections 160.518 & 160.522 RSMo.).

Currently to enroll in an adult high school an individual must be 21 years of age. The bill changes the minimum age for enrollment for adult high schools in the state to 18 years of age (Sections 160.2700 to 160.2725).

The bill adds clarification that students that leave a public school district will be considered a transfer student and not a dropout if they subsequently enroll in an adult high school (Sections 160.2700 to 160.2710).

Currently, there is additional State funding for school districts that provide for 169 schools days. This bill clarifies that a school district will still qualify for the additional funding, provided that the district calendar includes 169 days even if they are in session fewer due to inclement weather or an authorized reduction as provided for in this provision (Section 163.045).

The bill removes the requirement that a teacher's masters degree must be in a teaching related field in order to qualify for the minimum teacher salary (Section 163.172).

This bill requires school districts to prohibit any zero-tolerance disciplinary policy. Zero-tolerance discipline that results in an automatic disciplinary consequence without reviewing each pupil in a case by case manner is prohibited (Section 167.167).

The bill extends the authorization for teachers that are retired to substitute teach without a discontinuance of the teacher's retirement benefit. This authorization was set to expire in 2025 and the bill moves that to 2030 (Section 168.036).

This bill modifies the current "Teacher Recruitment and Retention State Scholarship Program" to allow for scholarships to cover education costs related to teacher preparation in addition to tuition.

If the currently authorized scholarship amount is not fully awarded due to lack of qualified applicants the bill creates an additional scholarship award for students in their final semester of student teaching. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will determine the amount for the additional scholarships. The amount granted for tuition can not exceed the amount per semester of tuition for a Missouri resident at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

The bill removes a requirement that school districts pay 25% of the cost for any scholarship recipient that was hired by the district (Section 173.232).

This bill is similar to HB 371, HCS HB 32, HB 368, HB 454, and HB 792 (2025).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the extension of the provision that allows retired teachers to substitute is very important as there is a large demand for good substitutes.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Pollitt and Special School District of St Louis County

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that there is concern about removing the inflationary increase found in the minimum teacher salary. Currently districts are working to a collective bargaining agreement with the idea that there may not be additional resources.

Testifying in person against the bill were Missouri State Teachers Association and Missouri Council of School Administrators.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say this bill would not negatively impact the teacher retirement system but that more should be done to recruit and retain teachers in the workforce.

Testifying in person on the bill were MO Retired Teachers Association; PSRS/PEERS; and Missouri NEA.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.