

2022 SESSION: EDUCATION BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

The FY 2023 budget provides the most state funds ever appropriated to K-12 education. The Quality Basic Education (QBE) program is fully funded, totaling \$11.8 billion in state funds, and includes a \$382 million austerity restoration that eliminates all reductions made in FY 2021 due to the decline in state revenues from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Amended FY 2022 budget includes a one-time supplement of \$2,000 for certified and classified employees, and the FY 2023 budget permanently increases the state teacher salary schedule by \$2,000, for a total increase of \$5,000 since FY 2020. Budget Highlights

- HB 910, the 'Amended FY 2022 Appropriations Act' and HB 911, the 'FY 2023 Appropriations Act' include a \$382 million austerity restoration, thereby eliminating all reductions made in FY 2021 due to the decline in state revenues from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- HB 910 provides \$326.9 million to fund a one-time supplement of \$2,000 to full-time and part-time employees, to include QBE-funded instructional staff, school support staff, school administration, and central administration; including teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselors, social workers, special education specialists, and psychologists. The Amended FY 2022 budget also includes \$76.8 million for a one time supplement of \$2,000 for school nutrition workers (\$27.6 million); bus drivers (\$28.1 million); school nurses (\$4.1 million); and custodians (\$17 million).
- The FY 2023 budget provides \$291.7 million to increase the state base salary schedule for certified teachers and employees by \$2,000, for a total adjustment to the state base salary schedule of \$5,000 since FY 2020. This adjustment is in the following programs with certified teachers and employees: Agricultural Education (\$469,033); Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) (\$1.5 million); Sparsity Grants (\$353,615); Residential Treatment Facilities (\$268,285); Preschool Disabilities Services (\$918,985); QBE (\$287.1 million); and Technology/Career Education (\$1.1 million). The budget also includes \$7.9 million for a 5.4% pay raise for school nutrition workers (\$1.1 million); bus drivers (\$4.7 million); school nurses (\$1.8 million); and Regional Education Services Agencies (RESAs) (\$310,071).
- The final version of the budget includes \$43.5 million for enrollment growth and training and experience for an additional 11,926 students and 484 teachers. The budget also includes \$30.3 million for growth in the State Commission Charter School supplements and state special charter schools. Charter system grants receive \$38,613 in additional funding and local charter schools receive \$2.9 million pursuant to SB 59 (2021 Session).
- The budget includes an additional \$1.4 million for pupil transportation based on an increase in FTEs, and when combined with the pay raise, the total pupil transportation funding for FY 2023

is \$142.7 million. The Amended FY 2022 budget provides \$188 million to purchase 1,747 school buses at \$88,110 per bus and includes funds for the purchase of bus safety features. This funding is sufficient for school systems to replace 45% of buses that have exceeded their recommended lifecycle over a three-year period. HB 910 also includes \$5 million to incentivize school systems to purchase alternative-fuel vehicles.

- In FY 2023, the School Nutrition program receives an additional \$712,028 to assist school districts in keeping school lunches affordable.
- HB 911 includes \$5.1 million in restorations to other Department of Education programs that provide direct instruction or vital educational services. The adjustments represent the full restoration of the original FY 2021 reductions: Agricultural Education (\$253,606); Communities in Schools (\$57,124); GNETS (\$2.4 million); Preschool Disabilities Services (\$1.6 million); RESAs (\$433,006); Technology/Career Education (\$282,460); State Schools (\$200,000); and Tuition for Multiple Disabilities (\$62,078). The budget also restores \$160,000 to RESAs for mental health training at districts and schools.
- In the Agricultural Education program, \$100,000 is provided for a new young farmer position in Floyd County and supplemental young farmer positions in Banks County, Barrow County, and Pelham City. The budget includes the state's share of funds for 21 new agricultural education programs across Georgia, for a total cost of \$178,500; \$144,000 for an urban/suburban agriculture specialist to grow agriculture education in non-rural areas of the state; \$140,000 for an additional FFA staff member to accommodate program growth; and two agricultural education staff to support the Area Teacher program.
- The FY 2023 budget provides \$200,000 for additional feminine hygiene grants, expanding from middle school and high school to include the fifth grade. The total funding for feminine hygiene grants of \$1.45 million is provided to school systems with low property tax wealth and a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students.
- Residential Treatment Facilities (RTFs) receive an additional \$931,194 based on a new formula. The new formula provides funding predictability for the RTFs, which naturally have a more transient student population.
- The FY 2023 budget includes \$3 million for charter facilities grants in the Charter School program, increasing the total funding to \$7.5 million. Facilities grants are provided to local charter schools and state charter schools at a flat amount pursuant to HB 430 (2017 Session).
- House Bill 911 includes \$3.1 million in matching funds to allow the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) to draw an additional \$17 million in federal Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) to provide child care assistance to low-income families; \$500,000 additional funds for the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program; and \$19.4 million in lottery funds to provide Pre-K teachers and assistant teachers with a \$2,000 salary increase.

- \$182,617 is provided to the Professional Standards Commission for two positions specializing in technical assistance to military personnel, veterans, and their spouses to assist their transition into teaching. Legislative Highlights

- HB 1084 (Rep. Will Wade, 9th) creates the 'Protect Students First Act,' which prevents the use of and reliance on curricula or training programs in state public schools that espouse "divisive concepts," such as: one race is inherently superior to another race; the United States of America is fundamentally racist; an individual, by virtue of their race, is inherently racist or oppressive toward individuals of other races; an individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment because of their race; an individual bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other individuals of the same race; an individual feel anguish, guilt, or any other form of psychological distress solely because of his or her race; the appreciation of character traits, such as hard work ethic, are racist or have been advocated for by individuals of a particular race to oppress individuals of another race; any other form of race scapegoating or race stereotyping. No later than August 1, 2022, each local board of education is to adopt a complaint resolution policy to address complaints alleging violations of this new policy. Within three school days of receiving a written complaint, the school principal or principal's designee will determine whether the alleged violation occurred and communicate that decision as well as remedial steps to the complainant within five days. The school principal's determinations will be reviewed by the local school superintendent, or their designee, within 14 days of receiving a written request, and their decision is subject to review by the local board of education or the State Charter Schools Commission. Decisions may be appealed to the State Board of Education, which will make written findings of any violations. In cases where a local school system has been granted one or more waivers, the State Board of Education will immediately suspend one or more waivers in the local school system's contract. In cases where a school system has not been granted a waiver, the state school superintendent will determine whether to exercise their suspension authority. House Bill 1084 adds a new subsection of 20-2-316 that no high school that receives QBE funds shall participate in, sponsor, or provide coaching staff for interscholastic sports events that are conducted under the authority of any athletic association unless that association provides for an executive oversight committee and for reimbursement for such oversight committee. A compliant athletic association has a charter, by-laws, and a 10-member executive oversight committee. The athletic association must also provide for reimbursement for travel expenses incurred by the executive oversight committee for the performance of their duties. If an athletic association determines that it is necessary and appropriate to prohibit students whose gender is male from participating in athletic events that are designated for students whose gender is female, then the athletic association may adopt a policy to that effect, and that policy shall be applied to all of the association's participating high schools. Any school that does not comply with this code section shall forfeit its allotted funding provided for under Article 6.

- HB 1178 (Rep. Josh Bonner, 72nd) establishes the 'Parents' Bill of Rights' and states that it is the fundamental right of a parent to direct the upbringing and education of their minor children. The bill certifies that no state or local government entity, local board of education, or any officer, employee, or agent thereof may infringe on the fundamental right of a parent without the action being reasonable and necessary to achieve a narrowly tailored, compelling state interest and is otherwise served by less restrictive means. The fundamental rights of parents include the right to: direct the moral and religious upbringing of their minor child; review all instructional materials intended for use in the classroom of their minor child; apply to enroll their minor child into a public or private school, or other available options; access and review all records relating to their child unless prohibited by law; access information relating to promotion and retention policies and high school graduation requirements; and consent in writing before a photograph, video, or voice recording of their child is made. Each governing body, in consultation with parents, teachers, and administrators, will develop and adopt a policy or regulation to promote parental involvement in public schools. The policy will include procedures for a parent to fulfill all the parts of their fundamental rights, as previously listed.
- HB 1215 (Rep. Brad Thomas, 21st) revises O.C.G.A. 20-2-2066 to allow students to withdraw without penalty from a local school in the school system in which a student resides and enroll in a charter school with available classroom space. Each local board of education will adopt a universal, streamlined transfer process. The bill includes a definition of "charter school," which clarifies that it operates under a charter school governing board, has a code assigned by the Department of Education, and is the subject of a report card prepared and distributed by the Office of Student Achievement. HB 1215 addresses funding of local charter schools by noting the calculation of allocation of local revenue is adjusted at least semi-annually based on collected local revenues.
- HB 1283 (Rep. Demetrius Douglas, 78th) amends O.C.G.A. 20-2-323 to provide for recess every day for students in kindergarten and grades one through five beginning in the 2022-2023 School Year. Recess is not required on any school day in which a student has had physical education or for other reasons. Each local education board shall establish written policies on recess.
- HB 1292 (Rep. Rick Jasperse, 11th) prohibits students who participate in 4-H sponsored activities or programs from being counted as absent from school. The school principal or their designee may request documentation, as proof, from a 4-H representative.
- HB 1303 (Rep. Robert Dickey, 140th) revises O.C.G.A. 20-2-154.3 relating to a pilot program for agricultural education in elementary schools to transition the pilot to an optional ongoing program. The Department of Education will provide a program evaluation to the House and Senate related committees by December 31, 2022.
- HR 650 (Rep. Matthew Gambill, 15th) creates the House Study Committee on Literacy Instruction. The committee consists of five members of the House of Representatives and nine

non-legislative members who are tasked with determining the definition of evidence-based instruction, the impact of low literacy on Georgia's economic and workforce competitiveness, and the extent of different programs in Georgia that work in birth through retirement literacy instruction. Additionally, the committee shall examine how programs that utilize evidence-based literacy instruction can adapt as new evidence emerges, examine changes that should be made to educational standards to support evidence-based instruction; and determine how the state can best support local educational ecosystems. The committee is abolished on December 1, 2022.

- HR 881 (Rep. Mack Jackson, 128th) encourages each public school in the state of Georgia to study the Civil Rights Era and related subjects in order to affirm the commitment of the people of Georgia to reject bigotry, to champion equal protection under the law, and to act in opposition to injustice wherever it occurs. HR 881 encourages the inclusion of curriculum on natural law, the natural rights principles of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the tactics and strategy of non-violent resistance.
- SB 220 (Sen. Chuck Payne, 54th) provides for a mandatory course of instruction in financial literacy for students in eleventh or twelfth grade and creates the Georgia Commission on Civics Education. Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, the State Board of Education will adopt content standards for minimum course of instruction in financial literacy to be completed by students in eleventh or twelfth grade. By January 1, 2023, the Professional Standards Commission will establish requirements and procedures to ensure educators are deemed licensed to teach financial literacy. SB 220 cites 'The Georgia Civics Renewal Act,' which creates the Georgia Commission on Civics Education, consisting of 17 members. The purpose of the commission is to provide for and enhance the education of students on the importance of civic involvement, public service, and communication and collaboration among organizations in the state.
- SB 514 (Sen. Clint Dixon, 45th) creates the 'Unmask Georgia Students Act.' SB 514 provides that no local board of education, local school superintendent, governing body of a charter school, or school personnel can make or enforce any rules that require students to wear face masks or face coverings while present in any area of a school, unless that rule allows a parent or guardian to exempt their child from such rule. A parent who exempts their child is not required to provide a reason or show any certification of a child's health status. A student cannot suffer any adverse disciplinary or academic consequences as a result of the decision of the parent. SB 514 sunsets on June 30, 2027.
- SB 588 (Sen. Butch Miller, 49th) amends O.C.G.A. 20-2-58 to provide that all meetings of a local board of education have a public comment period on its agenda posted prior to the meeting. Each local board must set the dates of their meetings annually and make that schedule available to the public on its website. Each local board must adopt rules of conduct for public meetings and publish these in a prominent manner on its website. No member of the

public is to be removed from a meeting unless there is an actual disruption of the proceedings or there is a violation of the rules of conduct established by that board. Visual and sound recordings are permitted at all public meetings of a local board of education.

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