



SREB

Legislative Report

Summary

Most SREB states have completed their 2016 regular sessions. The Texas Legislature, which meets biennially and last met in 2015, did not meet this year. Arkansas met in its biennial fiscal session. Louisiana completed its regular session as this report was completed, and it immediately convened a special session to address revenues for the coming fiscal year. West Virginia completed its regular session in March without an approved budget for 2016-17, but it reconvened in a special session in late May; budget work was ongoing at the time of this writing. Delaware legislators are scheduled to complete their session on June 30, while North Carolina legislators will continue their work into the summer. Summaries of final budget actions in West Virginia and of final legislative and budget actions in Delaware, Louisiana and North Carolina will appear in a forthcoming edition of *Legislative Report*.

Most states that have adopted general fund budgets for the coming year approved increases ranging from 4.3 percent to 9.9 percent. More modest increases were adopted in Arkansas (2.8 percent), Georgia (2.9 percent), and Kentucky (2.7 percent). General funds decline in Oklahoma (-5.3 percent), while West Virginia is expected to adopt a reduced general fund budget as well.

Funding increases for elementary and secondary education average around 1 percent in a handful of states, while larger increases were approved in Alabama (4.8 percent), Florida (2.3 percent), Georgia (6 percent), South Carolina (10.5 percent), Tennessee (5.7 percent) and Virginia (5 percent). Reductions were imposed in Mississippi (-0.7 percent) and Oklahoma (-2.4 percent).

Higher education funding remains flat in Arkansas, while state funding declines for colleges and universities in Kentucky (-4 percent), universities in Mississippi (-3.9 percent), and postsecondary education in Oklahoma (-16.9 percent). Many two- and four-year institutions saw increases up to 6 percent, with greater increases for Maryland universities (7 percent), South Carolina universities (6.3 percent), Tennessee Board of Regents institutions (9 percent), and Virginia's two-year colleges (7.2 percent) and four-year institutions (8.8 percent).

Several states addressed the role of state-mandated **student assessments**. Oklahoma legislation eliminates the current statewide assessment system; a new assessment system will take effect in 2017-18. Maryland limited administration of kindergarten readiness assessments to a sample of students in each school system. Georgia reduced the number of tests administered to elementary and secondary education students, while West Virginia eliminated the requirement that home-school students submit annual assessment results in favor of assessment results at grade levels three, five, eight and 11. Florida requires school districts to award course credit to a student who obtains a passing score on an end-of-course assessment — even if the student did not complete or enroll in the course.

Teacher licensure and career advancement continued as a common topic across SREB states. Florida will permit teachers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) subject areas to obtain professional educator certificates without completing a teacher preparation program. Virginia established alternative licensure procedures for high school career and technical teachers and trade and industrial education instructors.

Oklahoma legislators allowed school districts to establish systems that provide career pathways and leadership roles for teachers, and legislators established a scholarship program to help cover competency exam costs for teacher candidates to obtain certification. Maryland established a pilot program to improve teacher induction, retention and advancement, and South Carolina increased funding for its rural teacher recruitment initiative. Mississippi established additional salary supplements for National Board Certified teachers who teach in certain counties.

With regards to **school leadership**, Florida established a Principal Autonomy Pilot Program and will approve school leader preparation programs established by school districts and postsecondary institutions. In 2018, West Virginia will implement a framework to allow teachers, principals and administrative leaders to accomplish systemic change in school leadership. Georgia specified that a charter school principal may not serve as the school's chief financial officer.

To address **low-performing schools**, legislators established the Mississippi Achievement School District, which will assume control of persistently low-performing schools and school districts. Mississippi also required low-performing schools and districts selected by the state Department of Education to participate in the reading intervention program to involve the school or district leadership team as directed by the department. Oklahoma will allow persistently low-performing schools to implement a locally developed, evidence-based intervention model. South Carolina will develop a system to provide technical assistance to school districts with low annual accountability ratings or with low percentages of students who meet state standards.

Legislation to combat **bullying** included a Florida requirement for each school district to integrate policies that prohibit bullying and harassment with a bullying prevention and intervention program. Kentucky requires each board of education to prohibit bullying in its code of discipline. Maryland included social media communications in its definition of bullying. Oklahoma schools may decline to enroll a student who was removed from another school for using electronic communications to harass, intimidate or bully faculty or students.

The growing importance of **computer science instruction** resulted in several pieces of legislation across states. Georgia added computer science courses to the advanced science courses a high school student may take to gain eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship. Oklahoma required students who enroll in the alternate core curriculum to take a computer science course. Tennessee allows high school students to satisfy the fine arts graduation requirement by completing a computer science course. Virginia incorporated computer science

into its statewide Standards of Learning. West Virginia will develop standards for computer science instruction, learning and curriculum.

Several states tackled **college affordability**. Kentucky will implement a last-dollar financial aid program that will allow students to attend community and technical colleges at no cost. Florida requires the governing boards of its university and college systems to annually identify strategies to promote college affordability. Maryland will provide a \$250 contribution to a student's qualified tuition plan in lieu of a state income tax deduction and tax credits for individuals with outstanding undergraduate student loan debt of at least \$5,000.

Legislators in a few states raised the topic of **higher education performance funding**. Florida will provide funding to state colleges that meet performance metrics established by the state Board of Education and will provide additional funding to the highest-performing state college; legislators also increased funds for performance incentives to state colleges and universities. Kentucky will begin distributing a portion of state funding to universities based on their achievement of legislatively approved metrics, beginning in 2017-18.

Final Legislative and Budget Actions

Alabama (<http://www.legislature.state.al.us/>)

The Alabama Legislature adjourned its regular session in early May after debating several topics, including a statewide lottery, Medicaid and prison reform. In April, legislators passed a \$6.3 billion Education Trust Fund budget for 2016-17 (up 5.6 percent over 2015-16), which provides state funds to all levels of education and other programs. The State General Fund budget, which funds all other state activities, increases 5.2 percent to \$1.8 billion.

Elementary and secondary education receive \$4.4 billion (up 4.8 percent), with \$4 billion devoted to the K-12 Foundation Program (up 5 percent). State funds to the state Department of Education increase 4.3 percent to \$205.1 million. Funding to the department includes \$16.4 million for statewide student assessment, up 32.3 percent, \$2.8 million for the English Language Learners Program, up 37.4 percent, and \$1.3 million for arts education, up 62.5 percent. Funding to Advanced Placement under the department increases 19 percent to \$6.3 million.

Funding to higher education totals \$1.6 billion, a 4.5 percent increase from 2015-16. Four-year institutions receive \$1.1 billion, up 3 percent. Funds to the two-year college system increase 5.6 percent to \$362.2 million.

In 2012, the Legislature passed the Alabama Ahead Act to support the installation of wireless internet connections in local school systems and facilitate the transition to electronic instructional materials. Legislators in 2016 approved House Bill 41, which delays the date of implementation to the 2016-17 school year and removes the requirement for school districts that participate in Alabama Ahead to provide electronic textbooks to students in grades nine-12. If funding is available, districts may provide: wireless internet for students; upgrades to wireless internet infrastructure; and electronic devices, digital content and other electronic services and support.

House Bill 41 also creates the Alabama Ahead Oversight Committee to evaluate whether applications submitted to the department by school districts for participation in Alabama Ahead are appropriate and to oversee and administer implementation of the act.

Senate Bill 11 establishes the Jason Flatt Act to combat student suicide. School districts will adopt a policy on student suicide prevention and provide annual training to all certified school employees on suicide awareness and prevention. The state Department of Education will create an advisory committee with stakeholders in mental health and suicide prevention to assist in developing rules regarding school employee training and a list of approved materials. The committee and the department will develop a model policy on suicide prevention for school districts.

Other legislation

HB 121 provides a 4 percent salary increase to teachers, community college employees and other education employees who make less than \$75,000 annually, beginning in 2016-17. Employees who make \$75,000 or more will receive a 2 percent pay raise.

HB 168 allows a child who turns six on or before December 31 (previously September 1), to enroll in first grade at a public school.

HB 218 requires schools to teach cursive writing to students by the end of third grade.

SB 90 enacts the Apprenticeship Tax Credit Act of 2016, allowing an eligible employer, from 2017-2021, to claim a nonrefundable income tax credit of \$1,000 for each apprentice employed for at least seven months. An employer may not exceed five claims yearly. The bill caps the credit at \$3 million per year.

SB 215 establishes the Alabama School Bus Safety Act to allow a school district to work with law enforcement agencies to operate an automated school bus violation enforcement program.

Arkansas (<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/>)

Arkansas adjourned its fiscal session in early May following the passage of the Revenue Stabilization Act, which sets financial priorities based on expected revenue. The \$5.3 billion 2016-17 budget, up 2.8 percent over the original 2015-16 budget, provides flat funding to agencies with small increases to elementary and secondary education, human services and economic development. The rainy day fund will receive \$13.8 million, nearly triple the 2015-16 amount.

General funds to the Public School Fund increase 1.1 percent to \$2.2 billion; the increase in funding goes to elementary and secondary schools. Funds to the State Library and the Department of Career Education, administered through the Public School Fund, remain at the 2015-16 level.

The budget funds postsecondary educational institutions at the 2015-16 level. Four-year institutions receive \$588.1 million in general funds, two-year institutions receive \$111.9 million and technical colleges receive \$33.5 million. The budget also devotes \$40 million, the same amount as in 2015-16, toward higher education grants that provide financial aid to students.

Florida (<http://www.leg.state.fl.us/>)

The Legislature concluded its session in March and passed a budget for 2016-17 as well as several measures to reduce taxes. Included in the tax measures were a permanent extension of the sales tax exemption on manufacturing equipment, a three-day sales tax holiday in August for school supplies and a reduction in the required millage rate for local property taxes that support education. The Legislature approved \$30.3 billion in general fund appropriations for 2016-17, up 4.3 percent from the 2015-16 budget.

State general funds for K-12 school operations total nearly \$10.6 billion (up 2.3 percent), including \$7.7 billion for the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) funding formula (up 2.8 percent) and nearly \$2.9 billion (up 1.2 percent) for class size reduction. The Florida Best and Brightest Teacher Scholarship Program — established in 2015 to provide up to \$10,000 to each teacher who earns a rating of highly effective and whose SAT or ACT score is in the 80th percentile or higher — receives \$49 million, up 11.3 percent. Voluntary prekindergarten receives \$395.2 million in general funds, up 1.5 percent.

General funds for Florida College System (FCS) institutions are up 3.1 percent to \$966.2 million, which includes \$60 million (up 50 percent) for performance funding based on the model approved by the state Board of Education and \$10 million (double the 2015-16 amount) for performance-based incentives to colleges with students who earn industry certifications in certain fields. State universities receive nearly \$2.5 billion, up 4.9 percent, including \$500 million (up 25 percent) for performance-based incentives. General funds for student financial aid decline 11.3 percent to \$81.5 million, but for the National Merit Scholars Incentive Program are up 54.3 percent to \$12.9 million.

While lottery funds are projected to increase 7 percent to nearly \$1.8 billion, allocations to several programs in 2016-17 remain the same as provided in 2015-16, and Bright Futures merit-based scholarships receive \$217.3 million, a 9.4 percent decrease. Total lottery funding amounts for 2016-17 that are greater than the 2015-16 amount include: \$64.9 million for need-based Florida Student Assistance Grants to undergraduate students, up 23.1 percent; \$276.8 million for the FEFP school finance formula, up 26.2 percent; \$88.5 million for school district workforce education, up 11.8 percent; \$273.8 million for FCS, up 11.8 percent; and \$276.1 million for the state university system, up 12.6 percent.

The Legislature made changes to a wide range of education issues, including charter school approval and governance, school choice, alternative methods of awarding course credit to students and performance incentives for state colleges, through House Bill 7029. Under the bill, charter school applications must disclose information regarding all applicants, board members and service providers, including information regarding other charter schools that they operate or that have closed. The bill requires automatic termination of a charter school's contract after two consecutive grades of F under the statewide school accountability system, permits an approved charter school to defer opening for up to two years to allow facility planning, and requires school districts to provide funding to charter schools monthly or twice-monthly. The legislation also establishes a controlled open enrollment policy that permits parents to enroll their child in any school or charter school in any school district, subject to both school capacity and maximum class size restrictions. The bill also requires each district to create a process to transfer a student from one teacher to another at the request of the parent.

House Bill 7029 requires — even if a student has not completed or enrolled in the particular course — a school district to award course credit to a student who obtains a passing score on the corresponding end-of-course assessment, Advanced Placement examination or College Level Examination Program examination; it also permits districts and charter schools to award course credit for passage of an online content assessment. The bill establishes: the Florida Seal of Biliteracy Program for high school graduates who attain a high level of competency in one or more foreign languages; the Distinguished Florida College System Program to recognize and provide additional funding to the highest-performing FCS institution; and the Florida College System Performance-Based Incentive, which will provide funding to FCS institutions that meet performance metrics adopted by the state Board of Education.

Legislators approved Senate Bill 672 to modify several programs that provide educational options to students. The bill codifies the Students Attired for Education (SAFE) Act, established through the 2015 appropriations act and which provides \$10 per kindergarten through grade eight student to each school district

that implements a districtwide standard student attire policy. General funding for the SAFE Act in 2016-17 is up 40 percent to \$14 million. The bill renames the Florida Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts Program (provided for students with disabilities to pay for instructional materials, curriculum, specialized services or assessments) as the Gardiner Scholarship Program and makes numerous changes, including permitting the use of scholarship funds for online instruction or for instruction at independent colleges and universities. The bill allocates general funds totaling \$71.2 million (up 29.5 percent) for the program in 2016-17.

Senate Bill 672 establishes the Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program Act, which permits public and private colleges and universities in the state to offer transition programs for college students with intellectual disabilities age 18 to 26 and establishes a scholarship for students attending those programs; the bill provides \$3 million for program start-up grants in 2016-17 and \$3.5 million for scholarships. The bill also establishes the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities at the University of Central Florida, which will coordinate the provision of information on programs and services for students with disabilities to those students and their parents; \$1.5 million is provided for the center's operations in 2016-17.

Also relating to educational choice and students with disabilities, House Bill 837 will now permit private schools to offer transition-to-work programs for recipients of the McKay scholarship (which allows students with disabilities to use state-provided K-12 education funding to attend private schools) who are 17 to 22 years of age and have not received a high school diploma. Private schools may enter dual enrollment agreements with colleges and universities, and school districts may provide exceptional student services to home schooled students who enroll in public schools solely for the purpose of receiving those services.

Two bills address school leadership. The Legislature established, by passing House Bill 287, the Principal Autonomy Pilot Program Initiative within the state Department of Education, which will provide principals at participating schools with increased autonomy to operate their schools in ways that significantly improve student achievement and school management. Districts seeking to participate in the initiative must identify three low-rated schools and three principals who have earned performance evaluation ratings of highly effective in the prior academic year who the district will assign to those schools. Participating principals will receive salary supplements of \$10,000 per year. House Bill 719 requires the state Department of Education to establish a process for the approval of competency-based school leader preparation programs offered by school districts and postsecondary institutions that are aligned with state standards for school principal leadership and that allow a school leader to obtain a certificate in educational leadership.

Other legislation

HB 189 permits a teacher who holds a temporary educator certificate to obtain a professional educator certificate without completing a teacher preparation program. The teacher must hold a master's or higher degree in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) field, teach a high school course on the subject of that degree, receive a highly effective teacher performance evaluation and achieve a passing score on the Florida Teacher Certificate Examination.

HB 229 requires each school district to review its policies prohibiting bullying and harassment at least every three years and to integrate those policies with a bullying prevention and intervention program.

HB 585 requires each school district to submit to the state Department of Education, at least once every three years, proposed procedures for the provision of special instruction and services for exceptional students. The state Board of Education will establish rules for the provision of instruction to homebound or hospitalized students, including eligibility criteria and procedures for determining a student's eligibility.

HB 793 establishes the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award for students who are seeking an applied technology postsecondary diploma, a postsecondary technical degree or a career certificate; a recipient who completes a technical degree program may also receive an award to obtain a related bachelor of science or a bachelor of applied science degree.

HB 1365 establishes the five-year Competency-Based Education Pilot Program within the state Department of Education, under which participating schools will allow students to progress to higher grade levels based on demonstrated mastery of course content. The program will begin in 2016-17.

HB 7019 requires the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida and the state Board of Education to annually identify strategies to promote college affordability for all Floridians; the bill also allows the Board of Governors and each state college to use innovative pricing techniques and payment options for textbooks and instructional materials.

Georgia (<http://www.legis.ga.gov/>)

The Georgia Legislature adjourned its legislative session after passing a \$23.7 billion 2016-17 statewide budget, up 2.9 percent over the amended 2015-16 budget, including \$20.4 billion in general funds, up 3.9 percent. Amendments to the 2015-16 budget provided \$1.2 billion in additional state funds. Elementary and secondary education received an additional \$109.9 million for the Quality Basic Education (QBE) funding formula. K-12 schools also received a supplemental \$1.7 million to support information technology services. Funding to the state Move on When Ready dual-enrollment program increased by \$20.2 million, while the merit-based HOPE and Zell Miller Scholarships (for top-performing students) received an additional \$30.3 million in lottery funds.

In 2016-17, elementary and secondary education receives \$8.9 billion in general funds, up 6 percent over the amended 2015-16 budget. General funding for the QBE formula increases 6.5 percent to \$8.1 billion. The increase includes \$300 million to offset part of the austerity reductions made during the economic downturn and allow local education authorities the flexibility to end teacher furlough days, increase the number of instructional days and increase teacher salaries. Technology and career education programs receive \$17.5 million, up 2.4 percent.

The budget devotes \$413.4 million in state funds to the Department of Early Care and Learning, up 9.7 percent. The state's pre-k program, funded by the state lottery with \$357.8 million (an 11.4 percent increase), receives \$26.2 million to implement a new compensation model, retain lead teachers and increase assistant teacher salaries.

General funds to the University System of Georgia increase 5.9 percent for 2016-17 to \$2.1 billion, while funds to the Technical College System of Georgia increase 3 percent to \$350 million. The Georgia Student Finance Commission, the state agency that administers student financial aid, operates with \$807 million in state funds, up 5 percent. The lottery-funded, merit-based HOPE Scholarship for students who attend public postsecondary institutions receives \$522.5 million, a 5.8 percent increase. The budget funds the HOPE Scholarship for students who attend independent colleges and universities, the HOPE Grant for students who seek a postsecondary diploma or certificate, and the HOPE GED at the 2015-16 levels. General funding to Move on When Ready, the state dual enrollment program, increases 18.7 percent to \$58.3 million. The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia announced in February that it will not increase tuition in 2016-17.

Senate Bill 364 alters provisions relating to the statewide school personnel evaluation system. The bill reduces the portion of evaluations based on student growth from 50 percent to 30 percent for educators and from 70 percent to 40 percent for principals and assistant principals. Only the scores from students who attended at least 90 percent of course instructional days will count in evaluations. Professional growth will count for 20 percent for educator evaluations, and observations will count for 50 percent.

In principal and assistant principal evaluations, school climate (the quality and character of school life) must count for 10 percent; a combination of other performance data will count for 20 percent; and the results of evaluations, observations and standards of practice will count for the remaining 30 percent.

Changes to student assessment include decreasing the number of tests elementary and secondary students will take and adding a school readiness assessment for first- and second-grade students that will not factor into teacher evaluations. The bill requires that testing occur as close to the end of the school year or semester as possible by 2017-18.

Other legislation

HB 100 prohibits local schools where enrollment includes at least 5 percent out-of-district students from providing virtual instruction to such students should its College and Career Ready Performance Index fall below the state average. Ninety percent of funds received for out-of-district students must be spent on their virtual instruction.

HB 402 encourages employers to provide work-based learning opportunities to students aged 16 and up by offering a reduction in workers' compensation premiums up to 5 percent to employers certified by the state Board of Education as a work-based learning employer.

HB 739 makes optional the state process for reviewing and approving instructional materials. It requires school districts to set up a review and recommendation process for locally approved instructional materials.

HB 801 adds courses in computer science to the list of eligible advanced science courses a high school student may take to gain eligibility for a HOPE Scholarship. For postsecondary students, the Board of Regents will identify a list of STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) college courses leading to employment in high demand fields for which weighted grades will be used to determine HOPE continuing eligibility.

HB 879 establishes a Georgia Seal of Biliteracy, which recognizes high school graduates who attain a high level of proficiency in one or more languages in addition to achieving high proficiency in English language arts courses.

HB 895 establishes financial training requirements for charter school leaders and personnel and prohibits a charter school principal from serving simultaneously as the school's chief financial officer.

Kentucky (<http://www.lrc.ky.gov/>)

The Legislature adjourned on the last possible legislative day after approving House Bill 303, the 2016-18 biennial budget. General funds total \$10.6 billion in 2016-17, up 2.7 percent over the original 2015-16 budget, and rise 2.3 percent in 2017-18 to nearly \$10.9 billion. However, as a result of large general fund increases for state-supported retirement systems, most programs receive reduced or level funding. Kentucky Retirement Systems, which did not receive general funding in the 2014-16 biennium, receives general funds totaling \$98.2 million in 2016-17 and \$87.6 million in 2017-18. General funds for the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement

System increase 160.3 percent to \$779.2 million in 2016-17 and decline 4.4 percent to \$744.8 million in 2017-18.

Statewide general funds for K-12 education rise 0.9 percent to \$4.1 billion in 2016-17, including \$3 billion for SEEK formula funding to schools, also up 0.9 percent. Funding to each decline in 2017-18 by 0.2 percent and 0.4 percent, respectively.

General funds to state-supported postsecondary institutions decline 4 percent to \$879.4 million in 2016-17. While general funds provided directly to those institutions decline another 4 percent to \$844 million in 2017-18, the budget provides \$42.9 million to establish the Postsecondary Education Performance Fund, which will distribute the funds to institutions based on their achievement of legislatively approved performance goals and metrics.

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, which administers statewide student financial aid programs, receives \$240.2 million in 2016-17, up 17 percent, and \$245.2 million in 2017-18, up 2.1 percent. This includes \$15.9 million in 2017-18 for the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship that will provide last-dollar financial aid to permit students to attend Kentucky Community and Technical College System institutions at no cost.

To promote proper postsecondary institutional board stewardship statewide, the Legislature passed House Bill 15, which requires new appointees to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education to complete an orientation and education program. The bill further requires the council, in cooperation with each public university and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, to develop continuing education programs for the council and for public college and university governing board members.

State law requires schools to provide students with 1,062 hours of instruction during a minimum of 170 school days per school year. For the 2015-16 academic year, House Bill 111 allows school districts to add time to instructional days to reach the hour requirement; instructional days may not exceed seven hours, however, unless the district receives approval from the commissioner of education for an innovative alternative calendar. The bill allows the commissioner to waive the remaining instructional hours required if, after the commissioner provides scheduling assistance to the district, he or she determines the district has maximized instructional time but will be unable to complete the required hours.

Other legislation

HB 158 provides students with intellectual disabilities who enroll in courses as a part of a comprehensive transition and postsecondary program in 2016-17 and beyond \$500 in financial aid for enrollment in six or more credit hours in an academic term (previously, \$250) and \$250 in financial aid for enrollment in less than six hours in an academic term (previously, \$125).

SB 33 requires each high school to provide CPR training as a part of the health or physical education course required for graduation.

SB 140 authorizes Kentucky's participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), which establishes national standards for interstate online education course and program offerings.

SB 228 defines bullying as it relates to the education process and requires each local board of education, in its code of acceptable behavior and discipline, to prohibit bullying.

SB 296 establishes as a statewide program the Governor's School for Entrepreneurs, a learning program for high school students to develop innovative products and services. Legislators appropriated \$200,200 in each year of the budget for the program.

Maryland (<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/>)

The General Assembly completed its work on the state budget two weeks prior to the end of the session, permitting work on other legislative priorities, including criminal justice reform, police accountability, a system to prioritize funding for certain transportation projects, additional provisions to prohibit wage discrimination and assistance to impoverished areas. Legislators approved a \$17.2 billion statewide general fund budget for 2016-17, up 4.9 percent over the originally approved budget for 2015-16.

State-supported colleges and universities receive nearly \$1.4 billion in general funds, up 7 percent. State aid to community colleges is up 4.9 percent to \$251 million, while state funding for community college employee benefits totals \$63.3 million, up 7.6 percent. State aid to nonpublic colleges is up 18.7 percent to \$50.8 million. General funds for the need-based Educational Excellence Awards program are up 2.4 percent to \$80 million. Tuition for in-state undergraduates at University System of Maryland institutions is up 2 percent for 2016-17.

General funded state aid for primary and secondary education is up 0.6 percent to just less than \$6 billion, which includes \$2.7 billion in Foundation Program formula funds, a 1.1 percent increase. Also included in aid to education is \$434.9 million (up 2.2 percent) to educate students with disabilities, \$227.2 million (up 4.6 percent) for Limited English Proficient students and \$270.9 million (up 1.7 percent) for student transportation.

The 1.3 percent increase in state education aid for innovative programs, to \$8.1 million, provides \$104,000 in grants for operation of the two Education Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) schools that are set to operate in 2016-17. P-TECH schools will offer a six-year program that integrates high school and two-year postsecondary education with workplace skills in STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) fields. Senate Bill 376 establishes P-TECH schools in the state; legislators included \$600,000 in the amended 2015-16 budget to provide planning grants for six P-TECH schools.

A tax increment financing (TIF) district encourages development in a defined geographic area by reinvesting the increased property tax revenues that result from development toward further development in that area. In 2015-16, state education aid provided to certain low-wealth areas of the state declined due to TIF development districts located in those areas. In response, the General Assembly approved House Bill 285, which in 2017-18 and 2018-19, provides grants of additional state education aid to low-income school districts that approve TIF development districts after May 1, 2016, in order to offset the reduced aid amount. Grants are provided to counties that receive disparity grant funding from the state, which is provided to counties with per-capita income tax revenues that are less than 75 percent of the state average.

To help high school students from low-income families pre-qualify for Guaranteed Access Grants and receive mentoring and guidance services, the General Assembly previously established the College Readiness Outreach Program. However, the program has neither received any funding nor provided any services. House Bill 1403 renames the program as the Next Generation Scholars of Maryland Program and requires the governor, beginning in 2017-18, to include \$5 million in the state budget annually for Next Generation Scholars of Maryland grants to nonprofit organizations. Services provided to each student under the program by nonprofit organizations must include plans for graduating from high school and college, internship opportunities,

financial aid assistance, mentorship and counseling, and a summer bridge program for students entering postsecondary education directly from high school.

House Bill 1402 requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop a comprehensive plan for extended day or summer enhancement programs by December 1, 2016, in consultation with the state Department of Natural Resources. School systems and nonprofit organizations may apply for grants from MSDE to create or expand extended day and summer enhancement programs or for schools to establish new educational or recreational partnerships with nonprofit organizations. Beginning in 2017-18, the governor must include \$7.5 million in the state budget annually for the program.

Reflecting broad concerns over the increasing cost of attaining a college education, the General Assembly passed House Bill 1014 and Senate Bill 676, establishing the College Affordability Act of 2016. Under the act, a taxpayer may accept a \$250 state contribution to a student's qualified tuition plan account in lieu of an income tax deduction and may apply for a tax credit of up to \$5,000 if he or she incurred at least \$20,000 in undergraduate student loan debt and has at least \$5,000 in debt outstanding. To encourage students receiving state aid to complete their studies on-time, the act requires state institutions of higher education to prorate, in students' third and fourth academic years, the award amounts of Educational Excellence Awards and Guaranteed Access Grants provided to students who completed 24 or more academic credits in the prior year but did not complete 30 credits.

Other legislation

HB 72 requires the state Board of Education to develop and all county boards of education and nonpublic schools to implement an age-appropriate sexual assault and abuse awareness and prevention program.

HB 85 requires a school to provide the parents of a child with a disability with written information for contacting early intervention and special education family support services staff members within the local school system; the bill also requires the information to be provided in the parent's native language.

HB 365 includes social media communications in the definition of bullying and requires the state Board of Education to update the model policy prohibiting bullying, harassment or intimidation in schools by September 1, 2016.

HB 657 and SB 794 require MSDE and school boards to limit the administration of the kindergarten readiness assessment to a representative sample of students within each school system.

HB 668 and SB 584 require the governor to appropriate matching funds to which the state committed when applying for an expansion grant through the federal Preschool Development Grant Program in any fiscal year the state receives grant funds.

HB 999 and SB 905 establish the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, which will provide recommendations, based on the statutorily required study of the adequacy of state education funding, on how to prepare students for postsecondary education and for meeting the needs of the state workforce and the global economy.

SB 493 establishes the Teacher Induction, Retention, and Advancement Pilot Program for first-year teachers.

SB 823 extends the date (to December 30, 2016) by which the Task Force to Study the Implementation of a Dyslexia Education Program must submit its findings and recommendations and adds a requirement that the task force determine the services provided by successful dyslexia education programs in other states and the cost of those programs.

SB 910 establishes the Maryland Education Development Collaborative to study, recommend and promote policies that support learning, socioeconomic and demographic diversity in public schools and reducing achievement gaps in schools.

Mississippi (<http://www.legislature.ms.gov/>)

Legislators completed the regular session in April after approving measures that reduce appropriations for 2016-17 and lower taxes in coming years, including a 10-year phase out of the corporate franchise tax and a phased elimination over five years of state taxes on the first \$5,000 of an individual's income.

Legislators appropriated \$2.3 billion for K-12 education in 2016-17, down 0.7 percent. This includes \$2 billion for Mississippi Adequate Education Program formula funding, up 0.5 percent, and nearly \$112 million for statewide programs through the state Department of Education, down 9.5 percent. Statewide general funds for vocational and technical education decline 0.1 percent to \$76.1 million. General fund support to universities totals \$338.4 million, down 3.9 percent, while funding for state financial aid to university students totals \$38.8 million, up 2.4 percent.

At the time of this writing, further information about the 2016-17 budget was not available; expanded information on final budget actions in Mississippi will appear in a forthcoming edition of *Legislative Report*.

In April, the governor announced expenditure reductions and allocated stabilization funds to cover a general fund revenue shortfall for 2015-16. The 0.43 percent budget reduction did not apply to vocational and technical education or to student financial aid. The \$10 million allocated by the governor from the stabilization fund was the second such allocation of the fiscal year; he previously ordered the transfer of \$35.2 million from the stabilization fund to the general fund in January.

With the passage of House Bill 989, the Legislature created the statewide Mississippi Achievement School District, which is intended to transform persistently low-performing public schools and school districts into quality educational institutions. Schools or districts that receive an F rating in two consecutive school years or during two out of three consecutive years may be transferred to the achievement district. The state Board of Education will determine which schools and districts are transferred to the district. In determining which schools and districts are eligible for transfer, the state Board may not consider school ratings from prior to the 2015-16 academic year. The state Board may revert a transferred school or district back to local governance once it has attained an accountability rating of C or better for five consecutive years. The state Board will select an individual to serve as superintendent of the Mississippi Achievement School District.

Teachers who obtain National Board Certification are provided with a \$6,000 annual salary supplement. House Bill 207 provides, subject to the availability of funds, an additional \$4,000 salary supplement to National Board Certified teachers who provide instruction in certain counties.

Legislators passed Senate Bill 2064 to establish the Distance Learning Collaborative Act, which establishes a grant program at the state Department of Education to improve distance learning services, primarily in rural areas. The department will award grants for distance learning collaborative organizations to acquire equipment, instructional programming, technical assistance and instruction or to cover the cost of tuition and fees for participating students. The program will begin with the 2016-17 school year, subject to appropriation by the Legislature, which may choose to implement the program in phases.

In 2013, legislators established the Mississippi Charter Schools Act. Previously, only students assigned to the school district where a charter school is established were eligible to attend that school. With the passage

of Senate Bill 2161, any student who resides in a school district that has received a C, D or F rating under the state educational accountability system may enroll in a charter school established under the act. The bill also specifies that each charter school that serves grades nine through 12 must ensure that its graduation requirements meet or exceed those set by the state Department of Education for a regular high school diploma.

Currently, some school district superintendents are elected. With the passage of Senate Bill 2438, all district superintendents must be appointed by the respective local school board by the beginning of 2019.

Other legislation

HB 928 requires the state superintendent of public education to annually prepare a report on the number of students arrested for unlawful activity that occurred on school property or during a school-related activity.

SB 2157 specifies that the intensive instruction and intervention provided to K-3 students who exhibit substantial deficiency in reading must be documented in an individual reading plan. Beginning in 2018-19, the bill prohibits a school from promoting to grade four a student whose reading deficiency is not remedied by the end of grade three.

SB 2160 permits the state Department of Education to award a high school diploma to an individual who withdrew from high school prior to graduation if he or she completed all requisite graduation coursework and obtains a passing score on an assessment reasonably comparable to the assessments that would have qualified him or her for graduation at the time he or she completed the coursework. The state Department of Education is authorized to determine or develop a comparable assessment for this purpose.

SB 2388 specifies that schools and districts that participate in the reading intervention program for low-performing districts and schools must agree to involve the school or district leadership team as directed by the department, and that the department may include preschool programs in such intervention programs. Participating schools are selected by the state Department of Education.

Oklahoma (<http://www.oklegislature.gov/>)

Prior to the 2016 regular legislative session, the director of the Office of Management and Enterprise Services declared two revenue failures for 2015-16, which occur when collections to the state general revenue fund fall below 95 percent of the revenue projections previously certified by the State Board of Equalization. A revenue failure requires cuts to state-appropriated agencies in equal proportion, resulting in an approximate 7 percent cut to all agencies in 2015-16. Supplemental funding to K-12 education and prisons provided a combined \$78 million from the state rainy day fund to provide some relief against the cuts.

The Legislature adjourned its regular session on the last possible day after passing a \$6.8 billion spending plan for 2016-17, a 5.3 percent decrease from the original 2015-16 budget. Legislators closed a \$1.3 billion budget deficit through a combination of spending cuts to agencies, fee increases, tax credit reductions and one-time revenues, including the issuance of \$200 million in transportation bonds.

Funding to elementary and secondary education decreases 2.4 percent in 2016-17 to \$2.4 billion. The state Board of Career and Technology Education receives \$118.2 million (down 11.6 percent), and the Arts Council receives \$2.9 million (down 17.5 percent). The budget funds the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability with \$1.7 million, down 8.9 percent. Postsecondary education funding in 2016-17 decreases 16.9 percent from the original 2015-16 budget to \$810 million.

House Bill 2957 makes changes to the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Evaluation system, including allowing school districts to discontinue using the quantitative portion of evaluations — though they may continue their use with approval from the state Board of Education and at the expense of the local district. The state Department of Education will work with districts in 2016-17 to develop individualized professional development programs for the evaluation system. Districts will implement the system by 2017-18 and use it for evaluations of teachers and administrators in 2018-19.

House Bill 3218 repeals the state-mandated assessment system and end-of-course instruction tests, directing the state Board of Education to adopt a new system of statewide, standards-aligned student assessments by December 31, 2016, to take effect in 2017-18. At minimum, the new assessments must include: assessments in English language arts and math in grades three through eight and at least once in grades nine through 12; assessments in science at least once in grades three through five, six through nine and 10-12; and an assessment in U.S. history at least once during high school.

The bill also authorizes the state Board of Education to develop new graduation requirements, subject to legislative approval. Schools will include the highest-achieved score on each assessment on student transcripts. The bill requires the state Board of Education to continue to administer assessments by non-electronic means, should it implement an electronic assessment delivery system, and to provide school districts choice in their method of assessment delivery.

House Bill 2720 makes several changes and clarifications about how districts may convert an existing school into a conversion school — a previously traditional public school granted any or all of the flexibilities and accountability measures of a charter school. Unlike charter schools, however, funding and student enrollment occur in the same manner as a traditional public school, and conversion schools remain under the management of the school district. District boards of education, the only entities able to approve or disapprove the creation of a conversion school, must prepare a conversion plan complying with relevant statutes and with the Oklahoma Open Records Act. The district may revert a conversion school to a traditional public school but only during summer breaks between school years.

House Bill 3114 creates the Empowering Teachers to Lead Act. The act establishes a framework with teacher career pathways and leadership roles, each with its own requirements, in which teachers will progress through in the following order: initial teacher, career teacher, model teacher, mentor teacher and leader teacher. The bill also sets compensation requirements for each role. Districts may apply to the state Department of Education to implement the framework or a comparable system. Districts may also apply for a planning grant to design and implement a framework, subject to the availability of funds.

In addition to provisions in House Bill 3218 mentioned above, the Legislature passed several bills to alter high school graduation requirements and recognize graduates with special achievements. Senate Bill 1380 lowers the number of required arts credits from two credits to one and modifies the description of laboratory sciences. In lieu of the college preparatory work ready curriculum competencies required of high school students, statute permits students who receive written approval from a parent or legal guardian to enroll in the state's alternate core curriculum. Students under the alternate curriculum must take a computer science course. Senate Bill 1105 allows students who failed to meet graduation requirements to re-enroll in the school district to complete the requirements. It exempts such students from hourly instructional requirements and the requirement that students enroll in six periods. Senate Bill 1269 directs the state Board of Education to develop, with stakeholders, college and career endorsements that will provide distinction to high school graduates who satisfy curriculum requirements as determined by the state Board of Education and in categories determined by the Board, including STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) and public services.

Other legislation

HB 2404 directs the state Board of Education to provide exemptions that allow children over five years of age to attend half- or full-day early childhood education programs.

HB 2535 allows public (including, magnet, charter and virtual schools) and private schools to enter into agreements with private or public organizations beginning in 2017-18 to create apprenticeship, internship, or mentorship programs for high school juniors and seniors.

HB 2544 permits a school district to enact an extended-day schedule without state Board of Education approval and removes restrictions on which grades may use an extended day schedule.

HB 2614 allows a public school to refuse to provide educational services in a regular school setting to a student removed from another school for using electronic communications with the intent of harassing, intimidating, threatening or bullying faculty or students.

HB 2946 allows the state Board of Education to certify individuals with an out-of-country teaching certificate who meet the other requirements set by the state Board of Education or those who successfully complete a competency exam.

HB 2967 permits a school district to enter into a contract with a student teacher for the coming fiscal year as long as the student teacher obtains a valid teaching certificate by the first day of school. The district may also provide a stipend or signing bonus to the student teacher, conditional upon the completion of the first year of the contract.

HB 3025 expands eligibility for individuals pursuing a standard teaching certificate through an alternative placement program to include individuals who successfully complete a terminal degree from a post-secondary institution or have a bachelor's degree and qualified work experience.

HB 3102 raises the yearly limit on classroom teaching hours for adjunct teachers from 90 to 270 hours.

SB 1038 creates the Teaching Certification Scholarship Program under the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability to provide scholarships toward the costs of competency exams to qualifying teacher candidates. Recipients must teach at an accredited Oklahoma school for a minimum of one year.

SB 1431 allows persistently low-performing schools to implement a locally developed, evidence-based intervention model. If a school continues to need improvement after four years, the local school board must seek assistance from the state Department of Education to create a state support plan. After two years of implementing the state support plan, should the school make insufficient gains, the state Board of Education may take control of the school.

South Carolina (<http://www.scstatehouse.gov/>)

Legislators adjourned the regular session in early June after approving a \$7.6 billion general fund budget, up 9.9 percent from the adopted 2015-16 budget. K-12 education funding is up 10.5 percent to nearly \$2.9 billion, of which nearly \$2.7 billion (up 10.1 percent) is provided as aid to school districts. Included in the aid to school districts is \$1.7 billion in basic Education Finance Act formula funding, up 11.6 percent, with level funding for reading coaches (\$29.5 million) and summer reading camps (\$6 million).

Education Improvement Act (EIA) funding, derived from an earmarked 1 percent sales tax, is projected to rise 10.1 percent to \$751.6 million. The projected increase will permit legislators to direct a 16.6 percent increase in EIA funding, to \$81.1 million, to the statewide Public Charter School District and to double EIA funding for reading coaches to \$9.9 million. In 2016-17, the rural teacher recruitment initiative receives \$9.7 million in EIA funds, up from \$1.5 million in 2015-16. EIA teacher salary support increases 18.2 percent to \$150.8 million.

General funds to state universities increase 6.3 percent to \$388.7 million, while comprehensive and technical education receives \$140.5 million, up 6 percent. While the budget discontinues general fund support for the statewide merit-based LIFE, Palmetto Fellows and HOPE scholarship programs, available lottery funding in 2016-17 is projected to rise 32.5 percent over the originally estimated 2015-16 amount to \$418.7 million. As such, lottery funds in 2016-17 for LIFE Scholarships rise 1.8 percent over combined general and lottery funds in 2015-16 to \$199.8 million. Lottery funds during the same period for Palmetto Fellows Scholarships rise 4.5 percent over combined funds to \$49.3 million, and HOPE Scholarships lottery funds rise 8.6 percent over combined funds to \$9.6 million.

Other lottery-funded programs include the state Department of Education's K-12 Technology Initiative (up 26.2 percent to \$23.8 million), need-based student financial aid (up 27.3 percent to \$49.3 million) and tuition assistance to students at two-year institutions (up 7.8 percent to \$51.1 million).

To assist school districts with low annual accountability ratings or with low percentages of students meeting state standards, the Legislature approved House Bill 4939, which requires the state Department of Education to develop a system to provide technical assistance to school districts, including assistance with academics and finances. The bill requires, beginning in 2017, the state superintendent of education to report on the system's progress in improving student academic achievement and high school graduation rates. In addition, the state Department of Education must monitor and recommend changes and improvements to the professional development of teachers, staff and administrators in under-performing districts as well as changes to improve the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the boards of those districts. House Bill 4940 directs the state Department of Education to provide technical assistance to underperforming schools and districts through its Office of Transformation.

Other legislation

HB 3265 requires each high school to provide each student with instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation at least once during grades nine through 12.

HB 3560 moves from April 15th to the first of May the date by which each school district must notify a teacher concerning his or her continued employment for the following school year. The bill also allows a school district's board of trustees, when a teacher they have dismissed exercises his or her right to an evidentiary hearing, to hire a licensed attorney to conduct the hearing.

HB 3848 requires the state Board of Education and the Education Oversight Committee to include in the required study of the United States Constitution under the South Carolina Social Studies Standards, at a minimum, the Federalist Papers and instruction on the structure of government, federal separation of powers and the freedoms guaranteed under the Bill of Rights.

HJR 4632, passed early in the session, required all public high schools to offer a state-funded college entrance assessment to each student entering the 11th grade for the first time in the 2015-16 school year, in both paper and electronic format.

HJR 5024 requires the state Department of Education to provide to all K-3 literacy coaches and teachers training on dyslexia and related reading disorders, the use of screening tools to detect these disorders, and instructional methods and interventions designed for students with these disorders.

SB 933 removes the December 31, 2015 deadline by which a person who failed to receive a high school diploma — solely for failing to meet the graduation exam requirements — must file his or her petition to a local school board to receive a diploma.

Tennessee (<http://www.capitol.tn.gov/>)

The Tennessee General Assembly adjourned in late April, legalizing fantasy sports gambling and allowing grocery stores to sell wine. The Legislature passed a \$14.6 billion general fund budget for 2016-17, up 4.6 percent over 2015-16.

Elementary and secondary education receive \$4.8 billion in 2016-17, a 5.7 percent increase. Funding to the Basic Education Program formula increases 5.7 percent to \$4.8 billion. The amount includes \$104.6 million devoted to increasing teacher salaries and \$15 million for technology, double the amount devoted in 2015-16. Early childhood education receives \$92.2 million, up 1.1 percent. The budget devotes \$6.9 million to the Division of College, Career and Technical Education, a 14.3 percent decrease in funding.

Funding to postsecondary education totals \$1.7 billion, a 6.9 percent increase. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission, which coordinates postsecondary education, receives nearly \$4 million, a 23.3 percent increase. The approved budget increases funding to the University of Tennessee System by 4.9 percent to \$532.2 million. The Tennessee Board of Regents system, encompassing the state's community colleges, technical schools, and six four-year universities, receives \$746.7 million, a 9 percent increase.

Currently, the Tennessee Board of Regents exercises governance and control over the six universities within the state university and community college system. The passage of House Bill 2578, the Focus on College and University Success Act, transfers the governance and management of those universities to newly created boards of trustees at each institution. Each board will approve an operating budget and will set fiscal policy for its respective institution, but the Board of Regents will have final authority over each university's operating budget. The bill sets a transition period from July 1, 2016, to November 30, 2017, and requires the Board of Regents and six new institutional boards to cooperate to ensure a successful and aligned postsecondary system.

House Bill 1879 enacts the Course Access Program Act, which allows a K-12 student to enroll in courses provided by other public schools or entities authorized by the state Department of Education beginning in 2017-18 if their school does not offer the particular curriculum. The act requires the state Department of Education to maintain an online course catalog. Students may enroll in two courses per year at no cost, but must pay for additional courses. Courses available through the program must be rigorous and aligned to the state academic standards and must include an assessment for determining student growth and achievement.

House Bill 1905 directs the state Board of Education to revise the social studies standards adopted in 2013. The revised standards may not promote religion. The use of religion in textbooks or any other student materials or standards must be for educational purposes only. Each local education agency will establish a policy on the use of religion in educational materials. Additionally, teacher training institutions will provide candidates with instruction on what is constitutionally permissible when teaching religious content and how to handle the material in a neutral and objective manner.

Other legislation

HB 1755 allows high school students to satisfy the fine arts graduation requirement by completing a computer science course beginning in 2016-17.

HB 2117 makes changes to the Community College Reconnect Grant program, which provides scholarships to adults returning to community college to complete an associate degree in applied science. Changes include removing the requirement that the degree be in applied science and altering how Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation distributes the grants.

HB 2573 renames the Postsecondary Education Act of 1974 the Tennessee Higher Education Authorization Act of 2016 and makes various changes to the act, including an expedited avenue to authorization. It also directs the executive director of Tennessee Higher Education Commission to examine the commission's regulatory function, after which THEC must adopt policies reflecting the results.

HB 2635 requires the state Department of Education to provide a screening process to identify characteristics of dyslexia and to create a dyslexia advisory council to advise the Department. Students in K-2 must be screened annually and a student's parent or guardian, teacher, counselor or school psychologist may request a screening at any time.

SB 299 authorizes state participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), which establishes national standards for interstate online education courses and programs.

SB 300 requires the state Board of Education to develop an A-F school grading system to be implemented by the 2017-18 academic year. The state Department of Education will include each grade on the school's state report card.

SB 1144 requires the state Department of Education to list schools on the state priority lists by county and within each county from most to least successful. The state Department of Education may not place a school in the state achievement school district until it places all schools in the county ranked below it in the district.

SB 1735 allows students who attend a Tennessee school for the first time, rather than a Tennessee public school, to be eligible for an individualized education account, provided they meet other requirements.

SB 1899 makes changes to the Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act to ensure high-quality programs. Revisions include requiring that applications include a plan to coordinate with elementary education, to involve students' families in their education, and to provide professional development to teachers. Programs must meet the criteria the state Department of Education sets for highly qualified prekindergarten programs.

Texas (<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>)

The Texas Legislature meets every other year to approve a biennial budget and did not have a regularly scheduled legislative session in 2016. In 2015, the Legislature approved a statewide biennial general fund budget for 2016-17 that totals \$114.1 billion, up 12.5 percent from the original 2014-15 biennial budget.

General funds for K-12 education (9.9 percent to \$41.2 billion) and higher education (10.4 percent to \$17.4 billion) are up. The budget provides \$35.5 billion for Foundation School Program formula funding, up 12.3 percent; the increase offsets \$3.8 billion in local tax relief, including a \$1.2 billion reduction in school district property taxes and \$2.6 billion in franchise tax reductions.

Virginia (<http://viriniageneralassembly.gov/>)

The General Assembly concluded its legislative session after adopting a general fund budget of \$40.6 billion for the 2016-18 biennium, which includes a 2 percent pay raise for teachers. The Legislature authorized a \$20.3 billion general fund operating budget for 2016-17, up 9.2 percent over 2015-16. Direct aid to public education will increase 5 percent to \$5.9 billion.

The general fund operating budget will decline slightly in 2017-18, down 0.3 percent. Elementary and secondary education will receive another 5 percent increase in the second year of the biennium, with general funds for direct aid to public education totaling \$6.1 billion. Legislators reconvened in late April to consider the governor's actions on legislation and the budget and to make further changes.

Postsecondary educational institutions receive \$1.5 billion in 2016-17, an increase of 9.9 percent over 2015-16. Four-year institutions will receive \$1.1 billion (up 8.8 percent) and two-year institutions will receive \$388.4 million (up 7.2 percent). In 2017-18, funding to postsecondary education will increase another 1.3 percent over 2016-17 levels, with four-year institutions funded with \$1.1 billion (up 1.5 percent) and two-year institutions with \$391.3 million (up 0.8 percent). This funding includes \$16.2 million in 2016-17 and \$27.8 million in 2017-18 for faculty salary increases and \$4 million per year from interest earnings from non-general revenue funds for financial incentives to meet statewide goals. The governor requested that state postsecondary institutions keep tuition increases under 3 percent.

The Legislature passed House Bill 895 and Senate Bill 336 to remove references to standard and advanced high school diplomas and verified units of credit. The bills direct the state Board of Education to collaborate with stakeholders in elementary and secondary education, higher education, and business and industry to create a profile of a Virginia graduate. The profile will identify the core skills and competencies students need to achieve in high school, with emphasis in critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication and citizenship. The bills require the state Board of Education to emphasize the completion of core skills in the first two years of high school; the last two years will be characterized by increased flexibility to achieve college and career readiness through multiple pathways, each including opportunities for internships, externships and credentialing.

Other legislation

HB 66 and SB 576 establish the New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Fund and Program to provide grants for students to complete noncredit workforce training programs in high demand fields.

HB 279 and SB 573 allow the state Board of Education to issue three-year teaching licenses for individuals who meet education and employment requirements and achieve a qualifying score on the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment. Individuals will be eligible to teach high school career and technical education courses for 50 percent of the instructional day. The Board of Education may also set other conditions for licensure.

HB 682 allows a district superintendent to apply to the state Department of Education to waive teacher licensure requirements for an individual to teach trade or industrial education if the individual possesses recent employment in a relevant field and is working toward or has an industry credential.

HB 831 requires the state Standards of Learning to include computer science and computational thinking, including computer coding.

HB 961 allows any public postsecondary institution to offer alternative tuition or fee structures that lower attendance costs to first-time, in-state undergraduate freshmen pursuing a degree leading to employment in a high-demand field.

HB 1303 prohibits members of a board of visitors of a four-year public postsecondary institution or the State Board for Community Colleges who fail to complete mandatory training during a first term from serving a subsequent term.

SB 245 directs each community college to enter into agreements with local school districts to facilitate the participation of eligible students in a career pathways program to prepare students for high school equivalency exams and postsecondary credentials, certifications or license programs.

West Virginia (<http://www.legis.state.wv.us/>)

In March, prior to the end of the legislative session, the governor announced that revenue estimates for 2016-17 had been lowered by over \$90 million. This was in addition to previously projected revenue shortfalls in both the current and upcoming fiscal years for which the Legislature had not yet reached an agreement on further budget reductions or measures to raise additional revenue. As a result, legislators halted all budgetary work and began a special budget session in May; information on final budget actions in West Virginia will appear in an upcoming edition of *Legislative Report*.

Previously, state law required county boards of education that offer early childhood education programs for students age four to offer instruction five days per week. With the passage of Senate Bill 146, programs instead are required to offer a full-day program with a minimum of 1,500 minutes of instruction per week and at least 48,000 minutes of instruction per academic year.

To improve overall student outcomes, legislators passed House Bill 4295, the Innovation in Education Act, which permits the state Board of Education (BOE) to approve Innovation in Education schools. Each school approved under the act will focus on: STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) community school partnership; entrepreneurship; career pathways or the arts. Schools will use redesigned school curricula, instructional delivery and instructional strategies, will increase student engagement and will operate with greater flexibility than standard public schools. The bill terminates funding for School Innovation Zones and Local Solution Dropout Prevention and Recovery Innovation Zones as of July 2016.

In response to the 2012 Education Efficiency Audit of the state's K-12 education system, House Bill 4301 establishes a framework to initiate transformation of school leadership in a way that affects both the public education system and educator preparation programs. The framework will allow teachers, principals and administrative leaders to accomplish systemic change in school leadership. The bill requires the state BOE to report its recommendations for implementing the framework by the 2018 regular legislative session.

The Legislature made several changes to regulations governing home schooled students with the passage of House Bill 4175. Under the legislation, a parent is required to give notice to the county superintendent that he or she will be providing home school instruction to their child when they commence home schooling, rather than the previous annual notice requirement. The bill eliminates the requirement that a home school instructor outline a plan of instruction for each school year and eliminates the requirement to provide academic assessment results annually in favor of assessment results provided at grade levels three, five, eight and 11.

Other legislation

HB 4261 permits the use of confidential information by ACT or the College Board if the state Board of Education adopts the ACT or the SAT as state summative assessments.

HB 4566 moves to later in the year several deadlines by which county school boards must notify and take actions on personnel transfers, releases and reductions.

HB 4730 requires the state Board of Education to submit a plan to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability prior to the 2017 legislative session for the implementation of computer science instruction and learning standards, including core learning standards for a complete K-12 computer science curriculum.

SB 369 eliminates several education reporting requirements previously imposed by the Legislature on the state Board of Education, state superintendent of education, Higher Education Policy Commission and the Community and Technical College Council, among others.

This report was prepared by Jeffrey Grove, SREB research associate (Jeffrey.Grove@sreb.org), and Gabrielle Whitney, SREB research associate (Gabrielle.Whitney@sreb.org), with assistance from Gale Gaines, vice president, state services (Gale.Gaines@sreb.org). All can be reached at (404) 875-9211.