

A REPORT ON THE
ACTIONS OF THE GEORGIA
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
2012



CHARTER SCHOOLS

(The story of the 2012 session)

- **HR1162** (CA) and **HB797** (enabling legislation + other mischief)
 - Ballot issue in November, if successful, would allow the re-establishment of the now-defunct Charter Schools Commission, empowered to establish and fund charter schools whether approved by a local board or not.
 - Both amendment and bill language prohibit state authorization of local funds; state funds, however, would pay for these schools from a state budget already unable (unwilling?) to adequately fund K-12 schools in the state.
 - Allows for “statewide” or defined attendance zones for state special charter schools
 - Initial denial of petition by LBOE not always needed
 - Funding formula allows all QBE earnings (including LFMS) plus additional funds equal to the average of the local funds provided by the five lowest-wealth systems (virtual charter schools earn 2/3 of this latter amount)
 - Same funding mechanism will apply to state special charter schools (result of a late-night, last-minute, unexplained amendment by a senator who is one of the Governor’s floor leaders)

THE FY2012 AMENDED BUDGET

- 2% cuts that have been withheld from QBE allotments since beginning of fiscal year are enshrined in this budget (school nurses, transportation, etc.).
- No cuts to funds for Residential Treatment Centers (Gov. had recommended \$76K)
- \$5 million added in one-time funds for systems eliminated from equalization earnings beginning in FY13
- \$85 million added for enrollment growth

THE FY12 AMENDED BUDGET (continued)

- Charter school funds
 - \$7.6 million added for state special charter schools
 - \$2.5 million added for *virtual* state special charter schools
 - \$2.8 million increase included for charter system grants

THE FY12 AMENDED BUDGET (continued)

- \$7 million included to pay math/science teachers per HB280 (2010 session)
- No cut to RESA core services (also true in 2013 budget), and smaller cut than recommended by Governor to technology/career education
- **\$1.1 BILLION “amended formula adjustment” still in place**
- **Transportation still funded at approximately 18%**

THE FY2013 BUDGET

- Austerity cuts/amended formula adjustment still in place (\$1.1 BILLION)
- Funds added for enrollment growth (\$58.6M), T&E (\$55.7M), and school nurse program (\$3.5M)
- Funds included to reflect increase in employers' rates for TRS (11.41%)
- Small add (\$177K) to fund one AP exam for F/R lunch-eligible students

THE FY2013 BUDGET (continued)

- Funds *reduced* for DOE central office (\$150K)
- Funds *added* to DOE central office to pay for nurse program supervisor (\$120K)
- No further cuts to RESA core services or to Information Technology Services
- **Monies included to pay math/science teachers per HB280 *****
- Funds included (\$8.7M) to pay for state special charter schools and charter systems (\$2.8M)

THE FY2013 BUDGET (continued)

- *Funds for pupil transportation, school nurses, and the special needs voucher program are “transferred into the QBE program.” ????????*
- *An attempt was made to do the same with school nutrition funds, but that attempt was rebuffed.*
- *Also defeated was an attempt to end grants to charter systems.*

LEGISLATION

- Several bills emanated from the work of the Education Finance Study Commission:
 - HB760 (Capital outlay)
 - Exceptional growth category eliminated (NOTE: Regular program increased to \$300M, and all entitlement funds earned under EG category stay with system that earned them.)
 - HB1187 (Special Appropriation) language removed.
 - Advance funding payback changed to five years (was 3).
 - Low wealth application criteria redefined.
 - Numerous guidelines changed in SBOE rule 160-5-4-.16

- EFSC bills (continued):

- HB706 (Title 20 “clean-up”)

- Removed some “Schrenko-era” statutes
 - Places in statute the oath of office required of all local school superintendents
 - Repeals the “career ladder” statute as well as one dealing with the method for dealing with teacher shortages
 - Eliminates the requirement that systems submit a “staff development plan” or their code of conduct to DOE
 - Changes reporting requirements for parents of home-schooled students ***
 - Repeals the requirement that certified employee evaluations be completed by April 1 each year
 - Repeals prohibition against “electronic devices” at schools

READ BILL FOR FURTHER DETAILS.....

- ESFC bills (continued)
 - SB404 (Staff development revision)
 - Changes rate from 1.5% of salaries to 1% (but, includes administrator salaries)
 - Later, additional funds are added to be used at state level for “strategic initiatives”
 - HB824 (Equalization grant calculation)
 - 75th percentile system no longer guaranteed valuation system
 - Now based on “state average” wealth per weighted FTE, with top and bottom 5% of systems eliminated before calculating average
 - Distribution method included (for years when grant is not fully funded) that provides a greater percentage of earnings for systems closer to the bottom of the eligibility list

- ESFC bills (continued)

- SB403 (School nurse program)

- Establishes scale for “earning” nurse positions (1 for every 750 elementary FTE’s, 1 for every 1,500 middle/high school FTE’s), with unspecified “base funding” for smaller schools and systems
 - Vague language included (“Such funding shall have a ratio of one registered nurse to five licensed practical nurses.”) ??????????????
 - No local matching funds required, but 100% of funds earned for salaries and benefits must be spent on that
 - Subject to appropriation by the General Assembly, the DOE may devise a “grant” program with funds to be distributed to systems (FTE basis) to buy supplies for the school nurse program (Surprise: No money!)

LEGISLATION (continued)

- SB184 – local systems prohibited from having a RIF policy that uses “LIFO” as first step
- SB153 – if a local system RIF’s an educator “through no fault of their own,” a written statement to that effect must be given to the educator
- HB692 – would require that an educator return any bonus or salary step money that was earned based on “falsified” test scores
- HB39 – provides that notices to parents of truant students may be sent by first class mail
- HB1178 – ten-year cost projection required for any legislation creating a new program or funding category

LEGISLATION (continued)

- HB713 – extends by one year the deadlines in the “Career Pathways” bill from 2011
- HB766 – authorizes display of “historical documents” in public buildings
- SB410 – school grading bill (mirrors NCLB waiver granted to GA by USDE)
- SB289 – online course opportunities for students to be “maximized” by DOE (NOTE: May contain some additional requirements for local school systems.)
- HB181 – waiver of certain provisions of Special Needs Scholarship by SBOE

LEGISLATION (continued)

- HB208 – changes sunset date for statute governing full-time retiree return-to-work from June 30, 2016 to **June 30, 2013**
- SB227 – Interstate Compact for Military Children
 - Mandates, for children of military families, expedited transfer of records, extra time for immunization, possible waiver of graduation requirements, etc.
 - Most of this already in GA law, but now GA is in the “compact”

LEGISLATION (continued)

- HB879 – Diabetes management plans mandated
 - Perfect example of “legislation based on an ‘n’ of 1”
 - Requires training of “at least two employees” (in addition to the school nurse) in recognition of symptoms and treatment of diabetes
 - LBOE’s must provide “recognition” information to bus drivers
 - Authorizes “trained personnel” to perform all kinds of tests (or, permits the student to perform his own tests for blood sugar, etc.)
 - Attempts to limit liability for individuals or the school system through language at the end of the bill

Note: All of this could (and, should) be handled through a 504 plan, but the sponsor of the bill would not hear of such.

TAX REFORM

- Increases personal exemption for married couples, caps retirement income exclusion for seniors (Dang!), extends sales tax exemption for film production, provides airlines with a 1% jet fuel exemption from the state 4% rate, etc., etc.
- Eliminates **state** sales tax on energy (locals may keep their share via referendum)
- Eliminates “birthday tax” on vehicles (replaced by one-time “title fee” each time vehicle changes hands; local governments “guaranteed” to receive same funds as in previous years)
- Reinstates “sales tax holidays” for three years

QUESTIONS?????

