

Education “Reform” Bill

(S.419 – As passed out of Senate Ed Committee)
Summary as of January 8, 2019

State Board of Education (pg. 3)

- Add 2 non-voting “student” members appointed by Gov. for 1-year terms (max of 2 yrs)
 - *Questions:* K-12 students? Age?
- Add 1 Teacher of the Year appointed by the Governor for 1 2-year term (max of 2 years)
- New Required Annual Report by State Board to Gov. & G.A. – identifying key 0-20 benchmarks & workforce pipeline; evaluate agencies; recommendations for future legislation
 - *Questions:* Why? Who is asking for this? Will St. Board get to oversee the EOC? Agencies evaluating Agencies?

Computer Science (pg. 4-5) – NEW Section

- Requires 5-year review of new Computer Science State Standards (grades 9-12)
- Each public HS offer this new, rigorous computer science class
- State Board establishes new criteria for these new teachers
- Requires additional computer science instruction integrated... K-12
- New required coursework, professional development, endorsements, etc. for teachers teaching these new, rigorous courses
- Create certification pathways for Computer Science teachers
 - *Questions:* Why review standards every 5 years?
 - Where will additional funding come from for all these classes?
 - How much will it cost?
 - What will be the new qualifications for these new teaching positions?
 - With Teacher Shortage, where will we find the teachers?
 - Who pays for the required additional professional development and/or coursework required of teachers to teach these classes? (How much?)
 - Current teachers don’t have this expertise/training? Where get new ones?
 - What do SC teachers think about this?
 - Must be implemented by Aug. 2021 (15 months after passage). Really?

Testing (pg. 5-9)

- Delete the two Social Studies tests (Elementary & Middle); Leave HS U.S. History (which is not required by Feds); Keeps all other current state assessments (including WIN/Workkeys – not required by Feds).
 - *Questions:* This is more than many other states are testing. Should we not tell the SDE to request a waiver – changing our SC plan... modeling it after other state’s approved plans that have less testing than we do? (reduce testing further)
- Additional Test Tracking of Individual Students (K-12) in reading & math (new system); EOC (not State Board of Ed) approves tracking system
 - *Question:* Why not the State Board of Ed?

Read to Succeed (pg. 10-26)

- New requirements re: “Reading Interventions:” includes MTSS & RTI
- Keeps required courses for Teachers to take
- **HUGE – Deletes “not Met 1” as criteria for retention** (*MASSIVE increase in # of kids retained in 3rd grade... by the thousands!*) – pp. 11, 14-18
 - Currently: SC schools retain all “not Met 1” students who can’t read (the lowest of the failed students. Only those who are so far behind they can’t be “caught up”)
 - If this passes, SC will retain every kid who scores below the cut-score on a test will be retained!
 - Research is correct that if you can’t read by end of 3rd grade, you will be behind;
 - BUT... research also says that if you retain a kid one time, they are significantly more likely to drop out of school before graduating from HS.
 - Current law & practice balances between the two dangers.
 - NEW? WILL increase drop-out rates... by every single research study!
 - Currently, there are “good cause” exemptions to failing & retaining a kids based on one reading test score... BUT this bill would NARROW the possible exemptions:
 - State Dept. of Ed would now have more authority
 - **Reading Portfolios:** Currently, we allow the use of a “Reading Portfolio” to prove that a kid might be able to read (even though he had a poor test score). This proposal would DRASTICALLY decrease the ability to use “Reading Portfolios” (as alternative)
 - The point of a reading portfolio is to offer “non-test” means of testing whether a kid can read; but this bill would require TEST ITEMS in the portfolio (“multiple choice items... and fifty percent literary text and fifty percent informational text”)
 - Requires five work samples for each standard – attained at grade of 70 or higher.
 - *Questions:*
 - Use of one test to retain? Really?
 - Harm to students? (see above research?)
 - State (and local) Cost of thousands of kids now getting an extra year of school? (would there be a cheaper alternative that has less risk to student?)
 - Where is the research that moving from “non-Met 1” to this is good for the student? Actually improves reading, while keeping kid in school?
 - Are parents asking for thousands more kids be retained? Are teachers asking?
 - Changes to Reading Portfolio... limiting its use to prove a kid can read? Reading Portfolios are much needed – for “poor test takers” who might now test well... but can still demonstrate that they can read. Why limit its use... and move further towards one test?
 - Are all of the new Portfolio requirements even doable by a teacher? How help a non-test-taker?
- Required “Read to Succeed” Courses for Teachers: Keeps the course requirements of teachers; Specifies what will be in these required courses?

- *Questions:* Who thinks less time in school & more in Columbia at SDE helps kids read?
- If school has 2/3 students who meet or exceed expectations, they get more flexibility
- Course Requirements for Teachers (pg. 24-26)... very unclear re: changes
- Adds a Test to become a Teacher (in "Reading")
- Commission on Higher Ed (CHE) evaluate College Teacher Prep Programs re: components of Reading Process
 - *Question:* Good; but wouldn't the SDE have more expertise in this?

State Scholarships (pg. 26-34)

- ***Palmetto Fellows Scholarship*** – Students can use this now to attend a 2-year, as well
 - Specifies required minimum ACT score (as well as SAT) (25 & 1200)
 - *Question:* If Furman, Wofford, Yale, & Harvard have deleted these tests... no longer require these tests for admission, why is SC still using this as "gatekeeper?"
 - *Note:* ACT equivalent score not prior specified
 - **Raises the minimum GPA from 3.5 to 4.0**
 - *Questions:* Why? Are parents, students, & teachers asking for this?
 - If our Goal is to increase the number of kids going to college (esp. 1st generation college students), how does this help?
 - What does the research say about raising the GPA from 3.5 to 4.0?
 - (*And don't keep saying "Uniform Grading Scale Changes"*)
 - Other states' scholarship programs are 75% Need and 25% Merit (But in SC, it is 25% Need, 75% Merit)
 - Rank Top 6% in Class
 - **Alternative "Palmetto Fellows" Criteria:**
 - 1400 SAT or 31 ACT; *Note:* ACT equivalent score not prior specified
 - **increases GPA minimum from 4.0 to 4.3**
 - ADDS new statutory requirements for MAINTAINING a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship while in College? (currently not in statute)
 - Earn a 3.0 at end of Freshman Year with at least 30 hours
 - *Questions:* Why a 3.0 (and not a 2.5)? Did you & I have a 3.0 our Freshman year? What is purpose of this increase?
 - 30 hours your Freshman Year? Some colleges recommend 12 hours per semester, as a Freshman (because Freshman year is tough). Why not 24 hours?
 - HUGE – Would allow CHE to change SAT or ACT required scores in the future
- ***LIFE Scholarship***
 - **Increases required HS GPA from 3.0 to 3.3**
 - *Question:* How is raising the GPA helpful in getting more students (especially first-generation college students) into college?
 - Where is the research-based evidence that this change will help? What?
 - Continues requirement of SAT or ACT (specifies an ACT equivalent of 22)

Teacher Certification & Preparation (pg. 39-48)

- Excellent Schools AND “Critical Geographic Area” Schools... would BOTH be able to hire non-certified teachers (10%). Would require these non-certified teachers to have a Bachelor’s Degree in subject they will teach; similar evaluation to teachers; and training to support them.
 - *Questions:* “Excellent” district have no problem finding certified teachers... yet this helps them solve a problem that they don’t have.
 - *Odd combination of “Excellent” and “Critical Need” (odd who excludes?)*
 - *Also...* the requirements set forth are almost identical to the state’s Critical Needs Teacher Certification Program (PACE). The state’s PACE program requires same bachelors, evaluation, and training... provided by the state. And it is GOOD. We’ve had this PACE program (or one similar to it) since the 1980’s. And PACE provides ongoing support for these non-certified teachers throughout their first 3 years. *Why do something similar? Why not just send these teachers thru PACE? Same thing... and lots of evidence that PACE works well. The need???*
- Allow Colleges to have “Alternative Certification” programs
- New requirements to insure safety (background checks, etc.)
- New “associated fee” for new teachers?
 - *Question:* Will this make it easier to get good new teachers?
- Mandates a review of Alternative Certification Programs (any such programs, not limited to colleges)... to be once every 7 years
 - *Question:* This is the longest time cited anywhere in this bill? Why so long? These are “alternative” programs. There will be some risk that SC will have to track... sending these “Alternatively Certified” teachers into SC classrooms. Shouldn’t we review these programs more often?
- Requires Creation of a new SDE Data “Dash Board” (pg. 44)
 - Who is asking for this? Parents? Students? Teachers?
 - Will it be worth the money?
- Requires NEW Longitudinal Data Student Tracking System of College Teacher Candidates (pg. 44-45)
 - Take a College Graduate’s (now a teacher) students standardized test scores (by teacher) and evaluate the College’s student’s students’ performance on standardized tests... and use to evaluate College Teacher Education Programs
 - Includes use of SC-Ready Test Scores, SLO Performance Data, & Teacher Evaluations (ADEPT); and personnel file records
 - Not subject to FOIA

Teacher Pay, Working Conditions, & Incentives (pg. 46-49)

- **“Working Conditions Survey”** – CERRA will continue to do their annual Teacher Survey & publish results
- **Teacher Pay: (pg. 46-47)**
 - DELETES ALL references in EFA to our Teacher Salary Schedule which is the historical barometer & standard used to hold state accountable for paying teachers
 - Deletes current teacher salary requirements and moves “setting” to annual budget
 - *No statutory protection nor standard; now just year-to-year*

- Requires “Code of Ethics” for local school boards & members
- School Board Training? Shifts from the SCSBA to the State Dept. of Education
 - *Questions:* Does the SDE & St. Board have the capacity & expertise?
 - Are people somewhere upset with the SCSBA training?
 - State Cost??? And is this the best use of SDE Staff?
- Currently, NEW Board members required to go thru Orientation Training. Now, if you’ve been on Board for 4 years, you go to training if “re-elected.”
- Enacts a Nepotism Policy – requires local adoption
- Deletes requirement that SDE reimburse local school district for new member Board Orientation
 - *Question:* Is this because SDE will now do it? Enough money?
- **“Students State All Day”** Districts “MAY” establish policy requiring students to stay in school all day (with exceptions for college courses, community service, employment, or parent request). (pg. 51-52)
 - *Question:* Sounds good, but if it is a “MAY,” do we really need this?
 - Is anything stopping a district from doing this now, if they want to?
- **“Consolidation”** (pg. 52-54)
 - Creates “incentives” to “voluntarily apply” to consolidate; but if read entire section, it will be almost impossible NOT to apply!
 - Focuses ONLY on... “less than 1,500 students” AND “Tier IV county”
 - *Questions:* Why Tier IV County? What research directs us to Tier IV?
 - *Using only Tier IV is really weird, from an educator’s perspective...*
 - Why are we purposely leaving out Florence, Ware Shoals, etc? Political?
 - No requirement that school districts consolidating even be contiguous!!! (in fact, two currently consolidating this year don’t even come close to touching each other)
 - *Question:* What is national research evidence re: consolidating non-contiguous districts?
 - **HUGE “Catch:”** If you “voluntarily choose” not to consolidate, you really won’t be able to operate. This bill makes it look “optional,” but if you don’t, you can’t:
 - Pass a bond referendum to replace a dilapidated building (even if you have the money)
 - Spending existing cash reserves on needed projects
 - Increase teacher salaries
 - ... NOTHING... unless you get approval from the SDE or General Assembly
 - *Question:* Is this really a “voluntary” consolidation “choice?”
 - *Basically, school board members will have little power if don’t....*
- **“Charleston Schools Fiasco... Moves Statewide!”** (pg. 55)
 - Current law allows a local district to have one school exempt from state statutes... to experiment and learn lessons that could possibly be utilized in other schools; BUT this would make it unlimited.
 - Note: Charleston had one. Currently working to add numerous ones... managed by outside, for-profit or non-profit, private companies. Currently, HUGE controversies... and fiasco.
 - This section (pg. 55) would allow ALL SC to do the same...

- *Question:* Why would local boards power go to the State Supt of Ed and not the State Board of Education?
- Old Boards abolished and gone forever... never to come back
- After 3 years, IF district deemed "sufficient" by State Supt. of Ed, they can come out of "Emergency Takeover Status" ...BUT do NOT get to hold elections to elect new school board members.
 - 3 (of the 5) new School Board Members appointed by State Supt. of Ed.
 - 1 appointed by Governor; 1 appointed by Local Legislative Delegation
 - Appointed School Board Members stay in power at least another 3 years
 - THEN... after a minimum of 6 years, the community could hold elections
 - Note: There is no "maximum" stated in statute. Could stay on forever
- Shifts MONEY Power from Schools... to County Council (not elected to provide education) while in "Emergency Statues" and for at least 3 years to follow (i.e. levying mills)

Miscellaneous (pg. 62-63)

- Requires Legislative Audit Council to study and publish a report re: federal funding streams – including cost of compliance by SDE and local schools/districts.