



84th Legislative Session: What Passed, What Didn't

The House and Senate adjourned June 1, ending the 84th legislative session. Following are short summaries of some key bills TASA was tracking. (This list is not exhaustive; a more detailed summary is forthcoming after the veto period has concluded.)

The governor has until June 21 to sign or veto bills passed during the regular session. Bills not vetoed or signed become law without his signature.

Bills without specific effective dates (or that were not effective immediately) become law August 31.

Education-Related Bills Passed by the 84th Legislature

Affecting the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium

Expansion of the THPSC

Included in [HB 18](#), which relates to measures to support public school student academic achievement and high school, college, and career preparation, and includes several provisions regarding college and career readiness, is language that increases the number of districts in the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium from 20 to 30, with the Consortium representing not more than 10 percent (up from 5 percent) of the state's total student enrollment, and the Consortium reporting on its progress prior to each legislative session. It also amends the statutory purpose of the Consortium to add the State Board of Education as an entity that the Consortium informs "concerning methods for transforming public schools in this state by improving student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems, including standards and systems relating to career and college readiness."

THPSC Role in New Accountability Commission

Included in [HB 2804](#), which makes major revisions to the public school accountability system, is a provision that requires that the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability (to be created by HB 2804 if signed by the governor) include "an educator in a school district that is a participant in the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium," and, in preparing its report and recommendations "the commission shall consider the recommendations of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium established under Section 7.0561, including recommendations related to innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems."

Accountability

Accountability System Redesign

[HB 2804](#) changes the four indices used to currently rate schools to five weighted domains. The first domain would be based solely on the test, while the second and third domains would be based on student growth and closing gaps between student groups. (The first through third domains account for 55 percent of the rating.) The fourth domain would consist of non-test measures, such as certifications students earn, military enlistment, Advanced Placement courses taken, and other items listed in the bill. For elementary, middle school, and junior high campuses, the fourth domain would count for 35 percent. For high schools, the rating for the fourth domain would be split into graduation rates (10 percent) and non-STAAR academic measures (25 percent). The fifth domain (10 percent) would measure parent and student engagement.

Campus/District A-F Ratings

[HB 2804](#) requires the commissioner to rate districts and campuses on an A-F scale (an overall grade and also grades for each domain). The bill delays implementation of A-F for campuses and districts to 2017-18 (Under HB 5, the A-F district ratings were to begin in 2016-17.)

New Accountability/Assessment Commission

[HB 2804](#) also requires the establishment of the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability to develop and make recommendations for new systems of student assessment and public school accountability. The commission would be composed of 15 members (including an educator in a school district that participates in the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium) including 10 members appointed: by the governor (4), the lieutenant governor (3), and the speaker of the House (3). The commission must deliver its report that recommends statutory changes to the governor and Legislature by September 1, 2016. The commission must consider the recommendations of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium when creating its report.

Campus Turnaround

- [HB 1842](#) amends several provisions pertaining to accreditation interventions and sanctions, including changes to the required information investigators must present and the inclusion of school board members in hearings before the commissioner to explain a campus's low performance, lack of improvement, and plans for improvement. After two years of unacceptable performance, a district would undergo a school turnaround plan that could include alternative management, a board of managers, a local charter or closure. After three more years of unacceptable performance, a school would be closed or placed under a board of managers. The bill would allow districts to partner with universities to implement a turnaround plan. It also makes changes to monitor reviews and special accreditation investigations of school districts, including allowing TEA to interview district staff without district screening.
- [HB 3106](#) allows the commissioner to extend the authority of a board of managers for up to two additional years but provides for local feedback in the decision.

Innovation Zones

[HB 1842](#) establishes innovation zones to allow schools to develop local initiatives to improve educational outcomes. To be eligible to participate, a school district's most recent performance rating must be at least "acceptable." A district's local innovation plan must include innovative curriculum, instructional methods, and provisions regarding community participation, campus governance, and parental involvement.

Dropout Rates

[SB 1867](#) requires the commissioner, in computing dropout and completion rates, to exclude students who are at least 18 years old and have satisfied the credit requirements for high school graduation, have not completed their IEPs, and are enrolled and receiving IEP services.

Assessment

Individual Graduation Committees

[SB 149](#) requires districts and open-enrollment charter schools to establish an Individual Graduation Committee for each student who has successfully completed all the SBOE-identified curriculum requirements (or those of the commissioner's transition plan) to graduate in 2014-15 or 2015-16 (the law expires September 1, 2017) but who has failed up to two STAAR end-of-course exams. The committee, to be established at the end of or after the student's 11th grade year, will determine whether the student qualifies to graduate.

The committee must include the student's:

- principal or principal's designee
- teacher of each course for which the student failed an EOC exam
- department chair or lead teacher supervising the teacher of the course
- student's parent, person standing in parental relation, an advocate, or the student, if 18 years old or older or an emancipated minor

The committee must recommend additional requirements the student must meet to be eligible to graduate, including additional remediation, as well as completion of a project related to the subject area of the course(s) for which the student failed the EOC exam(s), or preparation of portfolio work samples in the subject area of the course. The law allows students to submit previously completed coursework to satisfy a recommended requirement.

The committee must also consider the recommendation of the student's teacher for the course in which the student failed the EOC exam, the student's grade in the course, the student's score on the failed EOC exam, the student's performance on any additional requirements recommended by the committee, the number of hours of remediation the student has attended, the student's attendance rate, and other factors.

TEA Resources for SB 149:

[SB 149 FAQs document](#) [<http://goo.gl/447bwA>]

Emergency Commissioner's Rules on SB 149 ([Special Education](#)) [<http://goo.gl/K2vqKH>]

Emergency Commissioner's Rules on SB 149 ([General Education](#)) [<http://goo.gl/fqfbvn>]

Assessment Instrument Validity and Design

[HB 743](#) requires that an assessment instrument, before it is administered, be determined to be valid and reliable, based on empirical evidence, by an independent entity. Tests would also have to be designed so that they take 85 percent of students in grades 3-5 no more than 120 minutes to complete and 85 percent of students in grades 6-8 no more than 180 minutes. A test administration could not exceed eight hours or take place on more than one day.

Writing Assessment Pilot Program

[HB 1164](#) requires that TEA, in cooperation with the company that contracts with the state to develop assessment instruments, conduct a study during the 2015-16 school year to develop an alternative writing assessment method. During the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, the alternate method, which may include student portfolios, will be used by designated districts as part of a pilot program. The program must include at least one large urban district, one medium-sized district, and one rural district. Each district must have a student enrollment that is representative of diverse demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds. TEA may select as many districts to participate as the agency determines appropriate to achieve cost savings noted in the bill.

College Prep Test Endorsement

[HB 2349](#) allows a student to earn a performance acknowledgment on the student's diploma and transcript for outstanding performance on an established nationally norm-referenced preliminary college preparation test used to determine college/career-readiness, college admission, or qualification for an industry certification or license. The bill would require a student to be administered an end-of-course assessment only for a course in which the student is enrolled and for which an EOC assessment is administered. The bill would also require a TEA study of students moving in from other states.

CLEP Testing

[SB 453](#) reduces from 60 to 50 the minimum scaled score required for a student in grade six or above to earn credit for a subject by examination administered through the College-Level Examination Program.

EOC Testing Exemptions

[HB 1613](#) provides that a student enrolled in a college preparatory math or English language arts course who satisfies the Texas Success Initiative college readiness benchmarks would be exempt from the Algebra I or English I and II end-of-course assessment instruments, as applicable, even if the student did not perform satisfactorily on a previous administration of the applicable EOC assessment. A student who fails to perform satisfactorily on the assessment instrument could retake that assessment instrument or the appropriate EOC assessment.

TSI Assessment Exemption

[SB 1776](#) makes the exemption from Texas Success Initiative assessment requirements that apply to a student who successfully completes a college preparatory course effective for two years following the student's high school graduation date.

Certification

Superintendent Certificate Waiver

[SB 168](#) allows the commissioner to waive the superintendent certification requirement if requested by a district. A person who is not certified could not be employed before the person has received a waiver. A person could be designated to act as temporary or interim superintendent without certification or waiver.

Additional SBEC Member

[HB 2205](#) requires that SBEC add a 15th member (one of two nonvoting members) who has experience working for and knowledge of an alternative educator preparation program and who is not affiliated with an institution of higher education.

Mental Health Training Requirement

[SB 674](#) requires that any minimum academic qualifications for a certificate that require a person to possess a bachelor's degree must also require instruction in mental health, substance abuse, and youth suicide.

Educator Criminal History

[HB 1783](#) requires a superintendent to notify SBEC if a district or school obtains information about the criminal record of an educator who is employed or seeking employment with the school or district through a means other than a criminal history check. It also requires a superintendent to report to SBEC that an educator's employment was terminated based on evidence that the educator was involved in a romantic relationship with or solicited or engaged in sexual contact with a student or minor.

Bilingual Certification

[HB 218](#) requires a teacher assigned to a bilingual education program using the transitional bilingual/early-exit program model or the transitional bilingual/late-exit program model to be appropriately certified for bilingual education. A teacher assigned to a bilingual education program using a dual-language immersion/one-way or two-way program model would be required to be appropriately certified for bilingual education for the program component provided in a language other than English, and for bilingual education or English as a second language for the component provided in English. A district using the dual-language immersion/one-way or two-way program model could assign different teachers to the different components.

CTE Certification

[HB 2205](#) allows a school board to issue a school district teaching permit to a person who will teach courses only in career and technical education based on certain qualifications certified by the superintendent. A school district must require such an employee to obtain at least 20 hours of classroom management training and to comply with continuing education requirements as determined by the school board.

Junior ROTC Teaching Certification

[SB 1309](#) creates a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) teacher certificate to provide Junior ROTC instruction.

Educator Preparation Programs

- [HB 2205](#) also makes changes to law related to educator preparation programs, including: requiring that the overall GPA of each incoming class admitted by an educator preparation program, including an alternative preparation program, be at least 3 on a 4-point scale or the equivalent, or a higher overall GPA prescribed by SBEC; requiring SBEC to establish standards to govern the approval or renewal of educator preparation programs and the certification fields they are authorized to offer; requiring the SBEC to establish a process for a candidate for teacher certification to direct a complaint against an educator preparation program to TEA; limiting candidates from retaking certification exams more than four times; and more.
- [HB 1300](#) requires SBEC rules to permit an educator preparation program to admit, in extraordinary circumstances, a person who fails to satisfy a GPA requirement provided that, in addition to current requirements, each such person admitted performs, before admission, at a satisfactory level on an appropriate subject matter exam for each subject in which the person seeks certification.

Charter Schools

Local Government Status

[HB 1170](#) provides that an open-enrollment charter school is considered a local government and political subdivision for various sections of the Government and Local Government Codes. The bill would allow an open-enrollment charter school to elect to extend workers' compensation benefits to employees through any method available to a political subdivision. If a charter school makes such election, it would be considered a political subdivision for all purposes under that chapter. If a charter school self-insures under that chapter, it would be considered to be an insurance carrier. The bill clarifies that a charter school is not a local government unless explicitly stated in statute.

Immunity from Liability

[HB 1171](#) provides that an open-enrollment charter school, charter holder, employees, volunteers, or governing body members are immune to the same extent as a school district or its employees, volunteers, or trustees. The bill would define an open-enrollment charter school as a governmental unit and subject to liability only as a school district is under that chapter. An open-enrollment charter school would be considered a local government for purposes of payment on a tort claim and a local governmental entity for purposes of contract liability.

College/University Charter School Locations

[SB 955](#) removes the current limitation on the locations at which a college or university can operate a charter school (currently limited to the county in which the college or university is located).

Curriculum

TEKS Review

- [SB 313](#) requires the SBOE to conduct a review of the essential knowledge and skills of each foundation curriculum subject (excluding the recently adopted math standards), with the intent of narrowing the content and scope of standards and skills for the subject at each grade level.

- [HB 743](#) (described above) also requires TEA to conduct a study that evaluates: the number and scope of the essential knowledge and skills of each subject of the required curriculum; the number and subjects of assessment instruments required to be administered in grades 3-8; and how the assessment instruments assess standards essential for student success. The results of the study must be submitted to the SBOE by March 1, 2016.

Dual Credit

- [HB 2812](#) repeals the limit on the number of dual-credit courses in which students can enroll under certain circumstances.
- [HB 505](#) prohibits the commissioner and the Higher Education Coordinating Board from adopting a rule that would limit the number of dual-credit courses or hours in which a student could enroll while in high school, the number of dual-credit courses or hours in which a student could enroll each semester or academic year, or the grade levels at which a student would be eligible to enroll in a dual-credit course. The bill would repeal Education Code 130.008(f) limiting the number of junior college courses in which certain high school students can enroll. This would apply beginning with the 2015-16 school year.
- [SB 1004](#) allows a public junior college in Harris County or an adjacent county to enter into an agreement with any school district located in Harris County to allow students to take courses for joint high school and junior college credit. The governing board of a public junior college could contract to provide remedial programs with a school board.
- [HB 18](#) identifies those qualified to teach a course offered for joint high school and junior college credit.

Instruction in High School, College, and Career Prep

[HB 18](#) requires TEA to develop outreach materials explaining the importance of school curriculum changes under HB 5 and requires schools to instruct seventh and eighth graders on preparing for high school, college and career.

Health TEKS on Prescription Drugs

[SB 968](#) requires the SBOE to adopt TEKS for the health curriculum that address the dangers, causes, consequences, signs, symptoms, and treatment of nonmedical use of prescription drugs. It requires TEA to compile a list of evidence-based prescription drug misuse awareness programs from which a district would choose a program to use in its middle, junior high, and high school health curricula.

Educator Input into IEP

[SB 1259](#) requires that each district develop a process to be used by a teacher who instructs a student with a disability in a regular classroom setting to provide input into the student's IEP. The bill provides that the regular education teacher who serves on a student's ARD committee should be one who is responsible for implementing a portion of the student's IEP.

Mental Health Professions Information

[HB 1430](#) requires TEA to ensure that information provided to students related to health science careers includes information regarding mental health professions. In addition, to the extent the public services endorsement includes information on health science career pathways, the information would be required to include mental health careers as a possible pathway.

PE Curriculum for Students With Disabilities

[HB 440](#) requires the physical education curriculum to meet the needs of students who have a disability, including a mental disability.

School-Based Savings Program

[HB 3987](#) allows a school district or open-enrollment charter school to establish, possibly in conjunction with a personal financial literacy course, a school-based savings program to promote general savings and savings for higher education by offering various types of accounts through partner financial institutions.

Discipline/Safety

Campus Behavior Coordinator

[SB 107](#) requires the designation of an administrator on each campus as a campus behavior coordinator who is responsible for maintaining student discipline, implementing progressive discipline management techniques as appropriate, and promptly notifying parents of major sanctions such as suspension, DAEP placement or expulsion.

School Crime Reporting

[HB 1783](#) allows a school district or open-enrollment charter school employee to report a crime witnessed at the school to any peace officer and prohibits a school from adopting policy requiring an employee to refrain from reporting a crime witnessed at the school.

School Officer Training

[HB 2684](#) requires a school district with more than 30,000 students that commissions a school district peace officer or at which a school resource officer (SRO) provides law enforcement to adopt a policy requiring the officer to complete certain education and training programs.

School Marshal Notification

[SB 996](#) requires a school district or open-enrollment charter school to provide parents written notice indicating whether any school employee is currently appointed as a school marshal if the parent or guardian inquires in writing. The notice could not disclose confidential information.

Video Cameras in Special Ed Classrooms

[SB 507](#) requires a school district or open-enrollment charter school to provide video equipment for a special education classroom *upon request* of a parent of a student in that classroom (starting in 2017-18). Districts may solicit gifts, grants, and donations from any person for use in placing such video cameras. The bill includes specifics about archival, confidentiality, etc.

Early Education Initiatives

High-Quality Pre-K

[HB 4](#), the governor's pre-K bill, provides for up to \$118 million, as allocated in Article IX of the budget, for a grant program. The commissioner of education will determine the amount given to each qualifying student who is counted in a district's ADA. The amount cannot exceed \$1,500 per student for pre-K programs in districts that meet certain requirements. HB 4 became effective immediately.

Math Achievement Academies (K-3)

[SB 934](#) requires the commissioner to develop math achievement academies for teachers who instruct K-3 students. SB 934 became effective immediately.

Literacy Achievement Academies (K-3)

[SB 925](#) requires the commissioner to develop and make available literacy achievement academies for teachers who provide reading instruction to K-3 students. SB 925 became effective immediately.

Reading Excellence Teams (Grade 3)

[SB 935](#) creates a pilot program under which reading excellence teams could assist school campuses rated academically unacceptable on the basis of student performance on the reading assessment instrument administered to grade 3 students. SB 935 became effective immediately.

Reading-to-Learn Academies (Grades 4-5)

[SB 972](#) requires the commissioner to develop and make available reading-to-learn academies for teachers who provide reading comprehension instruction to students in grades 4 or 5. SB 972 became effective immediately.

Paperwork/Reporting

Duplicate Paperwork

[HB 1706](#) mandates that the commissioner's periodic review of required reports and paperwork include a comparison of the reports and paperwork required by state law and those required by federal law. The commissioner would eliminate any provision required by state law that duplicates the content of those also required by federal law. The bill would also expand the duties of superintendents to allow that a copy of any report required by federal law, rule, or regulation is also delivered to TEA.

Electronic Reports to Parents

[HB 1993](#) allows a district that uses an electronic program to provide grades and other student information to parents to allow parents to sign report cards and other such notices electronically.

Notice to Foster Parents

[HB 1804](#) requires campuses and open-enrollment charter schools (current law requires only districts) to provide notice to the educational decision-maker and caseworker of a foster child regarding events that may significantly impact the education of the child.

Information Printed on High School Diplomas

[HB 181](#) eliminates the requirement that school districts and charter schools indicate on the high school diploma the distinguished level of achievement, endorsement(s), and performance acknowledgment(s) earned by a student who graduates on the Foundation High School Program. The information must still be included on the academic achievement record, or transcript, for each student. This law became effective with the end of the 2014-15 school year. Related TEA

Resources: [Letter to Administrators on HB 181](#) [<http://goo.gl/THoCyK>]

School District Operations

Local Breakfast Programs

[HB 1305](#) allows a district or charter with at least 10 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price breakfasts in one or more of its schools to enroll all eligible students in the national school breakfast program or implement a locally funded program to provide a free or reduced-price breakfast to the eligible students in the eligible schools. Students receiving full-time virtual education through the state virtual school network may be included in determining the number of educationally disadvantaged students.

Minutes of Instruction/School Calendar

[HB 2610](#) requires a school district, starting in 2015-16, to provide at least 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermissions and recesses, rather than 180 days. The commissioner could approve reduced instruction time under certain circumstances causing school closure; if the commissioner does not, a district could add additional minutes to the end of the normal school hours as necessary to compensate for minutes lost due to closure. A day of instruction would be defined as 420 minutes. A school district could not schedule the last day of school for students for a school year before May 15. A district that does not offer each grade level and that has prospective or former students who generally attend school in another state for the grade levels the district does not offer could schedule the last day on any date permitted under this provision or the law of the other state.

Accommodations for Breastfeeding Employees

[HB 786](#) states that an employee of a public employer, including a school district, has the right to express breast milk at the workplace and requires a public employer to develop written policy that must state that the employer will support the practice and make reasonable accommodations. The employer must provide reasonable break time and a place, other than a multiple-user bathroom, that is private and can be locked for the employee's use.

School/Municipal Facility Agreements

[SB 810](#) allows a school district and a municipality to contract for the district to contribute resources to pay a portion of the costs of an instructional facility, stadium, or other athletic facility owned by the municipality if there is a written agreement allowing the district to use the facility.

Bodily Injury Insurance

[HB 744](#) eliminates the clause “on a school campus” from current law that allows a school board to purchase insurance against bodily injury sustained by students training for or engaging in interschool athletic competition or engaging in school-sponsored activities.

School Funding

Public Education Budget

[HB 1](#), the budget bill, includes \$1.5 billion for the Foundation School Program (FSP) above \$2.3 billion for enrollment growth. 2016-17 budget highlights for the FSP include:

- \$1.2 billion for the basic allotment per ADA (\$5,140 both years)
- \$200 million for fractional funding (districts with compressed tax rates)
- Guaranteed Yield increases to \$74.28 (2016) and \$77.53 (2017)
- \$55.5 million for IFA (FY 2017)
- \$47.5 million for NIFA

Other budget items outside of FSP include:

*(*indicates the amount is unchanged from 2014-15 budget)*

- \$25 million for ESCs*
- \$31 million for Communities in Schools*
- \$12 million for Teach for America*
- \$8 million for Virtual Schools*
- \$16.3 million for Advanced Placement Initiative*
- \$6 million for Early College High School*
- \$3 million for T-STEM, down from \$6 million
- \$1.04 billion for IMA, up from \$838 million
- \$40.6 million for the newly created math and reading academies
- \$31.7 million for SSI, down from \$60.5 million
- \$30 million for supplemental funding for pre-K*
- \$118 million for pre-K programs that meet certain requirements

Also included in Article III is funding to pay for business and property tax relief:

- \$2.6 billion for a 25 percent reduction to the franchise tax
- \$1.2 billion to hold districts harmless for the \$10,000 increase to the homestead exemption

The annual school district contribution rate for TRS-Care remains at 0.55 percent of total payroll.

Flexible School Day ADA

[HB 2660](#) revises the calculation of average daily attendance for students in an optional flexible school day program so that funding is based on the same instructional hour requirements as the regular program.

Full Allotment for Fractionally Funded Districts

[HB 7](#) relates to the amounts, availability, and use of certain statutorily dedicated revenue, and would allow fractionally funded districts to receive the full basic allotment.

Instructional Materials Allotment

[SB 313](#) provides that the Instructional Materials Allotment is paid on a biennial basis during the first year of the biennium and that the SBOE shall not adopt a proclamation in which the total cost of materials would exceed 75 percent of the total amount used to fund the IMA.

Off-Campus Instruction Programs/ADA

[HB 2812](#) counts time that students spend participating in off-campus instructional programs toward the minimum number of instructional hours required to be a full-time student for ADA purposes.

Staff Development

Counseling Academies

[HB 18](#) requires the Center for Teaching and Learning at The University of Texas at Austin to develop and make available postsecondary education and career counseling academies for school counselors and other postsecondary advisors employed by a school district at a middle school, junior high school, or high school.

CPE for Defibrillator Training

[SB 382](#) requires SBEC to adopt rules allowing an educator to receive continuing education credit for completing a course on the use of an automated external defibrillator.

Investment Training

[HB 870](#) requires that school district chief financial officers and investment officers, as well as municipal investment officers, attend an investment training session not less than once in a two-year period that begins on the first day of the school district's fiscal year and consists of the two consecutive fiscal years after that date, and that they receive not less than five hours (rather than 10 hours) of instruction relating to investment responsibilities.

Mental Health First Aid Training

[SB 133](#) expands availability of mental health first aid training to non-educator school district employees, who, as defined in the bill, include secretaries, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers. The bill also creates a statutory funding cap that allows greater spending flexibility for local mental health authorities in training educators, and changes reporting requirement dates to align with the fiscal year rather than the calendar year.

Youth Suicide Prevention Training

[HB 2186](#) requires that district staff receive training in youth suicide prevention once annually, as part of a new employee orientation (for new employees) and on a schedule adopted by TEA (for existing employees). The training may be satisfied through independent review and be offered online.

Student Health/Well-Being

EpiPens

[SB 66](#) provides that districts and open-enrollment charter schools may adopt policy on the maintenance, administration, and disposal of epinephrine auto-injectors (EpiPens) at each campus. Such policies must provide that authorized and trained school personnel and volunteers may administer an EpiPen to a person who is reasonably believed to be experiencing anaphylaxis on a school campus, and the policies may provide for such administration at an off-campus school event or while in transit to or from a school event. The bill requires a school district adopting such a policy to provide written notice to the parent or guardian of each student enrolled in the district or school.

Homeless Students

- [HB 1559](#) requires each school that maintains a website to post information on local programs and services available to assist homeless students. These requirements would not apply to a school within a district that has an enrollment of fewer than 3,000 students and is primarily located in a county with a population of less than 50,000.

- [SB 1494](#) includes students who are homeless with those TEA would assist in transitioning from one school to another. The bill would also provide that an 11th or 12th grade student who is homeless who transfers to a different school district from which the student is not eligible to graduate could receive a diploma from the district from which the student transferred if certain criteria are met.

Meal Card Grace Periods

[HB 3562](#) requires a school that allows students to use prepaid meal cards or accounts to purchase school meals to adopt a grace period policy regarding the use of the cards or accounts to ensure that a student would still be able to eat meals while accumulating a negative balance until parents are notified and payment is made. Districts would be able to establish a payment schedule with parents.

Sunscreen

[SB 265](#) allows a student to possess and use over-the-counter, topical sunscreen while on school property or at a school-related event.

Vapor Products on School Property

[SB 97](#) regulates the use of vapor products (e-cigarettes), including provisions adding e-cigarettes to the various statutes that regulate the use of tobacco products on school property.

Teacher Retirement System

Annuity Check Schedule

[HB 2168](#) revises the payment date for retirement checks to provide that they would be paid on the last business day of the month rather than the first (moving the payment earlier, not later).

TRS-Care Funding

[HB 2](#), the supplemental appropriations bill, includes \$768 million to cover the projected TRS-Care shortfall. Without this funding, the program would be insolvent in 2016.

TRS Health Insurance Study

[SB 1940](#) creates a joint interim committee to study TRS-Care and TRS-ActiveCare that would be composed of three senators appointed by the lieutenant governor and three House members appointed by the speaker. The committee would examine and assess the financial soundness of the plans, the cost and affordability of plan coverage, and the sufficiency of access to physicians and health care providers.

TRS DROP Program

[HB 1937](#) allows employees still participating in the Deferred Retirement Option Program to revoke participation by December 31, 2015. This applies to a member whose DROP participation has expired and who has not retired on or before December 31, 2015. Benefits upon retirement would be calculated as if the member had never participated.

Truancy

[HB 2398](#) makes significant changes to statutes relating to truancy. It decriminalizes truancy and requires school districts to implement truancy prevention measures. The bill also requires the expungement of all documents and records of a truancy conviction. It creates a new civil process to deal with truancy matters. It requires TEA to adopt rules regarding standards and best practices for truancy prevention measures and for sanctions if a school district fails to comply with the provisions in the bill.

Initiatives That Did Not Pass in the 2015 Legislative Session

- Vouchers or tax-credit scholarships
- Recovery school district legislation (opportunity school district)
- Changes to home-rule legislation
- Parent trigger
- Tying student standardized test scores to teacher appraisals/compensation
- Elimination of the state minimum salary schedule
- Elimination of district payroll deduction of employee association dues
- Participation of home-schooled students in UIL activities