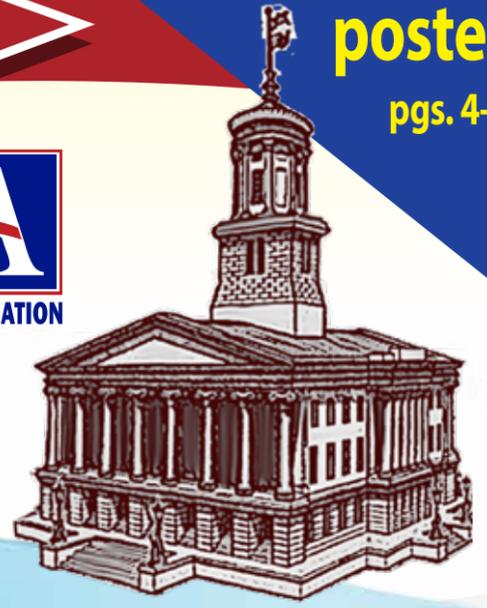


TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION PUBLIC SCHOOL ADVOCATE

LEGISLATIVE REPORT | May 6, 2019 | VOLUME 5, ISSUE 7



**Pull-out
poster**
pgs. 4-5

PRIVATIZATION

Like the undead in the hit series *Game of Thrones*, dead-headed privatization ideas just keep coming and coming. And while they may break through a wall, the war is far from over.

After months of pork-laden incentives, strong-arm threats, tight committee votes, dozens of bill changes, and millions spent in high-paid lobbyists roaming the Capitol, the House narrowly passed the Lee administration's voucher legislation 51-46. The Senate passed the legislation 19-14.

"We saw the worst side of politics during this ugly affair," said TEA President Beth Brown. "Right in front of our eyes, we watched all the under-handed tactics used by the other side to force this voucher bill through the legislature."

Brown and dozens of other TEA members were in the chamber gallery on April 23 when the House

floor first voted on the bill. When the vote was first cast, it was tied at 49-49. House Speaker Glen Casada held the vote open for 40 minutes as he searched to find the elusive 50th vote needed for passage. Lawmakers afterward told the media how the speaker's office made offers to entice them to switch their votes.

The fight from TEA members across the state forced proponents to pass legislation so flawed that groups and local governments have already outlined why they will sue in federal court.

The bill targets only two counties, Davidson and Shelby, with up to 15,000 recipients getting a debit card worth an annual BEP value of \$7,300. By 2024, the entitlements may cost taxpayers \$109 million annually and will increase the local tax burden in the targeted counties. The bill also excludes children of undocumented families, even children who are

U.S. citizens, from getting the vouchers. Legislation targeting certain counties and undocumented families have been overturned by federal courts.

In order to pass the legislation, Hamilton, Madison, and Knox counties were amended out of the bill, as well as all other school districts. It begged the question: If vouchers were such a good idea, why did lawmakers trade their vote to keep it from happening in their district?

It is important to note there was strong bipartisan opposition to the voucher legislation.

Privatizers didn't get everything they wanted. The bill requires state tests in Math and Language Arts, and private schools which take voucher students will get a TVAAS school score that will be made public, something the privatizers never wanted.

Voucher fight
cont. page 6

Senate resoundingly kills bill designed to weaken TEA

Efforts to weaken the association returned again this session. Attacks on the association are not new, but what is new is stopping those attacks in the state Senate.

In the closing days of the legislative session, the Senate voted 19-8 to defeat a bill that would have required TEA to re-sign all members on payroll deduction every year.

Senators quickly drew attention to the amended language that added the annual requirement to re-sign members, expressing concern for increased workload on district employees and the singling out of educators.

"We see some iteration of an attack on



Sen. Frank Nicely (R-Strawberry Plains) stood with educators and TEA against payroll attacks.

Payroll bill
cont. page 8

State report confirms teacher raises are not showing up in all paychecks

There is a \$72 million increase in teacher salary funds in the state budget, the sixth straight year of increases.

Yet year after year, many teachers are left wondering "Where is my raise?"

TEA has been raising this issue since the State Board of Education drastically changed the state minimum salary schedule several years ago.

"The State Board made this problem of raises not showing up in teachers'

paychecks worse when they gutted the salary schedule in 2013," said TEA President Beth Brown. "Since that time, TEA has been working closely with legislators to help them understand the ramifications of those changes and work to find a solution."

The Tennessee Comptroller's report released last week details what TEA has been saying for years: flexibility in how locals are able to use salary increase funds has led to many teachers receiving little-

Salary report
cont. page 7



THE STRONGEST VOICE FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS

Public education as a profit center? I don't think so.

By TEA President Beth Brown



During a recent meeting, a legislator declared that Tennessee's public schools are "a system of education that makes children a profit center." I fancy myself a fairly astute person, but I am still having trouble understanding on what grounds this legislator is basing this wholly inaccurate statement.

First, the statement was offered as support for this legislator's belief that Tennessee should adopt an ESA voucher program, which—by design—would allow taxpayer dollars to pay for private education at for-profit schools. Even without this context, however, the claim is

completely nonsensical.

If public education was a profit scheme as suggested by this legislator, teachers wouldn't earn 19% less than similarly skilled and educated professionals, as has been reported by the Economic Policy Institute. Moreover, inflation has eroded any salary increases awarded by the state over the past several years. (And don't get me started on those of us who haven't even seen those increases make it to our paychecks!)

If public education was a profit scheme... teachers would not be spending hundreds—even thousands—of dollars out of pocket annually to provide for their students.

If public education was a profit scheme as suggested by this legislator, teachers would not be spending hundreds—even thousands—of dollars out of pocket annually to provide for their students. I invite anyone in the General Assembly to visit a Tennessee public school and attempt to find a classroom in which

the teacher hasn't spent significant amounts of their personal money on supplies for their classroom. We provide food for students who are hungry, and we provide shoes, coats, and other clothing items for students who have need. We pay for pencils, paper, dry erase markers, and other classroom supplies out of our own pockets because what the state supplies is simply inadequate. And I, as well as many of my colleagues, have purchased lesson plans from educators via Teachers Pay Teachers because we don't have the academic resources that we need to adequately do our jobs. None of these choices—all made in the best interests of our students—is creating any sort of profit for public schools or public school educators.

If public education was a profit scheme as suggested by this legislator, Tennessee wouldn't be facing a teacher shortage. The U.S. Department of Education reports that nearly 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. In Tennessee, 20% of educators have fewer than two years of teaching experience. Moreover, if public education was a profit scheme, educators wouldn't be working two and sometimes even three jobs to provide for our own families.

Educators' vehement opposition to an ESA voucher scheme and our calls for increased funding for Tennessee's public schools come down to this: Tennessee's funding model is inadequate. No one chooses this profession with the goal of getting rich; we choose this profession because we love kids and want to help them grow and succeed.

Educating our children is not about profit. We take every student, regardless of income or ability, and we work tirelessly every single day to maximize the effect of the resources that we are given. Quite frankly, we're doing a fantastic job and should be lauded—rather than demeaned and undercut—by the people charged by our state Constitution to provide a free public education for all Tennessee students.

Unprecedented activism is something to celebrate

By TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder

Since the last vote was cast officially passing private school vouchers, I've been reminding myself that while we may have lost this battle, we have not lost the war.

Losing the voucher fight for the first time in eight years really stings. And it's OK for us to feel disappointed and concerned about what comes next.

It is also important, however, to acknowledge the amazing level of pro-public education advocacy that we witnessed this year. Thousands of educators, parents, community allies and even faith leaders stood shoulder to shoulder to fight in the best interest of Tennessee students.

TEA members and our allies started advocating in the fall by wearing "Red for Ed" in unity across the state; participating in stand-outs with signs demonstrating our 20/20 Vision (which includes increased school funding and the elimination of decisions based on high-stakes testing), working with parents to hold "walk-ins" to public schools showcasing community members' support and sponsoring meetings with legislators leading up to the session.

Once the session started and public education was threatened with one of the worst pieces of voucher legislation ever presented, the collective action ramped up even more. Hundreds attended Civication, which made the fight against vouchers extremely competitive in committee meetings. TEA, with our parent and faith leader partners, led a large and widely publicized public demonstration against vouchers. In Nashville, a long funeral procession of education supporters paraded to the Capitol led by a coffin with vouchers written on it, followed by a jazz band. It was a sight viewed by thousands on local news stations and all over social media. The greatest part of our demonstration was that there were similar events in every part of the state – showing the reach and power of TEA as well as the fact that no community wants vouchers.

The pressure on political leaders was immense. Both threats and promises were used to turn legislators away from their constituents. However, the pressure from back home was also profound. TEA members kept a barrage of calls and emails coming into legislative offices, and we sent more than 100,000 text messages across the state asking voters to contact their legislator. This all resulted in daily messages coming into legislative offices 40-to-1 against vouchers. And yet, we lost the vote. Yes, we lost this battle, but we won't lose the war if we channel our anger and frustration to win the next round.

Let's celebrate the positive gains we were able to make. We passed a portfolio bill which creates the opportunity to find better alternatives to a failed evaluation process. We also passed a community schools bill which creates an alternative besides vouchers or state take-over for schools that need help.

And finally, we need to do what educators do when our students don't get it the first time: we persevere. Our future depends on it.



Thousands of educators, parents, community allies and even faith leaders stood shoulder to shoulder to fight in the best interest of Tennessee students.

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UniServ Staff contact information
can be found on page 6.

Member Voices

Period poverty: We can help!

By Neshellda Johnson, TEA board member, United EA



“Low-income girls in the United States are unprepared for puberty and have largely negative experiences of this transition among its

inception.” (Herbert, 2016)

I remember it just like it was yesterday. I was a junior high student in the eighth grade. Most of the girls on my grade level had already experienced a menstrual cycle and would often swap stories of their experiences in the girls’ restrooms. I heard some of the stories and in my confusion thought nothing of it as it wasn’t an experience I could relate to. Having a period was never spoken of aside from these restroom sagas. In fact, having a period was something that wasn’t spoken of at all.

This is a health and wellness issue that affects half of the population but has been deemed taboo. One of the biggest problems with the way we talk about periods is the fact that we neglect to discuss it at all. When base-level conversations about periods are deemed off-limits, trying to address issues related to periods can be very difficult.

In order to advocate for viable

solutions to period poverty, we as educators must first understand it. The idea of period poverty stems from data reflecting high absentee rates of female students while on their menses. In an effort to support this population of students, some states have passed laws mandating schools provide period products to students, stating them to be as essential as toilet paper. In recent years, activists and several nonprofit agencies have organized petitions and marches to encourage the Department of Education to eradicate period poverty in the U.S.

TEA is joining the call for period products to be treated as health necessities, to implement policies that protect students who menstruate, and to fund period products in school bathrooms. Sanjay Wijesekera, former UNICEF Chief of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, stated, “Meeting the hygiene needs of all adolescent girls is a fundamental issue of human rights, dignity, and public health.”

As educators, community members, and parents, it’s our moral responsibility to support young girls and women by promoting menstrual equity. It’s time to take a stand to ensure that we are acting to end period poverty.

Make a donation

The TEA Status of Women committee has asked delegates to the TEA Representative Assembly to bring feminine hygiene products to the RA next week. Donations at the RA will go to the #NashvillePeriodProduct, which benefits students in Metro Nashville Public Schools. To date, the #NashvillePeriodProject has collected more than 200,000 feminine hygiene products for Nashville students.

If you are not attending the TEA RA, you can still participate! Make plans to have a delegate from your area collect the products to bring with them or find another nonprofit in your area to partner with for a local drive.

Eliminating period poverty is an important step toward keeping students in school and focused on preparing for their future success.



ASK TEA

ANSWERS FROM THE EXPERTS AT THE TEA HOTLINE

Q: I’m a probationary teacher who has not yet received tenure. A colleague asked recently if my contract would be renewed for next year. Exactly what does that mean?

A: All teachers, whether tenured or probationary, are hired on a so-called “continuing” or year-to-year employment contract. Before a teacher receives tenure, however, state law provides that the teacher’s contract can be non-renewed upon receipt of written notice from the district’s director of schools advising that the teacher has not been re-elected for the following school year. To be effective, such notice must be received not later than five (5) business days after the last instructional day of the district’s school year, otherwise the contract continues and the teacher is entitled to placement for the following year.

Q: I am taking several weeks of FMLA leave in April and May. I wanted to come back the last week of school to spend time with my students, but my principal said I have to remain on leave through the end of the school year. Is that true?

A: There are special rules that can be applied when instructional employees take FMLA leave near the end of a school term. Whether a teacher can return from a leave taken near the end of a term depends on the timing and length of the leave. As a general rule, if a leave begins more than five (5) weeks before the end of a term, and the leave is at least three (3) weeks in duration, the employer may require the teacher to remain on leave through the end of the term. If a leave occurs during the five-week period before the end of a term, the employer could require a teacher to remain on leave if the requested leave exceeded two (2) weeks, and the teacher’s return would occur during the final two (2) weeks of the term. If you believe your principal is incorrect about your leave, contact your UniServ coordinator or AR for assistance with having your FMLA request reviewed by the administration.

Q: My family has a dream vacation coming up in early July, but now my principal says I have to attend a training that falls during our trip, despite the fact that teachers are not scheduled to report until July 31. Can my principal require me to attend that training?

A: Maybe. As you know, teachers are hired on annual contracts, which typically commence on July 1 and conclude on June 30. Although teacher contracts are often referred to as “200 day” or “10 month” contracts, absent language included in a teacher’s contract, local board policy, or MOU that specifically defines when teachers are to be present, arguably teachers could be asked to report outside of days designated on the district’s calendar. That said, in the absence of unequivocal language that prohibits the principal from mandating teacher attendance at this training, perhaps the first thing to do would be to simply ask to be excused due to your pre-existing travel plans with the understanding you could be required to make up the training. If that request is denied, before you adjust your plans, contact your UniServ coordinator or AR to discuss acceptable alternatives to complete the training without impacting your vacation.



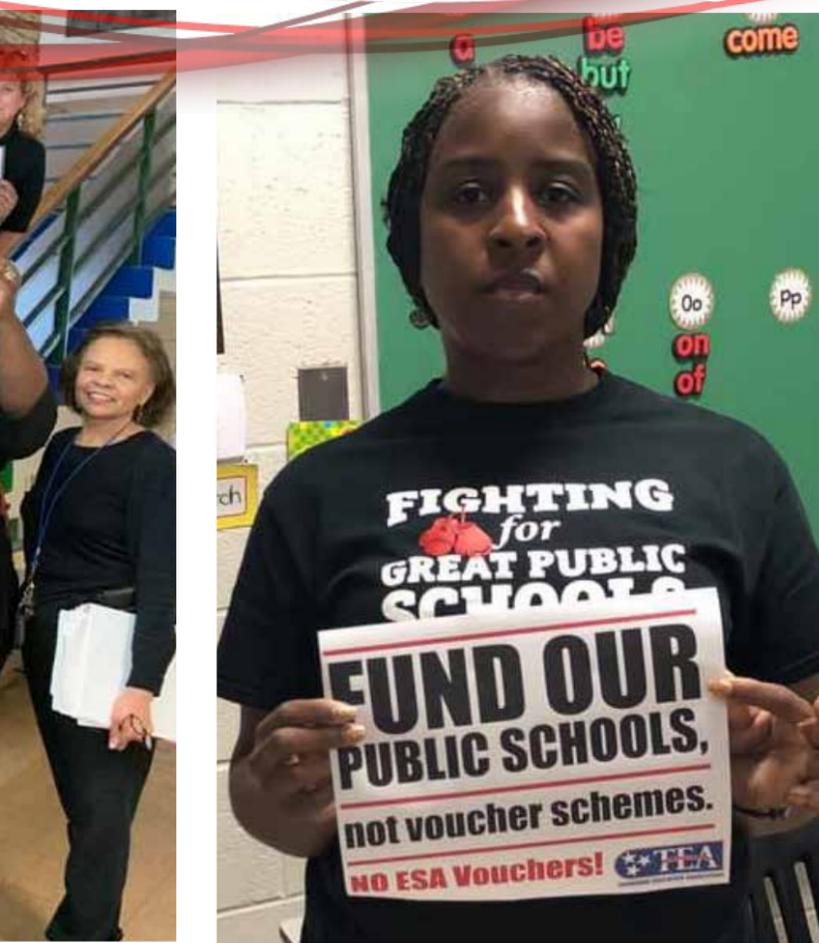
The TEA Advocacy Hotline supports local leaders and building representatives in answering member questions. If you have an employment-related question, please contact your building rep or UniServ coordinator.

Rising tide of education



#TN2020Vision

advocacy



#RedforEd

BIG FIGHTS ON THE HORIZON

Now is the time to strengthen local networks of association members and public education advocates!

By building on the historic increase in activism this session, we can win the big fights still to come and defend our great students and public schools.

- Expansion voucher and charter programs
- Additional high-stakes testing decisions
- Attacks on association
- Threats to tenure



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Radical charter expansion part of privatization march

Voucher fight from page 1

“In this whole tough fight, a bright moment was when the school-wide score amendment was put onto the bill on the Senate floor, the private school lobbyists about melted down,” said TEA lobbyist Jim Wrye. “Privatizers have never been serious about helping low-income children or academic outcomes. It’s about taking money from schools that serve low-income children for others without accountability.”

A family of four with an income of \$66,000 is eligible in the two targeted counties, whose children do not have to be zoned for a priority school. This bill is designed to allow children who may be attending the best public schools in the state to get a voucher to leave.

“There were lawmakers who oppose vouchers but voted for this because of pressure by the administration. There were others who feared it would pass with their district included and so tried to amend the bill,” said Wrye. “If we had a level playing field and people could vote their district, this would have been defeated. But Lee and others decided to spend all their political capital on vouchers. Now it is on to the next fight in the privatization wars.”

The bill will now likely be headed to federal court. Shelby and Davidson counties stated their intent to sue, citing a 2012 case that invalidated the first municipal school district law for Shelby County. Judge Samuel Mays, former chief of staff for former Tennessee Gov. Don Sundquist and a George W. Bush appointee, found the law violated the Tennessee state constitution because the General Assembly cannot pass bills with local effect without the approval of the local government.

Immigration groups have also said they will sue on the exclusion language which has been found unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.

TEA will be active in the rule-making process as the Department of Education works to implement the program, similar to efforts on the special education vouchers known as IEAs. After four years of the program, there were only 133 children using IEAs at the beginning of the school year.

“We may have lost this particular battle, but the fight goes on,” said Brown. “We will never stop fighting for our students and schools.”

Vouchers aren’t the only threat to public schools. Radical charter expansion has damaged urban, suburban and rural school systems in neighboring states.

When an administration bill to move state chartering authority from the State Board of Education to a new charter commission was unveiled, TEA and other groups immediately began to fight. The bill would allow charter groups to go directly to the state to open charters in any school system.

While the charter commission bill passed, during the fight it was amended to put up significant guardrails to its power and oversight to open charter schools. Charter applicants must initially go to the local school board, and if denied, may appeal to the state commission. If the commission overrules the local board, the state commission may authorize the charter itself. The commission could in theory authorize charter schools in every district in the state.

One tool to prevent this is the ability of a local school board to deny a charter based on the negative fiscal impact the charter would have on public schools. The new commission is prohibited from opening a charter school where it recognizes the negative fiscal impact on a local school system. The language of the bill gives local boards a powerful means to go to court if the commission disagrees or ignores the fiscal problems of authorizing charter schools in a district.

As it was described in committee by TEA lobbyist Jim Wrye, “You don’t close a public school when a charter school opens. There

are fixed costs and personnel costs that remain, which drain resources from students in public schools. Without thinking about these fiscal issues, charter school expansion may devastate a school system.”

Another tool to limit the power of the commission is that all nine members of the commission must be confirmed by the General Assembly, and all nine may be removed by the General Assembly by resolution.

“Most legislators think charter schools are just for urban districts. We worked hard to show what is happening in other states like Alabama and North Carolina, where commissions as first proposed by the administration are opening charters everywhere,” Wrye said. “We wanted to be sure that when a new Tennessee charter bureaucracy decides to open dozens of charter schools across Tennessee, the General Assembly can remove all the commissioners making those decisions. It is one way we will be able to fight radical charter expansion through the legislative process.”

Several key lawmakers who voted for the governor’s voucher bill were adamant opponents of the charter bill, rightly recognizing the charter commission is a bigger threat to their school districts. It was this opposition that led to curtailing the commission’s power and the ability of the legislature to fire commissioners.

“Legislators are very aware of what has happened in other states. Radical charter expansion, like vouchers, is an ongoing battle, and one we will not stop fighting,” Wrye said.

Nashville senator blocks “bathroom bill”

Rep. Andy Holt (R-Dresden) was back again this year with his attack on students’ and educators’ rights. His “bathroom bill” would provide cover for local school districts who prohibit transgender students and educators from using the bathroom of the gender with which they identify was met with resistance on the Senate floor.

Sen. Steve Dickerson (R-Nashville) raised concerns about the bill and moved to send it back to committee at the start of the 2020 legislative session. The motion passed, putting an end to debate and the threat to transgender

students and educators.

“As educators, we are committed to providing a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students, and the passage of this bill would directly conflict with that,” said TEA President Beth Brown. “TEA applauds the legislators who stood up for students’ and educators’ rights on this legislation.”

TEA will monitor the legislation next year and work to ensure students and educators continue to have a safe and welcoming environment in their public schools.

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Community schools bill to become law, providing districts another option to improve student learning

Legislation supporting the work of transformational community schools unanimously passed both chambers of the Tennessee Legislature and is headed to the governor's desk for signature.

HB1330/SB1058 highlights the positive impact community schools have on student achievement and instructs Tennessee Department of Education to provide technical assistance and "encourage LEAs and schools to combine multiple funding sources to create community schools and to support the schools."

A concept that's been supported by TEA through several legislative sessions, the bill also requests that the department assist LEAs in locating other available funding sources to community schools such as competitive grants, foundation

awards and private donations.

"TEA supports community schools because they have demonstrated tremendous success in Tennessee and research proves their effectiveness," said TEA President Beth Brown. "Each community school plan is tailored to meet the unique needs of that student body and the broader community, and since parent and community support are one of the vital pillars of a successful community school, parents have direct input into the creation of a successful academic experience for their children."

TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder said TEA is proud to champion community schools in Tennessee and looks forward to supporting efforts to expand the reach of these schools in communities across the state.



Rep. Kirk Haston (R-Lobelville) sponsored the community schools legislation.

CONFERRING CORNER

As a result of a three-year collaborative conferencing effort between Hamilton Co. EA and Hamilton County Schools, Superintendent Dr. Bryan Johnson submitted a bold budget proposal at the end of April, seeking a 5% overall teacher salary increase and highlighting the need to hire more school counselors and special education personnel such as RTI. While the proposal is \$34 million above the projected revenue, Dr. Johnson said he wants to increase school resources available to students.

As part of the collaborative conferencing memorandum of understanding (MOU), HCEA has agreed to partner with Hamilton Co. Schools to explain the budget proposal to the community.

"This has been a wonderful process, and we thank Dr. Johnson and central office staff for listening to teacher input, and for taking into consideration the results of the survey HCEA conducted in January," said HCEA President Jeanette Omarkhail. "Collaborative conferencing was exactly that, collaborative."



Report shows need for legislative fix to ensure raises reach teachers, state increases investment

Salary report from page 1

to-no pay increase in recent years. According to the report, approximately \$300 million has been allocated since 2016 for teacher raises, which has translated into an average of a 6% increase for teachers.

The data collected for the report reveals that the 6% average is greatly skewed by a small number of districts giving a double-digit percentage increase. Those districts have a larger local taxbase and are able to better mitigate the shortcomings of state funding for public education.

"While we are grateful the state continues to fully fund the BEP, it is important to acknowledge that the BEP is simply not sufficient in funding our schools at the level required to educate all students," Brown said. "Districts staff 15% more teaching positions than what is covered in the state funding formula. This forces districts to make that pot of money from the state stretch across more positions than intended, or figure out how to fund those needed positions with local dollars - which is easier said than done in districts like mine in Grundy County."

The comptroller report is the result of numerous meetings between TEA staff and leadership and former House Speaker Beth Harwell. In partnership with the Senate,

Harwell directed the Office of Research and Education Accountability to investigate how districts are using state funds allocated for teacher raises.

In addition to problems with teacher salary increases, the report also indicates the percentage of local funding for public education is steadily increasing. The report states the total local dollars budgeted for schools increased by \$400 million between 2015 and 2018, a per-pupil increase of about \$405.

The report will bolster efforts next legislative session to reinforce our push to close the loopholes allowing salary funds to be used for other purposes and to further highlight the deficiencies in state funding for public education.

"It is unsustainable to continue asking locals to take on more and more of this financial burden," Brown said. "At a time when the state is consistently exceeding revenue projections, it is crucial that those funds are directed to public schools. This is what TEA's 20/20 Vision is all about. We have to increase the state investment per student to provide a quality public education."

TEA will continue its work with legislators to identify solutions to make significant increases in student investment and teacher pay in the next session.

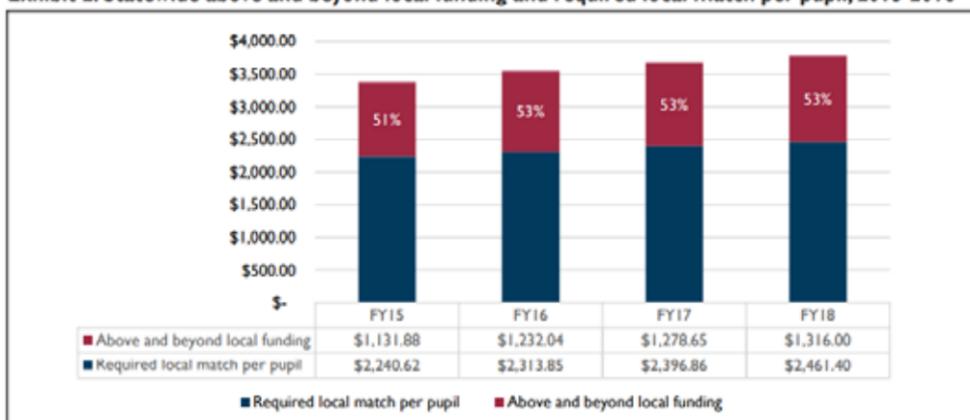
The comptroller report shows that between the 2015-16 and 2017-18 school years, teachers should have received a 14.3% increase, if districts had passed the full amount of budgeted raises on to teachers. Of the districts responding to the study, Union City was the only one to meet or exceed that number.

Year	State appropriation for instructional salary increases	Salary unit cost
2014-15	\$0	\$40,447
2015-16	\$97,600,000	\$42,065
2016-17	\$104,600,000	\$44,430
2017-18	\$100,386,000	\$46,225
2017-18 Total Increase (2015-2018)	\$302,586,000	14.3%
2018-19	\$55,124,000	\$47,150
2019-20 (proposed)	\$71,250,000	\$

Note: The totals above reflect state allocations specifically for teacher compensation in each year's annual appropriation act and do not include additional state funds allocated based on enrollment growth, new positions, or staff ratio adjustments. These funds are distributed to districts through the Instructional Salaries and Wages category of BEP funding.

Also highlighted in the report is the increasing burden on locals to fund a larger piece of the pie to keep their schools operating at the level needed to ensure student success. Total local dollars budgeted for schools increased by \$400 million between 2015 and 2018, a per-pupil increase of about \$405.

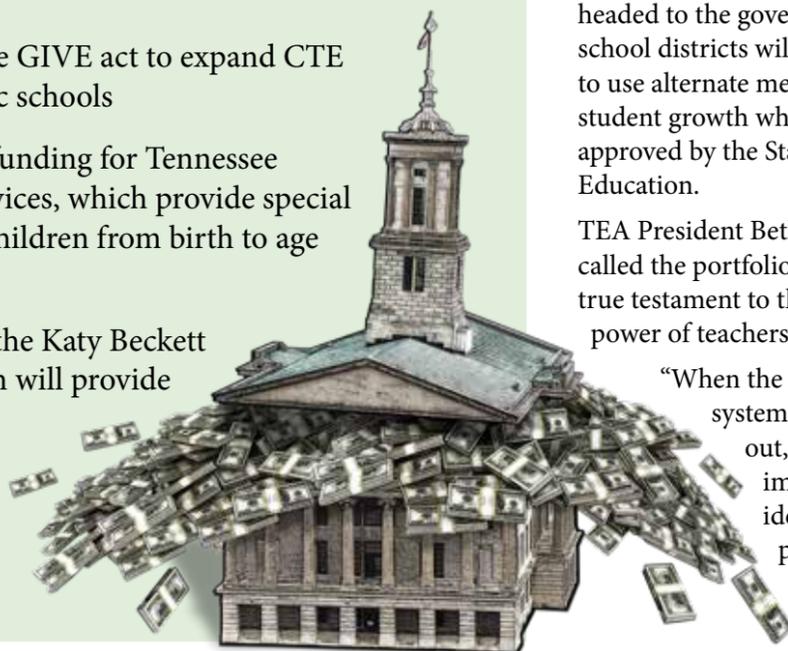
Exhibit 2: Statewide above and beyond local funding and required local match per pupil, 2015-2018



Final state budget includes increases for public education, children

The \$38.5 billion Tennessee state budget for the 2019-2020 fiscal year has passed both chambers of the legislature and is headed to the governor's desk for signature. It contains funding for a number of initiatives that will impact students and schools. Below are some specific investments:

- **\$39.4 million** to fund growth and inflation in the BEP
- **\$71.3 million** for teacher salaries (roughly 2%)
- **\$30 million** to provide for an SRO in every school in the state
- **\$25 million** for the new voucher program in Davidson and Shelby counties
- **\$25 million** to fund the GIVE act to expand CTE offerings in rural public schools
- **\$8 million** additional funding for Tennessee Early Intervention Services, which provide special education services to children from birth to age three
- **\$27.3 million** to fund the Katy Beckett Medicaid waiver, which will provide relief for families of children with severe disabilities who would otherwise be ineligible for coverage



State now required to form educator committee to address portfolios

Thanks to powerful testimony by TEA members, Tennessee pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers are once again held harmless from the state's controversial portfolio evaluation system. Teachers will also have a chance to fix the broken portfolio system via a specially appointed committee of practitioners.

As part of the bill sponsored by Rep. Gary Hicks (R-Rogersville) and Sen. Mike Bell (R-Riceville), which unanimously passed both legislative chambers and is headed to the governor's desk, school districts will be able to use alternate measures of student growth which have been approved by the State Board of Education.

TEA President Beth Brown called the portfolio victory a true testament to the organizing power of teachers.

"When the portfolio system was rolled out, teachers immediately identified problems and

as well as the state education commissioner or a designee.

The committee's charges are clearly spelled out. For instance, the bill requires the committee to review the pre-k/kindergarten growth portfolio model process, identify expectations for the model and areas of improvement, and make recommendations including "ways to streamline the growth portfolio model rubrics and processes" and "improve the functionality of the growth portfolio platform."

Once again, TEA was the lead organization highlighting problems with the portfolio system and demanding action on the botched pre-k and kindergarten portfolio implementation. As part of those efforts, several TEA members came to the capitol in Nashville during Civication to testify in education committee hearings about the severity of portfolio problems statewide.

"The [portfolio model] does not drive my instruction," said Candy Arwood, a teacher from Sumner County, during her testimony several weeks ago. "This is just something I have to check off the list. If you want to see the data that supports what I'm doing in the classroom, I'll pull the data and we can sit down and look at it, and I can show you where children have gone from a pre-reader to a k-level in guided reading. I can tell you where children couldn't form a sentence at the beginning of the year, and now they are running full sentences with a strong phonics program. But this [portfolio] is a mandate and busy work for teachers, and there are other options out there, but you have the power to change this for the children."

TEA will monitor the portfolio committee proceedings and will publish updates on social media and in future publications.

Strength, effectiveness of TEA make it a target for privatization groups

Payroll bill from page 1

payroll deduction almost every year," said TEA Chief Lobbyist Jim Wrye. "Honestly, these attacks are a testament to TEA members and staff doing our jobs. As the largest and strongest advocate for public education, TEA is an obvious target for those who want to pass legislation that harms public education. We are the ones standing in the way."

During debate, Sen. Frank Nicely (R-Strawberry Plains) questioned the merits of the bill, asking "What problem does this solve? It's almost

like you are trying to punish someone."

TEA's ability to defeat bills like the payroll dues deduction attack in the Senate demonstrates a changing tide in the upper chamber.

"Bad bills used to sail through the Senate, but under Sen. McNally's leadership and TEA's successful efforts to elect a growing number of pro-public education senators, that is no longer the case," Wrye said.

TEA stands ready for future attacks on the strength and effectiveness of the association.

inconsistencies. When the State Department of Education did not offer a fix, we made sure the legislature knew about the mounting issues, and they have heard our concerns," Brown said. "Time and again, TEA members have proven the power of collective advocacy is the most effective way to make change in public education."

HB 91/SB 442 ensures that teachers are held harmless for the 2018-19 school year and calls for "a portfolio review committee" comprised of three pre-k or kindergarten teachers (one from each of the grand divisions of the state), four legislators, one representative of the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents, one representative of the Tennessee School Boards Association,

TEA's ability to flood the halls of the General Assembly with hundreds of educators and pack committee rooms makes the association a force to be reckoned with. The association's proven record of increasing pro-public education voter turnout in primary elections has also increased the size of the target on our back.



TEA Summer Leadership Academy

Embassy Suites – Cool Springs June 13 – 15 www.teateachers.org/SLA