

HIGHER EDUCATION

Reverse Articulation

- Legislation making it easier for students to transfer credits between community colleges, private colleges and state universities has passed. Passage of the new law works to help obtain the goal of increasing the number of college graduates in Tennessee. [Senate Bill 2431](#) authorizes community colleges within the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) to enter into reverse articulation or reverse transfer agreements with four year institutions within the TBR system and institutions within the University of Tennessee, as well as private colleges accredited by the Southern Association of College and Schools (SACS).
- Articulation agreements are arrangements between higher education institutions that facilitate the transfer of course credits from one school to another. Agreements outline specific courses and letter grades completed at the community college that will transfer to a university or private college. They help students begin more defined curriculums so that students understand exactly which courses will and will not transfer as they move between colleges.
- According to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), articulation agreements between public higher education institutions are currently in development as part of the state's Complete College Act of 2010. The articulation agreements between public institutions and private SACS-accredited institutions will be completed if the private institutions approve the agreements.
- The agreements could also work to give students attending a four-year college who do not complete their degree the opportunity to transfer their credits to a community college if they choose to earn an Associate's Degree instead.

Dual Credit Courses

- Similarly, a bill to ensure students will receive college credit for dual credit courses that they complete successfully in high school was approved by the Tennessee General Assembly. Dual credit is a type of college credit by assessment that occurs when a high school student passes a course that has been created in collaboration with a higher education institution. The student then takes a test to prove their proficiency.
- Dual credit courses allow high school students to receive college credit for certain courses with a more rigorous college level curriculum. These courses are becoming more common in Tennessee high schools and are exceptional tools in preparing and encouraging high school students to attend college. However, many students have not been able to get the credit in college because of the transferability issue.
- [Senate Bill 2809](#) would require public postsecondary institutions to accept for credit any dual credit course developed by another public postsecondary institution in collaboration with a high school if the student passes the course and a college proficiency test. The legislation specifies credit would only be provided when the student enrolls in college.

K-12 EDUCATION

No Child Left Behind

- The General Assembly approved a bill that amends current law to reflect Tennessee's waiver from provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). [Senate Bill 3122](#) acknowledges Tennessee's own ambitious but achievable goals. The legislation is part of Governor Bill Haslam's legislative priorities and comes after Tennessee received approval from the U.S. Department of Education to waive certain provisions of the federal NCLB law.
- The bill matches Tennessee law with Tennessee goals, moving away from the barriers created by the federal NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards.
- It removes the over-identification of failing schools under the NCLB provisions to a system where schools are recognized for achieving individual student progress benchmarks set though the state's successful Race to the Top application.
- In place of the annual AYP designation for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and schools, the bill establishes a state accountability system requiring significant growth in student achievement in core subjects.
- It also contains provisions designed to cut the achievement gap between the poorest students and racial minorities with their counterparts, whose scores are higher.

Teachers / Discipline in the Classroom

- The legislature approved a new law to give teachers more authority to relocate a student who poses a safety threat without fear of being found liable. [Senate Bill 3116](#) requires local education boards to adopt a policy authorizing a teacher's ability to temporarily move a student to a different location for the student's safety or the safety of others. The bill also requires principals to fully support the authority of teachers in taking the action when it is done according to the policy.
- The genesis of the bill came as lawmakers have listened to teachers who were concerned about liability while performing assigned duties or that a lawsuit could be brought against them if they try to remove a student during an altercation. The legislation is supported by the Tennessee School Board Association, the Tennessee Teacher Association, and the Professional Educators of Tennessee.
- The policy required under the measure would also cover teachers' authorization to intervene in a physical altercation between two or more students or between a student and Local Education Agency (LEA) employee. It also allows for the use of reasonable or justifiable force upon a student if the student is unwilling to cooperate and it becomes necessary to end the altercation by relocating the student to another area. If steps beyond the use of reasonable or justifiable force are required, the proposal says the student would remain in place until law enforcement officers or school resource officers arrive.

Reasonable Force by School Personnel / School Bus Drivers

- Similarly, legislation was passed into law this year which regulates student conduct on school buses. The bill authorizes any teacher, principal, school employee or school bus driver, in exercising the person's lawful authority, to use

- reasonable force when necessary under the circumstances to correct or restrain a student or prevent bodily harm or death to another person.
- This bill expands present law to include assaulting a school bus driver or other school personnel with vulgar, obscene or threatening language as conduct for which it is appropriate to suspend a student.
 - The legislation also creates a defense against a civil action for damages, which action is based on an intentional assault, personal injury or injury to the personal property of a student or school personnel, that a teacher, principal, school employee or school bus driver in the exercise of the person's lawful authority used reasonable force that was necessary to restrain the student or to prevent bodily harm or death to another person.

Teachers First Amendment Right Protected

- The State Senate passed [Senate Bill 3060](#) aimed at protecting the First Amendment rights of school personnel, including teachers and administrators. The bill seeks to ensure educators can participate in programs that take place either before or after school hours and do not interfere with their school duties, including those of a religious nature as long as they are initiated by students. The action comes after reported incidents where teachers and coaches were admonished for participating in such activities as the “Meet Me at the Pole” prayer event and prayer before sporting events, both of which are outside of school hours.