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Arts Educators and Advocates

The 111st Tennessee General Assembly is now well underway. The deadline for filing new legislation has passed and we are currently reviewing the proposed education legislation. As we saw from the Governor's State of the State address, K-12 education is again a priority for this administration. Below are highlights from the Governor Lee's address, and the legislation we are following as of this date.

For more information on ArtsEd Tennessee's work to support the arts in the schools, we encourage you to visit our [new website](#) and sign up to be a member at no cost!

State of the State Address

The Governor's budget includes an increase in spending for K-12 education, and a 4% raise for teachers. In addition, Governor Lee has recommended moving minimum teacher salaries from the current \$36,000 to \$40,000 over the next two years.

To address the statewide shortage of teachers, the Governor announced the creation of the Governor's Teaching Fellowship to support the academic journey of 1,000 future teachers each year. Also included in his address is a program designed to improve teacher preparation in the state's universities.

Of particular importance are proposed new standards for K-2 literacy training and instruction. The Governor's budget includes nearly \$70 million to support evidence-based reading instruction. Education Commissioner Schwinn wants all who teach reading at this level to receive PD in the science of reading. Legislation for this literacy initiative has already been proposed in the House and Senate Education Committees. ArtsEd Tennessee will follow this legislation to watch for the possible implications for elementary music and visual art. We will keep you informed of the details as it moves forward.

Pending Legislation

HB2001, M.White; SB1962, D. Gresham

Requires the county legislative body determine school budgets

Description of Legislation: As proposed, this legislation would broaden the duties of county legislative bodies to include making revenue estimates set by the basic education program (BEP) for the school system. Currently, school boards set the budget for the local school system, then present it to the county legislative body. If passed, this would change the governing body that sets the school budget from the school board to the county legislative body.

Why this matters: A change in who sets the school budget could impact the local funding of school arts programs. It is notable that this legislation is sponsored by the chair of the House Education Committee, Rep. White, and the Senate Education Committee, Sen. Gresham.

ArtsEdTN position/action: We are following this legislation and will keep you informed as it progresses.

HB1993, B. Dunn; SB2343, D. Gresham

Open enrollment – transfer of students to school that student is not zoned to attend

Description of Legislation: This would require all school systems to conduct an open enrollment period of at least 30 days, during which parents or guardians of students residing either in or outside the system may apply for enrollment in a school for which the student is not zoned.

Why this matters: There is much support within the Lee administration to give parents/guardians greater choice concerning the school their child attends. This legislation is a step in that direction by allowing a student to apply to attend a school other than the one the student is zoned to attend, whether that school is in their current school system or not.

ArtsEdTN position/action: We will follow this legislation and provide updates through the process.

HB1664, J. Hodges; SB1728, R. Briggs

Grading scale for students in grades 9-12

Description of Legislation: This legislation would establish the grading scale that must be used to assign letter grade to students in grades 9-12 for the purpose of reporting student grades for post secondary financial assistance. This does not prohibit the State Board of Education or an individual school system from implementing a grading system to use for purposes other than reporting for post secondary financial assistance.

Why this matters: The purpose of this legislation is to create a "level playing field" for the state's students when they apply for college financial aid and must report letter grades. Currently, there are a variety of interpretations in school systems throughout the state concerning the number grade range used for each letter grade.

ArtsEdTN position/action: Creating a standard letter grade system statewide for financial aid would benefit students and insure the process is fair. We support this legislation.

More Legislation Ahead

We estimate there are nearly 350 pieces of legislation that are currently under consideration by the 111th General Assembly that specifically address K-12 education issues. In future updates we will continue to report on the legislation included in this email, as well as any other that has the potential of impacting the arts curriculum.

Our profession and our voice is stronger when we work together as unified arts educators. The ArtsEdTN coalition supports and represents all arts content areas, in all grade levels, for all the students in Tennessee. You can help build the ArtsEdTN community by forwarding this email to colleagues and any others you know who support arts education. Together we can insure that every student in our state has access to quality arts instruction offered during the school day by licensed specialists, highly skilled in the subject area being taught.

Stephen Coleman
Director, ArtsEd Tennessee

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