

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Dickson County Board of Education is responsible for providing a local system of public education; and

WHEREAS, there is pending legislation before the Tennessee General Assembly that would create a voucher program allowing students to use public education funds to pay for private school tuition; and

WHEREAS, more than 50 years have passed since private school vouchers were first proposed, and during that time proponents have spent millions of dollars attempting to convince the public and lawmakers of the concept's efficacy, and yet, five decades later, vouchers still remain controversial, unproven, and unpopular; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the State of Tennessee requires that the Tennessee General Assembly "provide for the maintenance, support and eligibility standards of a system of free public schools", with no mention of the maintenance or support of private schools; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee, through work of the Tennessee General Assembly, the Tennessee Department of Education, the State Board of Education and local school boards, has established nationally recognized standards and measures for accountability in public education; and

WHEREAS, vouchers eliminate public accountability by channeling tax dollars into private schools that do not face state-approved academic standards, do not make budgets public, do not adhere to open meetings and records laws, do not publicly report on student achievement, and do not face the public accountability requirements contained in major federal laws, including special education; and

WHEREAS, vouchers have not been effective at improving student achievement or closing the achievement gap, with the most credible research finding little or no difference in voucher and public school students' performance; and

WHEREAS, vouchers leave many students behind, including those with the greatest needs, because vouchers channel tax dollars into private schools that are not required to accept all students, nor offer the special services they may need; and

WHEREAS, vouchers give choices to private schools, not students and parents, since private schools decide if they want to accept vouchers, how many and which students they want to admit, and the potentially arbitrary reasons for which they might later dismiss a student; and

WHEREAS, many proponents argue these programs will increase options, when in fact several options currently exist within public school systems. Through federal and state laws, students have the options of charter or magnet schools, and in the event of failing schools, students may attend other traditional public schools within the district.

WHEREAS, voucher programs divert critical dollars and commitment from public schools to pay private school tuition for a few students, including many who already attend private schools; and

WHEREAS, vouchers are an inefficient use of tax payer money because they compel taxpayers to support two school systems: one public and one private, the latter of which is not accountable to all the taxpayers supporting it; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE DICKSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION AS FOLLOWS:

The Dickson County Board of Education opposes HB 1049 or any other legislation or other similar effort to create a voucher program in Tennessee that would divert money intended for public education to private schools.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, on November 1, 2015 the Basic Education Program Review Committee (the Committee) Annual Report (The BEP Report) was published with recommendations for actions by the Legislature; and

WHEREAS, the Committee for a third consecutive year voted to recommend as its first priority that the health insurance component of the BEP be funded at 12 months, rather than 10; and while the Governor and General Assembly have now funded an 11th month and boards are grateful, the lack of state funds for the 12th month is an immense burden on LEAs; and

WHEREAS, the Committee for a third consecutive year voted to recommend as its second priority that the teachers' salary component of the BEP be increased to reconcile the discrepancy between funding and actual salaries; and again, while LEAs are grateful for additional appropriations this year for salaries and benefits, the gap is still tremendous; and

WHEREAS, despite the shortfalls in the BEP, Tennessee students and teachers are improving at amazing rates; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee students are still the fastest improving in the nation since 2011 according to the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); and

WHEREAS, Tennessee students are on track to be in the top half of all states in all subjects on NAEP by 2019; and

WHEREAS, investing in improving public education is the only strategic investment the State may make that can yield positive results in all of the following areas:

- 1) Reducing poverty and the number of citizens on the TENNCARE rolls;
- 2) Increasing a highly skilled workforce to meet the demands of the increasingly competitive global environment;
- 3) Increasing State tax revenues by attracting new industry, increasing personal incomes & spending by creating more jobs, and increasing property values;
- 4) Reducing crime rates statewide; and
- 5) Improving the quality of life for all Tennesseans; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Dickson County Board of Education urges the Governor and General Assembly to prioritize the funding for education by providing the necessary resources to school districts through the BEP by immediately providing the 12 month of funding of insurance premiums and increasing the salary component for teachers' salaries. Furthermore, the Board urges Governor Haslam, the General Assembly, and the Department of Education to continue efforts to fund all of the recommendations and priorities of prior reports of the BEP Review Committee.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Dickson County Board of Education is responsible for providing a local system of public education; and

WHEREAS, local boards of education currently have the ability to establish school calendars and do so after considering the needs of parents, teachers, students, and communities; and

WHEREAS, even though the Board takes into account the needs of parents, teachers, students, and local communities, the school calendar must have 180 days of instruction each academic year; and

WHEREAS, there are 141 school districts in Tennessee, and each has its own unique needs and circumstances that must be evaluated when developing an academic calendar that meets the 180-day instructional time requirement; and

WHEREAS, thirty-six (36) other states around the country require a minimum number of hours or they enable local school districts to meet instructional time requirements through hours or days; and

WHEREAS, allowing local boards of education to meet the instructional time requirement through hours or days would provide additional flexibility and create opportunities for additional instructional services through potential savings with operational costs; and

WHEREAS, with every decision, school board members must consider the best interests of students and the advancement of student achievement; and

WHEREAS, additional flexibility helps ensure that all students receive the best educational opportunities in order to graduate prepared to enter a postsecondary institutions or the workforce; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE DICKSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION AS FOLLOWS:

The Dickson County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to amend state law to provide an option to local school districts whereby the State Board of Education would establish a minimum number of instructional hours or days in an academic year.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Dickson County Board of Education is responsible for providing a local system of public education; and

WHEREAS, local boards of education currently have the ability to establish school calendars and do so after considering the needs of parents, teachers, students, and communities ; and

WHEREAS, in addition to Tennessee, a majority of states around the country allow local school boards to set school calendars; and

WHEREAS, there are 141 school districts in Tennessee, and each has its own unique needs and circumstances that must be evaluated in developing an academic calendar; and

WHEREAS, there have been numerous movements to postpone the start dates for schools; and

WHEREAS, proponents of these movements point to the costs of utilities and the potential influx of revenue through tourism as reasons for the legislation; and

WHEREAS, as with every decision, school board members must consider the best interests of students and the advancement of student achievement above these and other factors; and

WHEREAS, a mandatory start date would greatly hinder a school system's ability to ensure sufficient instruction time for students; and

WHEREAS, a mandatory start date would require local school boards to reduce or eliminate breaks throughout the year, including but not limited to fall break, spring break, and Christmas break; and

WHEREAS, a later start date would almost certainly postpone the end dates for schools and not result in additional days for summer vacation between academic years; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE DICKSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION AS FOLLOWS:

The Dickson County Board of Education opposes any legislation or other similar effort to alter or impair a local board of education's ability to establish an academic calendar as it works best for its students, teachers, parents, and community.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Dickson County Board of Education is charged with governing the school system so that all students receive the best educational opportunities in order to graduate prepared to enter a postsecondary institution or the workforce; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of this community have entrusted the Board to make conscientious decisions with priorities and budgetary items to ensure the resources are available to provide these educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, too often there are unfunded mandates, unintended consequences, or other requirements in the law that force the expenditure of funds that will never have an impact on the classroom; and

WHEREAS, the Board supports access to public records by citizens in order to provide transparency and to generate an informed and involved citizenry; and

WHEREAS, the Board believes that access to public records must be weighed against the overall importance of maximizing resources for students; and

WHEREAS, if a citizen requests copies of public records, reasonable fees may be assessed for labor costs in excess of one hour and for the production of copies; and

WHEREAS, however, if a request is made to inspect records, no fees may be assessed regardless of the length of time or the costs associated with the compliance; and

WHEREAS, requests for inspection may require the printing, redacting, and copying of thousands of documents and the use of multiple employees and numerous hours to comply; and

WHEREAS, while the reasonable requests of citizens to inspect public records are welcomed and encouraged by the Board, unreasonable and overly burdensome requests divert attention and resources from reaching students; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE DICKSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION AS FOLLOWS:

The Dickson County Board of Education urges the General Assembly to amend state law to enable governmental entities to charge reasonable fees for the inspection of records similar to the current provisions with requests for copies of records.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Dickson County Board of Education is responsible for providing a local system of public education; and

WHEREAS, the appointment of school superintendents was the cornerstone of the Education Improvement Act of 1992, patterning school governance after the business model, with elected school boards responsible for setting policy and board-appointed chief executive officers in charge of day-to-day administration of schools; and

WHEREAS, the Education Improvement Act and the appointment of superintendents have provided greater flexibility at the local level to operate schools and made school systems more accountable for results; and

WHEREAS, the appointment of superintendents provides a broader pool of qualified candidates and removes residency limitations, allowing the selection to be based solely on professional qualifications and leadership skills rather than the political savvy of only those individuals living in a particular district and willing to run for office; and

WHEREAS, the appointed superintendent is accountable to the board of education and may be replaced for failure to achieve the standards and goals established by the local board and the state; and

WHEREAS, the appointment of the superintendent ensures cooperation and a common vision with the board of education to improve student achievement and overall school performance; and

WHEREAS, history in Tennessee has shown that most elected superintendents are voted out of office after one term – just around the time school systems, students and the community can begin to benefit from their increased knowledge and experience; and

WHEREAS, only three states in the entire country (Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi) continue to participate in the outdated practice of electing school superintendents, electing less than one percent of the nearly 15,000 superintendents in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee General Assembly will undoubtedly continue to face pressure to revert to elected superintendents, particularly from some local funding bodies reluctant to increase education funding and improve school system budgets and frustrated with the lead advocacy roles of appointed superintendents;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE Dickson County Board of Education encourages the Tennessee General Assembly to place the interest of students above any other by recognizing the value of appointed superintendents and rejecting any attempt to revert to superintendent elections.

RESOLUTION

Whereas, school boards in Tennessee are facing unprecedented accountability at the national, state and local levels for student and school performance; and

Whereas, school board members can be removed from office and school systems can be taken over by the state if performance standards are not met; yet, boards of education are completely dependent upon other elected bodies for the fiscal resources that are often necessary to meet these very standards; and

Whereas, this flawed and uncommon system of funding public education serves only to perpetuate unproductive funding battles and finger-pointing between boards of education and county commissions/city councils and leaves the public with no clear line of accountability or authority; and

Whereas, accountability without authority is simply unreasonable and the time has come to move forward with a funding system for education that is fair and sensible and one that will place student achievement on the top of the priority list; and

Whereas, there are currently 14 special school districts in Tennessee; and,

Whereas, in special school districts, money earmarked for education cannot be redirected for other city/county projects; and

Whereas, in special school districts, local taxpayers are much more supportive of decisions to raise funds when revenue goes solely to education; and

Whereas, if special school district legislation were passed as proposed, it would merely give existing school systems in the state the OPTION to become a special school district;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Dickson School Board respectfully urges the General Assembly to pass legislation removing the prohibition on local boards converting to special school districts.

Adopted, This 28th day of January 2016.