

Rochester PTA Legislative Committee Recap: October 2, 2015

**Note: Legislation may have moved since the meeting date.*

Third-grade reading proficiency bill close to vote

House Bill 4822 (HB 4822) requires benchmarks for reading proficiency in order for students to be promoted to the third grade, and would provide early evaluation and intervention programs, and modify reading instruction requirements for teacher certification. Earlier versions of the bill required certain student scores and mandatory retention if those scores weren't met, but there was no funding source to provide necessary resources for these children.

Some positive improvements have been made to the bill, including funding, and educators generally agree that third-grade reading proficiency is a critical skill, but the Michigan Education Association (MEA) asserts that mandatory retention is punitive, but not helpful, and there are many other factors to consider. For instance, what if a child is proficient in all other subjects, but not reading? Should they be held back?

HB 4822 is now before the full House and a vote is expected soon.

- RCS leadership supports the reading interventions and resources that are included in this bill, but is philosophically opposed to mandatory retention.
- Click here for a fact sheet, created by the MEA: <http://www.mea.org/sites/default/files/images/093015-factsheet-4822.pdf>.
- To follow the activity of HB 4822, click here: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2015-HB-4822>.
- House Bill 4823 is related to HB 4822, and involves requiring that teacher certification include field experience in the diagnosis and remediation of reading disabilities. For details, click here: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2003-HB-4823>.

Teacher evaluations and student growth measurements in question

Senate Bill 103 (SB 103), sponsored by Sen. Phil Pavlov, addresses teacher performance evaluations and how much of that evaluation should be tied to student growth measures. This bill wants to push back deadlines that were imposed by a 2011 law that says teacher effectiveness scores need to include student growth as measured by statewide tests, and 22.5% of the teacher assessment would be based on student test scores. Earlier bills argued that 40-50% of teacher evaluations should be based on student growth. Additionally, schools would be prohibited from assigning students to a class in the same subject for two years in a row taught by a teacher rated "ineffective" in that subject two years in a row.

This subject is important, because there is no common student assessment and growth measurement in place in Michigan. M-Step was a temporary test to take the place of MEAP, and M-Step data is still unavailable; therefore, it would not be reliable for growth comparisons or analysis across school years. SB 103 eliminates the state-driven system (which doesn't exist currently) and allows districts and charters to implement their own teacher evaluation system.

- RCS teacher evaluations are based on a combination of classroom performance and student measurements. RCS favors local control, particularly in the absence of good statewide tools.
- Click here to follow SB 103: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2015-SB-0103>.

Post-labor-day school start under review

The House is revisiting HB 4396 (enacted in 2003), mandating that schools start after Labor Day in Michigan. Legislators are considering repealing this law, but would continue to ensure that classes are not in session the Friday before Labor Day. Pre-labor day starts are supported by the MEA, as calendar restraints make it difficult to get the full instructional requirements fulfilled. Additionally, mandatory classroom hours have increased, as the state continues to make the curriculum more rigorous.

- To follow the progress of this discussion, click here: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2015-HB-4396>.

Gun-free zones in schools discussed

House Bill 4261 was introduced earlier this year, proposing to ban "open carry" (versus concealed carry) of firearms in "gun free zones" specified in the state concealed pistol license law, which include, schools, day care centers, stadiums, arenas, theaters, bars, churches, college dorms and classrooms, hospitals, casinos, and courts. The bill would add public libraries to this list, also. The Michigan PTA supports this ban on open carry in schools. A recent Ann Arbor case is challenging the law too.

- To follow this bill, click here: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2003-HB-4261>.

RCS School Bond Proposal on the Nov. 3 ballot

The aging buildings and large-scale infrastructure needs of Rochester Community Schools (RCS) could be addressed if voters approve a Nov. 3 bond proposal that would provide \$185 million for facility improvements and repairs, with no tax increase. If the proposal passes, new bonds would replace expiring ones, and the current tax rate would be extended for five years.

The proposed bond-funded projects fall into seven basic categories:

- Improve student safety and security.
- Address critical needs in roofs, electrical and mechanical areas.

- Upgrade technology and technology infrastructure.
- Establish permanent spaces for Pre-K, adult and special education.
- Improve classroom and school interiors.
- Improve playgrounds, school sites, athletic fields and fine arts facilities.
- Replace school buses as they reach the end of their useful life.

More information about the bond proposal, including detailed building breakdowns, costs, and voter instructions can be found at www.rochester.k12.mi.us. Click the TI2020 Voter Information button. You can also visit the Citizens Committee website at: www.cc4RCS.org or go to Facebook and follow the Citizens Committee for Rochester Community Schools.

Stay informed

To stay informed about relevant pending legislation, RCS parents and families may utilize the following resources:

- Please visit the Tri-County Alliance for Public Education website at: <http://www.tricountyalliance.org/>. Remember to check back regularly and sign up to receive e-mail briefs.
- Subscribe to the Bridge Magazine (electronic), which provides news and analysis from the Center for Michigan. This is not limited to public education issues, but includes relevant news. To sign up, visit: www.bridgemi.com.
- The Michigan Education Association offers two electronic newsletters: *Capitol Comments* and *Voice Online*. To subscribe, visit: www.mea.org.

RCS PTA legislative committee meetings are held on the first Friday of each month, from 9:30-11:00 a.m., in the Rochester Community Schools Administration Building (Parker Room). Future meetings are: November 6, December 4, January 8 (to accommodate holiday break), February 5, March 4, April 1, May 6, and June 3.

**Discussions/meeting minutes summarized by Amy DiCresce. (amydicresce@gmail.com)*