

2015 Missouri Legislative Session Final Summary Bill of Interest to Special Education

Bills that Passed and have been or should be signed by the Governor

HB 2 – DESE Appropriations

The following are the final appropriation amounts for special education line items of interest:

- Early Childhood Special Education– \$149,660,376 (5 million increase from last year.)
- High Need Fund - \$46,555,141 (Level funding from last year)
- First Steps - \$53,372,710 (Level funding from last year)
- Reimbursements for Publicly Placed Students - \$11,099,337 (level funding)
- Blind Literacy Task Force and Blind Skills Specialists - \$231,953 (level funding)
- Readers for the Blind - \$25,000 (level funding)

SB 107 – Sater (Also SB 146 - Pearce & HB 288 – Rep Dohrman)

This bill amends the SLP licensure law to simplify the process for obtaining DESE SLP certification and addressing issues with SLP Assistant credentials. Specifically the bill –

- Eliminates the Provisional Certificate and associated 9 month fellowship period. When the law becomes effective, August 28, 2015, individuals with a Master’s degree in SLP who have passed the Praxis will get a full license from the Board of Healing Arts (BoHA) and then will get an initial SLP Student Services Certificate from DESE. No more TAC! With a full license these individuals will also be able to bill Medicaid.
- Clarifies that only individuals who hold a DESE SLP certificate issued prior to January 1, 2016 can work in Missouri public schools without a license. This should help ensure that all new graduates get a license first and keep that license current and will get Missouri to universal licensure over time.
- Allows individuals who hold a DESE only certificate to supervise SLP Assistants. Current law only allows those with a BoHA SLP license to supervise. Eventually this will be a moot point when everyone holds a license; but for now this will encourage SLP-A use instead of Implementers.
- Clarifies the requirements for credentialing of SLP Assistants. These clarifications should make is relatively easy for any individual with a bachelor’s degree in Communication Disorders or SLP to get registered as an SLP Assistant. Again the goal is to increase the use of SLP Assistants and decrease the use of Implementers.
- Authorizes the BoHA and the SLP Commission to establish continuing education requirements for SLP Assistants.

SB 174 – Senator Schmitt

This bill establishes authorization for Missouri to implement the federal ABLE Act which is a tax-free savings plan for individuals with disabilities similar to the 539 college savings plan. Individuals with disabilities can have savings in these accounts up to certain amounts without jeopardizing their federal benefits, such as SSI/SSDI and Medicaid coverage.

Bills that Passed but may be vetoed by the Governor

HB 42 – Rep Wood

This bill is the legislature’s attempt to fix the transfer law and again it was loaded up with many other requirements, such as expansion of charter schools and virtual schools supported with foundation formula funds, a dyslexia task force and requiring DESE to hire a dyslexia specialist – while still doing little to change the tuition system to prevent schools

paying tuition from going bankrupt. *It is unknown if the Governor will veto the bill this year or not and if he does veto it if the legislature will try to override his veto.*

Bills that did not pass

SB 172 – Senator Romine

This core bill would have established requirements for a career and technical high school certificate. Many other educational provisions were amended onto the bill including establishing a Legislative Task Force on dyslexia with 18 members (including a member recommended by MO-CASE) to develop recommendations for providing services to meet the needs of individuals with dyslexia in Missouri. The bill also would have required DESE to hire a dyslexia specialist to support schools in meeting the needs of students with dyslexia.

SB 468 – Senator Sifton, HB 731 – Rep Wood, HB 1255 – Rep Swan

These bills would have required schools to screen for dyslexia and provide intervention for students determined to have dyslexia. The fiscal note on these bill was quite high for just the screening portion and the intervention portion would be even more costly.

SB 365 – Senator Schmitt

This bill would have revised special education procedures to require districts do initial evaluations every 24 months upon request, would shift the burden of proof to schools (instead of the party initiating due process) and would make minor procedural errors a violation of FAPE, would restrict district use of attorneys, and would require policies that allow parents to record conversations and meetings.

HB 365 – Rep Spencer

This bill would have established rigid differentiated diplomas in Missouri based solely on scoring proficient on standardized tests. Students who scored proficient on specified standardized tests would be eligible for a “high school academic diploma”. Students who did not meet this requirement would be given a “diploma of local achievement” instead. Only IDEA eligible students with an IQ of less than 85 would be exempt from this requirement but they would only be eligible for the local achievement diploma.

HB 578 – Rep Swan

This bill would have established a requirement for all students to pass a civics test before graduating from high school. MO-CASE was able to ensure that a provisions was added that allowed districts to establish their own policy regarding the participation of students with disabilities in this testing.

HB 1003 - Representative Hummel

This bill would have required all students to receive instruction in Braille “when an assessment demonstrates the need for such instruction”. MO-CASE was able to modify the bill text to align with IDEA requirements for consideration of Braille so that the assessment informs decision-making but the assessment itself does not dictate instruction outside of the IEP process.