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STATE NEWS

States Loosening 'Seat Time' Requirements

Education Week

March 7, 2012

By: Sean Cavanagh

[http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/03/07/23biz-state.h31.html?](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/03/07/23biz-state.h31.html?tkn=TOZFAMBx0xQ3pe1Lkl2OY1OTtArJNBke7vGs&cmp=clp-edweek&intc=EW-BE0312-EWH)

[tkn=TOZFAMBx0xQ3pe1Lkl2OY1OTtArJNBke7vGs&cmp=clp-edweek&intc=EW-BE0312-EWH](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/03/07/23biz-state.h31.html?tkn=TOZFAMBx0xQ3pe1Lkl2OY1OTtArJNBke7vGs&cmp=clp-edweek&intc=EW-BE0312-EWH)

States have established an array of policies in recent years to free schools from having to award academic credits based on "seat time," with the goal of making it easier for struggling students to catch up, exceptional students to race ahead, and students facing geographic and scheduling barriers to take the courses they need.

Thirty-six states have adopted policies that allow districts or schools to provide credits based on students' proving proficiency in a subject, rather than the time they physically spend in a traditional classroom setting, [according to the National Governors Association](#)

[Association](#). One state, New Hampshire, has required high schools to assign credits based on competency, rather than seat time, while others have encouraged schools to do that or allowed them to apply for waivers from state policy to do so.

In addition to their desire to increase academic opportunities for students, state policymakers are eager to boost high school graduation rates by re-engaging struggling teenagers through online or alternative courses, and potentially putting them on the path to a two- or four-year college degree or career certification.

Merely "having a seat in a class doesn't guarantee you anything," said Jason Glass, the director of the Iowa Department of Education. He and Iowa's Republican governor, Terry Branstad, are asking state lawmakers to [create a system](#) that allows students to prove their ability in different subjects in a variety of ways—such as through tests, demonstrations of skills, and the completion of projects.

"Right now," Mr. Glass said, "we allow kids to move on by demonstrating very minimal competencies in these courses." The concept is "still sort of cutting edge," he added, "but we want Iowa experimenting with it."

Others, however, wonder whether advocates of moving away from seat time are more interested in trying to boost graduation rates through online and other means than in keeping an eye on the instructional quality of those courses.

"A teacher inspires students. A laptop can't do that," said Rita M. Solnet, a member of [Parents Across America](#), an organization that is critical of efforts to shift educational services away from the public to the private sector. She suggested that lawmakers in her state, Florida, and elsewhere are among those putting more focus on improving graduation rates than on maintaining the academic quality of the new online learning programs they are creating.

Florida has an extensive virtual education program through the Florida Virtual School, the country's largest state-sponsored virtual school, and this year, the Republican-controlled legislature has been considering a measure that would require that students assigned to teachers with a continually low performance rating be told of virtual education options.

The risk in the push for such programs is that public officials, in an effort to improve graduation rates, will allow online providers to present easy material to students so they can "breeze right through it," Ms. Solnet said.

Beyond Carnegie Units

For roughly a century, the standard method for awarding American students academic credit was through Carnegie units, a measure based on student time spent in school. The goal of that measurement was to standardize the amount of instruction students received and were credited for across subjects, for college admission and other purposes.

But over time, critics have said that model has become increasingly obsolete, in that it doesn't help students who aren't being served well by traditional classrooms and doesn't account for the ways in which advances in technology and alternative

instructional methods can help students.

Perhaps no state has gone as far as New Hampshire in moving away from seat-time requirements. In 2005, it became the first state to do away with the Carnegie unit, according to the [International Association of K-12 Online Learning](#), or INACOL, a Vienna, Va.-based group that supports expanding online education options.

The state gave districts until the 2008-09 academic year to award students credits based on their mastery of course-level competencies, though some districts have yet to make the change. ("[N.H. Schools Embrace Competency-Based Learning.](#)" Feb. 8, 2012.)

New Hampshire does not have state definitions for discipline-specific competencies, but rather gives school districts the right to define them, a level of flexibility local officials have argued is a matter of local control, said Paul K. Leather, the state's deputy commissioner of education.

The state has offered guidance to districts through a "competency validation rubric" and model competencies.

Students across the state are obtaining competency-based credits through online courses and extended-learning programs, generally defined as out-of-school options that could include apprenticeships, independent study, or community service.

So far, more students are using competency-based options for elective courses, rather than core academic subjects, Mr. Leather said.

At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education encourages "promising practices" among states and districts, in which schools make the most of student learning time and ensure that students' mastery of academic content is a major focus, noted Elizabeth Utrup, a spokeswoman for the agency, in an email.

Department officials believe those strategies can improve schools' flexibility and productivity, she said.

Yet even as states roll out new policies designed to move away from seat-time requirements, they face major questions about how to integrate new education options within their current systems.

For instance, many states do not have clearly defined policies on whether public colleges and universities should accept credits awarded for mastery of a subject, rather than seat time, explained Stephanie Shipton, an education policy analyst at the Washington-based NGA.

Credit for College

Some states could soon move to clarify those policies. Over the next few years, Colorado officials will be revising college admissions policy, and are likely to consider accepting credits acquired through students' demonstration of mastery, including those obtained through web-based portfolios of work, according to officials at the state Department of Higher Education. State policies also vary greatly in how they attempt to regulate the awarding of credits to students other than by seat time, said Jennifer Dounay Zinth, a senior policy analyst at the [Education Commission of the States](#), a research and policy organization in Denver.

Some states audit online programs and other alternative education options; some require that online or out-of-school courses adhere to state academic standards; some mandate end-of-course exams for students; and some attempt to regulate them by setting requirements for teacher qualifications, Ms. Dounay Zinth said.

Gary Miron, a professor of education at Western Michigan University, in Kalamazoo, sees the shift away from seat time as part of a broader movement in U.S. education to rework traditional school schedules to increase student achievement—such as through lengthening the school day or school year.

But he also said it represents another shift, too: a move away from "regulatory accountability" of schools, toward more "performance-based" or "market" accountability. Under the latter form of accountability, advocates of nontraditional options say they should be judged on their ability to produce results for students, and by how attractive those options are for parents.

State policymakers would be wise to move more slowly in promoting alternatives to traditional classroom instruction, given their uneven record, he argued. Mr. Miron released a report this year that found that a much smaller percentage of schools managed by for-profit virtual education providers—27 percent—made "adequate yearly progress" under the federal No Child Left Behind Act than was the case among schools managed by nonprofit and for-profit organizations, overall.

"I'm cautious about the speed of implementation, before we've taken the time to figure all of these things out, and test all of these things out," Mr. Miron said.

Some states are giving districts the flexibility to come up with alternatives to seat-time requirements.

Michigan is among them. In 2007, the state created a policy to grant waivers from seat-time requirements to districts on a case-by-case basis.

Luring Dropouts Back

Over the past year, more than 200 schools have requested some sort of waiver, and about 5,500 students are making use of that flexibility, said Barbara Fardell, the manager of educational technology for the Michigan Department of Education.

The majority of those participants are doing some form of blended learning, combining traditional instruction in public schools with online learning or other alternative forms of instruction, Ms. Fardell said.

Many of the schools are attempting to lure dropouts back to school—who have obtained relatively few credits in traditional high school settings, she said. For those students, "it's hard to come back," the Michigan official said. "They feel there's a stigma." "I won't say that an online environment is the best way for all students to learn best," Ms. Fardell added, "but it's definitely the better option for some of them."

One agency making use of that flexibility is the [Oakland Schools](#), a regional service agency outside Detroit that oversees the participation of students from 17 school districts in [Widening Advancements for Youth](#). WAY, as the program is known, is a nonprofit program based in Belleville, Mich. It uses primarily online lessons, combined with in-person instruction, and mentoring, tailored to individual student needs.

The Oakland Schools began accepting students into the program in September; enrollment is 160 and growing.

Students are assigned mentors and are given access to a network of adult support, including teachers who provide help at in-person laboratories the students are expected to attend, as well as educators who provide online support 24 hours a day, WAY

officials said. Students work on "projects" in different subjects in which they lack credit, and work toward meeting state content expectations in those subjects, and Oakland Schools then recommends whether or not students' home districts should award them academic credit, said Michael Yocum, the executive director of learning services for the Oakland schools.

The program is winning over "school-phobic" students, who do not feel comfortable in traditional classroom settings, said Mr. Yocum.

"We try to shape the projects around what will motivate them," Mr. Yocum said. "It's an attempt to reinvigorate them, and get them to look at academic work differently."

One student who says her perspective has shifted is Rebecca Poniewierski, 15, from Auburn Hills, Mich.

Before joining the program, she had accumulated only a handful of academic credits, acquired at an area high school.

Now she's trying to rebuild her academic career in subjects like chemistry, U.S. history, and algebra. Much of her work is done online, but she makes regular visits to a laboratory to meet her teachers in person in various subjects, and she can ask for online help at all hours of the day.

Ms. Poniewierski admits she had doubts whether the online-heavy program would work for her. She worried she would procrastinate too much—and she confesses to spending too much time on Facebook, though she says "that just makes me work longer."

"I'm a totally different person now that I'm out of [my] school," she said. "So far, I'm catching up easily. If I don't understand, and I want to talk to a teacher or mentor, I can talk to them."

Coverage of the education industry and K-12 innovation is supported in part by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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Florida education "acceleration" bill heads to Gov. Rick Scott

Tampa Bay Times

By: Jeff Solochechek

March 8, 2012

<http://www.tampabay.com/blogs/gradebook/content/education-acceleration-bill-heads-gov-rick-scott>

A [bill](#) that would require Florida school districts to adopt early high school graduation policies won unanimous Senate support on Wednesday as it headed to Gov. Rick Scott's office for his signature into law.

The bill would allow students to earn credit based on their accelerated learning, and not just based on the amount of time they sit in a class. The provisions include:

At a minimum, each school must offer the following ACCEL options: whole-grade and midyear promotion; subject-matter acceleration; virtual instruction in higher grade level subjects; and the Credit Acceleration Program under s. 1003.4295. Additional ACCEL options may include, but are not limited to, enriched science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) coursework; enrichment programs; flexible grouping; advanced academic courses; combined classes; self-paced instruction; curriculum compacting; advanced-content instruction; and telescoping curriculum.

Part of the idea behind this bill was the notion that advanced students were being ignored as schools work to bring up low-performing children to meet state and federal accountability standards.

Patricia Levesque, who heads Jeb Bush's Foundation for Florida's Future, praised the passage of the legislation. "Recognizing and rewarding student learning instead of just seat-time is the next step towards providing every Florida student a quality education that is customized to meet their unique learning style and pace," she said in a release. "We look forward to Governor Scott signing this bill into law."

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Teacher Evaluations Pose Test for States

Wall Street Journal

By: Stephanie Banchemo

March 8, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203961204577267562780533458.html?mod=googlenews_wsj#printMode

Efforts to revamp public education are increasingly focused on evaluating teachers using student test scores, but school districts nationwide are only beginning to deal with the practical challenges of implementing those changes.

Music teacher Anthony Q. Richardson works with fourth- and fifth-graders in Memphis, Tenn., where evaluations include student portfolios.

Only an estimated 30% of classroom teachers in the U.S. work in grades or subjects covered by state standardized tests. Currently, most states test students only in math and reading in third through eighth grades and once in high school, as mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind law. Few states test students in other core subjects, such as science and social studies, and for many other subjects there is no testing at all.

Rolling out systemwide tests and devising ways to measure educator effectiveness require additional spending for states and

districts, many already low on cash. And some parents and teachers complain that the effort has translated into more testing for children, taking away from classroom learning.

"Nothing like this has ever been done on this scale, and states and districts have to ensure it's done in a rigorous way so we feel confident the information actually reflects how well teachers are helping students learn," said Mariann Lemke, a researcher with the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, a federally funded research group that advises states.

The efforts began two years ago, spurred by President Barack Obama's Race to the Top education initiative, which has doled out \$4.35 billion to states that have embraced reforms. Governors had been pushing similar efforts on their own at the state level. In the past two years, at least 30 states have passed such legislation and are in the process of implementing changes.

Washington state lawmakers passed a bill in late February that will judge teachers on student achievement, and lawmakers in Kansas and Wisconsin are currently debating the issue.

Some states and districts are looking to adopt a system like the one in Hillsborough County Public Schools in Florida, where the district created exams for every subject at every grade five years ago in an effort to award merit pay to teachers.

Tennessee rolled out a system this year that ties most teacher evaluations, even those in subjects like music and gym, to schoolwide math and reading scores. In Memphis, the system is being refined, with music, drama and dance teachers creating their own "portfolios" to prove students have progressed under their tutelage.

"No system is perfect," said Kevin Huffman, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education, "but the question is whether the one we have now is better and more fair than the previous one. And the answer is, indisputably, yes."

In North Carolina, a team of 800 teachers is working with state officials to create standardized exams for virtually every subject. But some of the efforts have hit roadblocks.

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, officials jettisoned 52 end-of-the-year exams last month that were created to measure teacher effectiveness after parents complained. Parents were especially angered by kindergarten exams, administered one student at a time, saying they ate up too much instructional time. The exams were used for only one year before being scrapped.

Latarzja Henry, spokeswoman for the district, said the testing regimen was ditched because the district plans to adopt the new assessments state officials are creating.

Pamela Grundy, the mother of a fifth-grader and co-chairwoman of Mecklenburg Area Coming Together for Schools, a parent advocacy group, thinks parental outcry played a roll.

She said school-board meetings were packed with parents who were "appalled" by the increase in student testing. "We thought it was stifling kids' creativity and warping our children's classroom experience," she said.

Elsewhere in the country, a Louisiana state lawmaker recently filed a bill to delay the new teacher evaluations, citing concerns about adopting potentially costly new evaluation methods that might lack validity.

Memphis music teacher Jeff Chipman is part of a small group of teachers piloting the new assessment based on student portfolios, and he acknowledges the district's challenges.

"We are about teaching kids to perform and experience art, and that cannot be measured with a pencil-and-paper test," he said. "We want to be evaluated on how we help kids grow, but we don't want to turn the arts program into a testing machine."

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Teachers union files lawsuit over Michigan Teacher Tenure Act

Detroit Free Press

By: Lori Higgins

March 8, 2012

<http://www.freep.com/article/20120308/NEWS05/203080731/Teachers-union-files-lawsuit-over-Michigan-Teacher-Tenure-Act>

A local teachers union is challenging aspects of Michigan's Teacher Tenure Act, saying in a federal lawsuit filed Wednesday that a controversial amendment made to the law last summer is unconstitutional.

The amendment barred school districts from using seniority as the determining factor when making layoff decisions -- tossing aside traditional "last in, first out" procedures.

The amendment was part of sweeping changes to Michigan's tenure act. Michael Lee, a Southfield attorney representing the Southfield Education Association, said he believes it is the first time the changes have been challenged in federal court.

The case, filed in U.S. District Court in Detroit, stems from a dispute in the Southfield Public Schools that began when the district laid off teachers last summer. Lee said the district did not follow its own procedures for recalling teachers -- procedures that were put in place following passage of the tenure changes.

That part of the dispute is addressed in a lawsuit the union filed in circuit court last month. The federal lawsuit addresses the broader issue of whether the amendment itself is lawful.

Lee said the U.S. Supreme Court has recognized tenure as a property right in cases that go back as far as 1978.

"Once you pass legislation that says ignore tenure and people are laid off as a result, you have taken away that property right, and you have done that without due process," Lee said.

Ari Adler, spokesman for state House Speaker Jase Bolger, R-Marshall, said the amendment was part of needed changes in tenure laws for teachers. Legislation to enact the changes originated in the House.

"The focus was to do what we could to protect good teachers and ensure a high quality of education for the students," Adler said. "We were hearing a number of stories where there were young teachers who were outstanding in their profession but were being laid off simply because they did not have the seniority."

Doug Pratt, spokesman for the Michigan Education Association -- the state's largest teachers union with 157,000 members -- said his organization warned lawmakers last summer that "stripping away these collective-bargaining rights ... leaves no ability to use the process that's been used for years to figure out these issues. The only thing these employees can resort to is taking their case to federal court."

Southfield Public Schools officials could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

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Virginia legislation promotes 'school choice'

Fairfax Times

By: Holly Hobbs

March 7, 2012

<http://www.fairfaxtimes.com/article/20120307/NEWS/703079324/1117/legislation-promotes-school-choice&template=fairfaxTimes>

Program would aid low-income students and those with disabilities

A new tax credit, approved by the Virginia General Assembly, would offer breaks to individuals or corporations that donate to nonprofit organizations providing educational scholarships to low-income students or those with disabilities.

The tax credit is being touted by state Republicans, who say it will generate greater access to private school choice options for parents.

The legislation Senate Bill 131 and House Bill 321—awaits the governor's signature before becoming law.

"Virginia students deserve a world-class education regardless of their zip code and socio-economic status," Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R) said in a released statement. "I have supported this effort to provide a tax incentive for individuals and private corporations that will spur their investment in students. This legislation will increase the ability of nonprofit organizations to provide education improvement scholarships so low-income students or students with disabilities can attend the non-public school of their choice."

Moves toward education reform through private and charter schools began as early as the Reagan administration in the 1980s.

"There are increasingly states that are passing these kinds of laws," said George Mason University professor Gary Galluzzo, an instructor in the College of Education and Human Development. Virginia is the 14th state to pass a scholarship tax credit of this kind.

"In a sense the issue here is expressed in a parent's rights to be able to pick the school that they want to send their kids," Galluzzo said. Reforms like vouchers, charters and choice continue to roll forward, usually backed by Republican support. However, the Obama administration has also supported some of these reforms through Race to the Top, which included incentives for states to promote the creation of charter schools.

Galluzzo describes the relationship between these reforms and public schools as a zero sum game, where money does end up going somewhere other than public school budgets.

This is one of the reasons Sen. Chap Petersen (D-Dist. 34) of Fairfax said he voted against the tax credit.

"To me, we're a public institution — the General Assembly — and we don't fund private entities," he said. "Public schools are in need of funding. We've, over the past couple of years, cut funding. You've got more children coming to the schools but the same level of funding,"

According to the state, Virginia's funding of K-12 education has hovered around the same level since 2007; however, the governor's budget for fiscal 2013 included increases in funding to help offset costs under the Virginia Retirement System, a fund which includes teacher retirement benefits.

Republicans in the General Assembly argued that the tax incentive provided low-income students and families of children with disabilities greater choice in where they can attend school if their school system fails to provide needed services.

"In Fairfax County, the bill doesn't make much sense because we have really good schools... You've got to think of it in terms of a school in a tough neighborhood," said Del. David Albo (R-Dist. 42) of Springfield, who voted for the tax credit.

As part of the legislation, the state would cap the total tax credit at \$25 million annually. Scholarships are limited to students whose family income falls below the current poverty guidelines and certain students with disabilities.

"If the issue is really about, 'OK we have these kids who have these specific needs and the schools aren't offering them or

meeting them' ... then yes, one option is private schools. But another is to look at the public schools and see what is needed to meet these needs," said Fairfax County Federation of Teachers President Steve Greenburg. "Then everyone's needs are met without pulling money away from the public school system."

Since assuming office in 2010, McDonnell has championed school reform issues such as school choice and charter schools. Currently there are four charter schools in Virginia, according to the state Department of Education: one each in Yorktown and Richmond, and two in Charlottesville. Only one of the schools, Patrick Henry School of Science and Arts which serves 150 students grades kindergarten through fifth in Richmond—has opened during McDonnell's term in office.

While the legislation cleared the House of Delegates with a solid majority, held by Republicans, the Senate's 20-20 vote on the tax credit was broken by Lt. Governor Bill Bolling (R) in favor of the legislation.

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Florida parent trigger bill sparks fierce debate as vote nears

Orlando Sentinel

By: Leslie Postal

March 7, 2012

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/education/os-parent-trigger-florida-2-20120307.0.4010324.story>

A proposal that could let parents decide the fate of failing public schools is sparking fierce debate as it heads to a final vote in the Florida Senate this week.

The "parent trigger" bill has prompted an outcry from critics, who view it as a way to snatch power from local school boards and convince parents to turn public campuses over to private companies.

Its supporters, including former Gov. Jeb Bush, call the criticism misleading. They argue the bill would simply help parents push for change at chronically struggling campuses.

Though it passed the House easily, the trigger bill's fate in the Senate isn't clear, and it has been the subject of intense lobbying as a vote nears.

"Thousands of parents are speaking. They don't want this bill," said Sen. Evelyn Lynn, R-Ormond Beach, one of two Republican senators to announce they would not support it.

Sen. John Thrasher, R-St. Augustine, one of Senate President Mike Haridopolos' top lieutenants, said he doesn't know if the bill will pass the 40-member chamber. Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, supports the bill.

"The Senate is about ideas," Thrasher said. "Ideas sometimes don't get 21 votes."

But Thrasher said Haridopolos gets credit for pushing the proposal. "I think a lot of people see this as a threat to the interests of the public education system," he said. "I don't see it that way at all. If these schools are performing well, you'll never have that situation."

But opponents dislike the bill modeled on California's controversial "parent trigger" law. Florida families, they say, already have ways to take part in public education and don't want this West Coast option.

"The parents did not ask for this — not the 330,000 in the Florida PTA," said Dawn Steward, vice president of the Florida PTA and an Orange County resident. "We feel very strongly it is a systematic approach to privatize education."

The bill would allow parents with kids at failing campuses to choose from four improvement plans. The four choices are already in state law, but local school boards now decide on the plans, with final approval going to the State Board of Education.

The options include: devising a district-run improvement plan; reassigning students to other campuses; closing the school and turning it into a charter school; or closing the school and turning its management over to a private firm.

If parents and school boards don't agree, the bill allows the State Board to have final say.

"What's the threat here?" said Bush, whose education foundation has been lobbying for the bill.

"This has turned out to be about politics in Tallahassee," not education, Bush said. The bill is about "giving parents the right to be engaged, with some wind at their backs," he added. "It's not going to change the world."

But opponents fear widespread fallout from a "cynical" effort to close public schools and then transfer their students — and the tax dollars they bring — to corporate-managed, for-profit charter schools.

"When we see a group of highly paid lobbyists running all over Tallahassee pushing this bill, we have to ask who is going to profit from this?" said Kathleen Oropeza, of Fund Education Now, an Orlando based parent group.

Michelle Rhee, the former Washington, D.C. schools chancellor who has served as Gov. Rick Scott's education advisor, said such criticism is baffling.

"They want more parental involvement in schools, and yet we're going to limit and define what that involvement will look like?" said Rhee, whose StudentsFirst group supports the legislation.

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Louisiana Governor Jindal vows to fight for changes

Baton Rouge Advocate

By: Will Sentell

March 8, 2012

<http://theadvocate.com/home/2260307-125/jindal-vows-to-fight-for.html>

Gov. Bobby Jindal said Wednesday he will fight efforts to delay sweeping changes in public schools, including new evaluations for public school teachers set to start this fall.

"We will absolutely oppose any type of amendments that attempt to dilute, delay or defeat these reforms," Jindal told reporters.

"And I suspect there are going to be a whole lot of amendments in that vein," he said.

The governor made his comments after a private meeting with business leaders, several of whom said that public school improvements are one of the keys to improving Louisiana's business climate.

House Democratic Caucus Chairman John Bel Edwards, of Amite, has filed a bill that would impose a one-year delay in the start of new evaluations for public school teachers.

The change, which stems from a 2010 state law, will link half of the teacher's review to the growth of student achievement.

Teachers who earn low marks face action, and possible dismissal if they fail to improve.

Edwards, who backed the 2010 law, said the state is not ready to launch the new reviews.

But Jindal cited such talk as one of the proposals he will oppose in the 2012 regular legislative session, which begins Monday.

The governor has made public school improvements one of the top themes of his agenda.

The list includes new ways to pay and evaluate teachers, a major expansion of state aid for some students to attend private and parochial schools and steps aimed at improving public classrooms for 4-year-olds.

Jindal says the plan is needed to transform public schools, including new options for students trapped in low-performing public schools.

Critics contend parts of the governor's plan would damage traditional public schools.

State Rep. Patricia Smith, D-Baton Rouge and chairwoman of the Legislative Black Caucus, said last week that some Democrats want to "tweak" Jindal's plan rather than offering a sweeping alternative of their own.

The governor wants to allow low-income students in "C," "D" and "F" schools to have the option of attending a private or parochial school.

Smith said the option should rest with students in "D" and "F" schools, with an emphasis on "F" schools.

Jindal said Wednesday that he would oppose efforts to "restrict which children have the option."

Senate Education Committee Chairman Conrad Appel, R-Metairie, said last week that the Legislature needs to approve Jindal's public school plan essentially the way he proposed it.

Stephen Moret, secretary for the state Department of Economic Development, said if lawmakers approve the governor's school package the state's business climate rating would improve dramatically.

The Baton Rouge Area Chamber on Wednesday endorsed Jindal's key public school proposals.

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