



Mississippi State Legislature

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LEGISLATURE HIRES FIRM TO UPDATE DECADES-OLD SCHOOL FORMULA

More tax dollars are needed in classroom, not administration

JACKSON -- Members of the Legislature took steps today to modernize the outdated school funding formula and direct more tax dollars into the classroom.

The House Management and Senate Rules committees voted to hire nonprofit EdBuild to examine the funding formula for public schools known as the Mississippi Adequate Education Program, or MAEP. This formula comprises more than \$2.2 billion of the state's annual budget -- the single largest expenditure of taxpayer dollars.

"The current funding formula was written almost two decades ago and has not kept up with the needs of the classroom of the 21st Century," said House Speaker Philip Gunn. "Our goal is to move dollars away from administration as much as possible and make sure the teachers in the classroom and the students are prioritized."

EdBuild will begin their work and participate in public meetings to discuss ways school funding can target needs for special education, career technology, gifted students and low-income students.

"Any formula that calls for significant increases in administrative expenses while decreasing instructional spending should be re-evaluated," Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves said. "In an era of apps and iPads, Mississippi students deserve school funding based on their classroom needs rather than inflated administrative offices."

According to research by EdBuild, 37 states use a student-based funding formula. However, Mississippi's funding program is focused more on resources not students.

"Mississippi is similar to many other states that rely on a funding formula that is antiquated and arbitrary," said Rebecca Sibilia, CEO of EdBuild. "The needs of the

classroom are not the same as they were 20, 50 or 100 years ago, and states' funding mechanisms should reflect that progress in education.”

According to EdBuild, Mississippi is one of six states that fund education for students with special needs based on programs, but the majority of states use a student-based formula for these costs. The state also does not effectively direct funds to help improve the academic performance of students in the bottom quartile of test scores.

Public meetings will be announced at a later date.

The effort to invest more tax dollars into the classroom builds on legislative efforts to raise student achievement. Under Republican leadership, more than \$45 million has been directed to efforts to improve reading skills, teacher salaries have increased with starting teacher pay being among the highest among neighboring states, and students with special needs can use scholarships to fund programs that meet their educational needs.

As a result graduation rates have increased, reading skills have improved and fourth grade students are performing better in reading and math as compared to their peers nationally.