

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

March 12, 2013

Legislative summary (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

This is a summary list of bills (by bill number, lead sponsor and title) introduced by midday Monday in the 89th General Assembly, except for appropriation bills, which, along with other bills and resolutions, may be found at the legislative website: www.arkleg.state.ar.us

HOUSE

HB1905, Vines - An act to provide consumer protection for the elderly and to protect the elderly from repeat offenders that are sanctioned or licensed by the Office of Long Term Care.

HB1906, Vines - To amend the law concerning electioneering and to prohibit certain electioneering practices.

HB1907, Vines - Regarding the form of acknowledgements and addressing defects in acknowledgements of recorded instruments and to declare an emergency.

HB1908, J. Edwards - To regulate insurance companies, practices, procedures and the business of insurance.

HB1909, J. Edwards - Concerning the eligibility for burial in a state veterans' cemetery.

HB1910, C. Armstrong - Concerning the hiring of truancy officers for high-priority school districts.

HB1911, C. Armstrong - To provide special transportation funding for alternative learning environment high-priority schools.

HB1912, C. Armstrong - To provide state funding for transportation expenditures of public school districts.

HB1913, Hodges - To amend the law concerning runoff elections for county and municipal officers.

HB1914, Hodges - To provide for the implementation of elements associated with a steel mill project under Amendment 82 to the Arkansas Constitution.

HB1915, Hodges - To provide for the implementation of elements associated with a steel mill project under Amendment 82 to the Arkansas Constitution and to provide an exemption from the sales and use tax for utilities used in manufacturing.

HB1916, Hodges - To authorize the issuance of general obligation bonds under Amendment 82 to the Arkansas Constitution to assist in the development of a steel-mill project.

HB1917, Hodges - To provide for the implementation of elements associated with a steel mill project under Amendment 82 to the Arkansas Constitution and to provide an extended carry forward for recycling tax credits.

HB1918, House - To regulate the distribution of proceeds from the sale of tax-delinquent lands.

HB1919, Lenderman - To regulate certain activities related to feral hogs; to increase the penalties for releasing a hog into the wild.

HB1920, J. Edwards - To amend the property laws of the state of Arkansas to prohibit property rights from being acquired through the unlawful killing of another person.

HB1921, J. Edwards - To improve transportation in Arkansas.

HB1922, J. Edwards - To improve economic opportunities in Arkansas.

HB1923, Sabin - To amend Arkansas law concerning campaign contributions and to amend portions of Arkansas law resulting from initiated acts.

HB1924, Sabin - To amend Arkansas law concerning the registration of a former member of the General Assembly as a lobbyist.

HB1925, Sabin - To amend Arkansas law concerning the receipt of gifts from lobbyists by certain elected officials.

HB1926, Sabin - To add a tax rate for certain income levels; to adjust the income levels subject to certain income tax rates and to increase the number of persons entitled to use the low-income tax tables.

HB1927, Sabin - To advance the understanding of personal financial management among public school students; to require a course in personal finance as a requirement of graduation from high school.

HB1928, Sabin - To provide financing options for public entities to bury power lines.

HB1929, Davis - To amend the laws pertaining to the promulgation of water quality standards; to improve the process for developing and implementing water quality standards and to declare an emergency.

HB1930, Baltz - To amend the fireworks laws and to clarify and make technical corrections to the fireworks laws.

HB1931, D. Douglas - To amend the Regional Economic Development Partnership Act.

HB1932, D. Douglas - To amend Arkansas law relating to the rents, fees and charges of a regional solid-waste management district or board.

HB1933, Wardlaw - To authorize a limited license for self-service storage insurance.

HB1934, Wardlaw - To enhance the collection of solid-waste fees resulting from the state mandate for the collection and disposal of solid waste.

HB1935, Wardlaw - To address long-term care eligibility requirements.

HB1936, Wardlaw - To regulate the procedures for an insurance adjuster license.

HB1937, C. Douglas - To be known as Angela's Law in honor of Angela Allen, concerning sentences for felony-level sexual offenses not resulting in incarceration in the Department of Correction.

HB1938, Alexander - To suspend administrative reorganizations of school districts; to require a study of administrative reorganizations and student transportation in small and rural districts; to declare an emergency.

HB1939, C. Douglas - Concerning the agenda of a regular meeting of a school district board of directors.

HB1940, C. Douglas - Concerning qualifying reports to the Child Abuse Hotline of certain types of child maltreatment.

HB1941, C. Douglas - To allow an individual school district to negotiate health-insurance coverage and to require an insurance carrier to provide the lowest rate available.

HB1942, C. Douglas - To amend the Arkansas Code concerning sick leave for public school teachers.

HB1943, C. Douglas - To provide state funding aid for student transportation costs of public school districts and to declare an emergency.

HB1944, C. Douglas - Concerning school district superintendent evaluations.

HB1945, C. Douglas - To require public schools to report the enrollment of a student who is a military dependent.

HB1946, Kerr - Concerning certain businesses and persons that perform disaster or emergency-related work in the state.

HB1947, Perry - To amend the law concerning the Arkansas Scholarship Lottery Act.

HB1948, Jean -To amend the Arkansas Existing Workforce Training Act of 1995 and to raise the pay for instructional hours from \$80 per hour to \$100 per hour.

HB1949, Perry - To amend the law concerning the Arkansas Lottery Commission.

HB1950, Perry - To clarify the authority of the State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Professional Surveyors to impose fees.

HB1951, Love - To prohibit the possession and use of a Taser stun gun.

HB1952, Love - To require fiscal impact statements for certain bills and to encourage the litigation costs to state, county, and local governments arising from new laws be considered before enacting those new laws. HB1953, Love - To prohibit the use of e-cigarettes on school campuses.

HB1954, Alexander - To amend Arkansas law concerning infringements of the constitutionally protected rights of the state of Arkansas or its citizens via a federal act deemed to be unconstitutional.

HB1955, D. Altes - Regarding training that a constable is required to complete as developed by the Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training.

HB1956, D. Altes - To address requirements a constable has to meet in order to conduct certain duties.

HB1957, Wardlaw - To restrict the prescribing of controlled substances by emergency department physicians.

HB1958, Wardlaw - To amend the law concerning certain emergency medical services.

HB1959, House - To require that retail establishments make employee restrooms available to individuals with certain medical conditions.

HB1960, House -To regulate spending by state entities in relation to gifts, food, and other items and services provided to members of the General Assembly.

HB1961, Rice - To prohibit cash sales of scrap metal.

HB1962, Gillam - Concerning reforms to the current alimony and child-support statutes.

HB1963, Westerman - Pertaining to the Division of County Operations of the Department of Human Services.

HB1964, Westerman - Regarding the Department of Human Services.

HB1965, Westerman - To reform the state Medicaid program.

HB1966, Carter - To amend the laws concerning the income tax on capital gains.

HB1967, Hutchison - To regulate rice assessments.

HB1968, Westerman - To create the Access to Care Act.

HB1969, Lampkin - To require the Department of Environmental Quality to assist cities and counties with engineering requirements concerning certain enforcement measures and permits issued to city and county facilities.

HB1970, D. Douglas - To amend Act 70 of the 2011 Acts of Arkansas to provide that franchises and contractual branding agreements be permitted and to declare an emergency.

HB1971, Lowery - Regarding certain communications made to a certified peer support member by an emergency responder. HB1972, Lowery - To amend the statutes governing the abatement of nuisances that are used for the manufacture, sale or use of a controlled substance.

HB1973, D. Douglas - To create the offense of sexual grooming of a child; to require registration with the sex-offender registry upon conviction of sexual grooming of a child; concerning unlawful sexual offenses against a child.

HB1974, Gossage - To amend the law concerning the transport of sparkling wine in Arkansas.

HB1975, Williams - Concerning the sale, purchase, or transfer of scrap metal; concerning who may or may not enter into scrap metal transactions; concerning penalties.

HB1976, Williams - To create a limited exemption from the sales and use tax for utilities used in the manufacture of steel pipe.

HB1977, Murdock - To provide fairness in bidding for public projects.

HB1978, Murdock - To allow quorum court members to bid on county projects and counties to purchase goods or services from quorum court members in certain circumstances.

HB1979, Murdock - To establish maximum student transportation time.

HB1980, Sabin - To amend and expand the Arkansas Arts and Cultural Districts Act and to create tax incentives related to arts and cultural districts.

HB1981, Sabin - To amend and expand the Arkansas Central Business Improvement District Rehabilitation and Development Investment Tax Credit Act. HB1982, Hillman - Regarding protection of agricultural equipment and implements and to regulate transactions involving certain metals associated with agricultural production.

HB1983, Cozart - To amend Arkansas law concerning the licensure of electrical inspectors. HB1984, Slinkard - To allow county clerks to use electronic poll books; to require the secretary of state to maintain an electronic voter registration list; to allow county clerks access to the electronic list.

HB1985, Slinkard - To allow owner choice of towing company when reclaiming a vehicle; to require the Arkansas Towing and Recovery Board to office in the seat of government; to require compliance with Arkansas's reciprocity requirements.

HB1986, Baine - To create an exemption from the sales and use tax for food and food ingredients purchased by a state entity and used for certain purposes.

HB1987, Baine - Concerning the sharing of certain investigatory information by authorized entities and amending a portion of Arkansas law resulting from an initiated act.

HB1988, Baine - To create the Arkansas Task Force for the Prevention Through Education of Child Sexual Abuse.

HB1989, Kizzia - To amend the law concerning additional or improved municipal services in certain annexation matters.

HB1990, Kizzia - To include Grant and Hot Spring counties in the state district court program.

HB1991, Kizzia - To amend the Arkansas Code concerning the licensure of building-level administrators in public schools.

HB1992, Kizzia - To amend the use of highway rights-of way; to permit nonobstructive signs in highway rights-of-way; to establish a permit procedure for nonobstructive signs in highway rights-of-way.

HB1993, Steel - Concerning sentences for youths convicted of capital murder.

HB1994, Nickels - To amend the workers' compensation law enacted by Initiated Act 4 of 1948; to regulate final settlements of claims involving joint petitions.

HB1995, Steel - Concerning the portion of a district court's expenses that are paid by a county, city or town.

HB1996, Steel - To regulate the use of automatic license plate reader systems.

HB1997, Kizzia - To require bicycle helmets on riders under age 14; to impose penalties for violations.

HB1998, Nickels - To amend certain ethics laws of the state of Arkansas concerning the receipt of gifts by public servants and to amend portions of Arkansas law resulting from Initiated Act 1 of 1988.

HB1999, Bell - To limit the number of special license plates issued by the Department of Finance and Administration.

HB2000, Bell - To amend the criminal offense of cyber bullying, § 5-71-217.

HB2001, Leding - The Landowner Notification Act.

HB2002, Leding - To exempt from the income tax certain education awards, grants and scholarships.

HB2003, Leding - To establish a revenue neutral new jobs training program.

HB2004, Leding - To require full payment of wages after termination of employment.

HB2005, Leding - An act to provide a tax credit for small businesses that hire recently returned combat veterans and for other purposes.

HB2006, Leding - To authorize issuance or renewal of a driver's license for eligible nonimmigrant employees and their dependents for periods of extension or application for extension.

HB2007, Copenhaver - To establish the Arkansas Emergency Contact Information System.

HB2008, Copenhaver - To prohibit covering of required motor vehicle lighting that reduces lighting visibility.

HB2009, Copenhaver - To establish a license for a limited lines travel insurance producer.

HB2010, J. Edwards - To promote adoption in Arkansas by protecting the privacy of the relinquishing parent.

HB2011, Bell - To allow a school nurse to administer auto-injectable epinephrine to a public school student under certain circumstances.

HB2012, Bell - To amend the law concerning licensing of tattoo artists.

HB2013, Catlett - To amend the Arkansas Uniform Commercial Driver License Act, § 27-23-101 et seq., to comply with federal commercial driver license regulations and to make technical corrections.

HB2014, Bell - To provide that an employee of a detention facility may carry a firearm and to require firearm training.

HB2015, Leding - To encourage oversight of state agencies; to require periodic review of all state agencies; to provide recommendations to state agencies to prevent waste.

HB2016, Bell - Concerning criminal offenses involving a firearm.

HB2017, Bell - To allow certain counties to elect to hold nonpartisan elections for sheriff; to provide a procedure for nonpartisan election of sheriffs.

HB2018, Bell - To provide for criminal background checks of candidates before elections; to allow candidates to provide their background checks.

HB2019, Branscum - To allow a limited amount of net excess generation credit to roll over to a net-metering customer's account at the close of an annual billing cycle; to make technical corrections.

HB2020, Collins - To require accountable and transparent student evaluation and grading practices.

Notable Resolutions

HR1040, J. Edwards - To commend ABATE, the Arkansas Bikers Aiming Towards Education nonprofit organization, for its promotion of rider safety, public awareness, rider education and charitable efforts.

HR1041, J. Edwards - To commend the Patriot Guard Riders of Arkansas for their work in honoring fallen heroes and the families and communities of fallen heroes and for their work with disabled veterans.

SENATE

SB913, Irvin - An act to regulate the use of certain drugs used to induce an abortion; to provide for disciplinary proceedings for abortions performed in violation of this act.

SB914, D. Sanders - To establish the office of the Medicaid inspector general; to develop and test new methods of Medicaid claims and utilization review.

SB915, Elliott - The Post secondary Education and Economic Development Act of 2013.

SB916, J. Woods - To ensure that vulnerable citizens receive medications for life-altering illness; to create the Continuity of Care Act of 2013.

SB917, Holland - To clarify that limitations on liability arising out of death or bodily injury are unenforceable in construction contracts.

SB918, Holland - To mandate organ donor information confidentiality unless waived by the donor; to require waiver opportunity be made available to organ donors at the time of registration as an organ donor.

SB919, Holland - To regulate evergreen clauses or automatic renewals in certain lease agreements.

SB920, E. Williams - To provide a franchise tax penalty and interest amnesty program.

SB921, E. Williams - Concerning the repayment of fees that are owed related to court-ordered representation by the public defender.

SB922, Burnett - To provide for the implementation of elements associated with a steel mill project under Amendment 82 to the Arkansas Constitution; to provide an exemption from the sales and use tax for utilities used in manufacturing.

SB923, Burnett - To provide for the implementation of elements associated with a steel mill project under Amendment 82 to the Arkansas Constitution.

SB924, Burnett - To provide for the implementation of elements associated with a steel mill project under Amendment 82 to the Arkansas Constitution; to provide an extended carry forward for recycling tax credits.

SB925, Burnett - To authorize the issuance of general obligation bonds under Amendment 82 to the Arkansas Constitution to assist in the development of a steel-mill project.

SB926, Teague - To create a state broadband chair or other mechanism or entity to promote, develop and coordinate broadband expansion and appropriate broadband infrastructure for all areas of the state.

SB927, Teague - To create an exemption from the sales and use tax for utilities used for agricultural purposes.

SB928, R. Thompson - To clarify payment methods for fees involving secured transactions; to declare an emergency.

SB929, Teague - To implement recommendations to expand opportunities to create high-technology, knowledge-based jobs; to restructure certain programs and program requirements to foster economic development.

SB930, B. Pierce - To establish the Ticket Resale and Consumer Protection Act.

SB931, B. Pierce - To exempt small water systems and small sewage systems from regulation by the Public Service Commission.

SB932, Burnett - Concerning eligibility to file a uniform petition to expunge a misdemeanor offense or violation; to declare an emergency.

SB933, D. Wyatt - To amend the Arkansas Alternative Fuels Development Act; to provide a tax credit for the production of alternative fuels.

SB934, D. Wyatt - To amend Arkansas law concerning recreational vehicles.

SB935, Hickey - To amend the law concerning the State Athletic Commission; to expand the types of sports under the authority of the State Athletic Commission.

SB936, B. Sample - To amend the law concerning licensing by the State Board of Cosmetology.

SB937, B. Sample - To amend the law concerning licensing of the Arkansas State Board of Massage Therapy.

SB938, B. Sample - To amend the laws concerning regulation of towing and recovery; to amend the laws concerning towing and recovery.

SB939, B. Sample - To authorize for creation and issuance an Arkansas State Lodge Fraternal Order of Police motor vehicle special license plate.

SB940, B. Sample - To amend the law concerning licensing of the State Board of Barber Examiners.

SB941, B. Sample - To create an income tax exemption for qualified drop-in biofuels manufacturers.

SB942, E. Cheatham - To amend Arkansas law concerning the Department of Career Education's authority over federal surplus property.

SB943, E. Cheatham - To establish the Task Force on the Study of Education Innovation and Reform.

SB944, E. Cheatham - To clarify the procedure and requirements for renewing the charter of a public charter school.

SB945, G. Stubblefield - To permit entry upon private property for the limited purpose to retrieve hunting dogs.

SB946, J. Woods - To create a child-abuse registry within the Arkansas Crime Information Center.

SB947, J. Woods - To amend the Arkansas landlord and tenant laws; to implement the recommendations of the Non-legislative Commission on the Study of Landlord-Tenant Laws concerning civil and criminal evictions.

SB948, J. Woods - Regarding the advertising and provision of telecommunications services.

SB949, J. Woods - To proclaim the city of Springdale, Ark., to be the poultry capital of the world.

SB950, J. Woods - To create the Legislative Task Force on Landlord and Tenant Law.

SB951, J. Woods - To implement certain recommended landlord and tenant reforms; to require minimum habitability standards for tenants of residential real property; to protect tenants from unreasonable intrusions and against retaliation.

SB952, U. Lindsey - To revise the compensation plan under the Uniform Classification and Compensation Act for the 2013-15 biennial period; to declare an emergency.

SB953, D. Johnson - To prohibit the use of e-cigarettes on public school property.

SB954, U. Lindsey - To amend the law regarding specialty hospitals for the assessment fee on hospitals to improve healthcare access law.

SB955 - To amend Arkansas law concerning meetings of a county board of election commissioners.

SB956, B. King - To amend Arkansas law concerning service on a county board of election commissioners.

SB957, B. King - To amend the law concerning certain voting procedures; to amend the law concerning the identification required of voters at the polls.

SB958, B. King - To amend the law concerning identification needed at the voting location; to amend the law concerning procedures and requirements for voter identification.

SB959, B. King - To require the filing of certain information concerning reapportionment with the president pro tempore of the Senate and speaker of the House of Representatives.

SB960, B. King - To create a state board, committee, or task force to address forestry and forestry issues.

SB961, B. King - To amend the law concerning certain election crimes.

SB962, B. King - To amend Arkansas law concerning the internal audit section of the Department of Finance and Administration.

SB963, B. King - To prohibit the enforcement of federal firearm laws in the state of Arkansas.

SB964, B. King - Concerning the 19th Judicial District-East and the 19th Judicial District-West.

SB965, J. Dismang - To amend uncodified Section 1 of Act 274 of 2013 to exclude certain drugs from the definition of therapeutic class.

SB966, J. Dismang - To clarify the penalty for an individual failing to report employment or earnings while receiving unemployment benefits; to clarify the process for reviewing earnings reports.

SB967, Maloch - To amend Arkansas law concerning administrative rules promulgated by state agencies.

SB968, Maloch - To regulate physician dispensing of legend drugs; to authorize the State Medical Board to regulate physician dispensing of legend drugs.

SB969, Maloch - To establish alternative learning environments within the system of education provided by the Division of Youth Services of the Department of Human Services.

SB970, Maloch - To amend the penalties for violating the Safe Drinking Water Act or rules, regulations or orders of the Oil and Gas Commission.

SB971, Maloch - To adopt and implement the International Green Construction Code.

SB972, Maloch - To amend the Arkansas Wetlands Mitigation Bank Act.

SB973, J. Hendren - To revise the Arkansas Public Safety Communications Act of 1985; to amend Arkansas Code § 12-10-318.

SB974, J. Dismang - To establish the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Committee on local 911 systems.

SB975, J. Dismang - To amend the Arkansas Tobacco Products Tax Act of 1977.

SB976, J. Dismang - To clarify the definition of a child-safety center and to establish access for specialized mental-health services.

SB977, J. Dismang - To clarify who commits the crime of sexual assault in the first degree.

SB978, J. Dismang - To address long-term care eligibility requirements.

SB979, J. Dismang - To clarify the process for unemployment claims and the Department of Workforce Services' employer follow-up.

SB980, D. Sanders - To allow the state of Arkansas to engage in a study with neighboring states to explore the possibility of establishing interstate insurance commerce.

SB981, D. Sanders - Pertaining to the Division of County Operations of the Department of Human Services.

SB982, D. Sanders - Regarding the Department of Human Services.

SB983, D. Sanders - To create the Arkansas Income Tax Reduction Act.

SB984, D. Sanders - To prohibit sex offenders from providing services through the Arkansas Medicaid program.

Notable Resolutions

SR22, E. Cheatham - To encourage the Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission to create a special native-born hunting license that will be available for a reduced fee to nonresidents who were born in Arkansas.

Springdale classrooms blending subjects (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Reading sample blood test results from real patients allows chemistry students in Doug Owensby's class at Springdale High School to apply what they are learning about blood-gas laws and dynamic equilibrium.

Students read the results to try and determine which patients have lung disease, he said.

First, the students learn about the concept of dynamic equilibrium, in which the human body adjusts its blood-gas levels, he said. A lung disease called chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder causes carbon dioxide to build up in arteries, which can lead to congestive heart failure.

By analyzing blood gases, the students "were able to find the person who had COPD," he said.

This year, he added another facet to the exercise: His students are creating a brochure about the disease that could be given to patients. It's an effort to weave literacy skills into chemistry, Owensby said.

Owensby is among a growing number of teachers adapting to a new method of making literacy skills relevant to all subjects, not just English classes, as part of the transition to new curriculum standards. The new Common Core State Standards outlines expectations for what students should know by grade in mathematics and literacy.

The standards not only specify reading, writing, speaking, listening and language skills for English language arts, but also provide literacy standards for history, science and technical subjects for grades 6 through 12. History, science and music teachers are expected to tie in complex informational texts that are relevant to their subjects.

Owensby's module on the lung disease will be shared with teachers across the country.

"I've taken off with this," Owensby said. "We're all going to be doing this."

WOVEN LESSONS

Owensby was among the first teachers at Springdale High School to participate in a national network of teachers adapting to a framework in which projects in other subjects are used to strengthen students' reading skills.

In one class period, his students discussed how the body balances levels of carbon dioxide in the blood and how to write strong conclusions for the brochure on the effects of smoking on chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder.

Owensby told them: "The conclusion should be a very smooth transition from your summary statement. It should bring closure to the entire pamphlet. Don't end it with just a [statistic]."

Eleventh-grader Patty Zapien, 17, explained that her brochure will describe the lung disease, its causes and how the disease affects people. In preparing her brochure, she learned how to check whether a person has a high blood pH, a sign of chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder.

Zapien said the same rules of writing in her English class apply to writing in science class, such as not opening the concluding paragraph with “In conclusion.”

“I’ve learned a lot of things in chemistry that I didn’t know,” Zapien said.

Arkansas was chosen to serve as a model for implementing the new framework, the Literacy Design Collaborative, said Gene Bottoms, senior vice president for the Southern Regional Education Board. The collaborative involves an expanding number of classroom teachers, school and district leaders, state departments, state organizations and service providers, according to literacydesigncollaborative.org.

The Southern Regional Education Board is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Atlanta that works to improve public education for 16 member states, including Arkansas. The board was created in 1948 by the governors and legislators of those states.

The collaborative provides a framework that teachers can use to weave relevant complex reading materials into their lesson plans, said Carol Ann Duke, a lead literacy specialist for the board. Duke is from Magnolia.

Teachers learn to develop literacy modules that start with an essential question and a goal, such as creating a brochure, as students are doing in Owensby’s classes. The module identifies each task that students will complete, concepts they need to learn and all of the state standards the module teaches.

Teachers plot activities for each day of the module that will lead students to complete the required task. They also determine how to grade the students’ work.

“It’s about getting kids to read grade-level texts and in different subject matter areas and other related documents, put their understanding in some written paper and explain it orally as well,” Bottoms said. “We are beginning to see evidence that students can read more complex material than teachers thought they could read.”

Students do well with complex reading materials when teachers take time to explain how to read an article from a science journal. Their learning goes further when the complex reading is paired with a writing assignment.

“Teachers figure out assignments that cause kids to read challenging documents,” Bottoms said.

Those skills are important in the work force, where students will need to be able to read complex materials and write coherently about what they have read, Bottoms said.

COLLABORATIVE GROWS

Tracy Tucker, special adviser for the Division of Learning Services at the Arkansas Department of Education, said Arkansas’ participation in the Literacy Design Collaborative began a year ago with five school districts and has grown this school year to involve 48 schools in more than 30 school districts.

“This helps them really wrap their brains around how to plan differently and engage students in learning in a manner than what they’ve done in the past,” she said.

As teachers test out learning modules in their classrooms, many of them have said they are encouraged by the responses of students and the quality of work the youths produced, Tucker said. The concept encourages students in history classes to write like historians and in science classes to research and think like scientists.

Owensby will complete four literacy modules that he developed for his chemistry class through the Literacy Design Collaborative framework by the end of the school year. He began training in the framework last July.

The training fits with his belief that his students should be able to explain what they learned, describe what happens and make a prediction based on what they have learned, Owensby said.

Through Common Core and the Literacy Design Collaborative, teachers are grouping concepts together in a manner that helps students retain what they are learning.

When he completed his first module on chemical formulas for fertilizer, he saw students who are learning English develop an argument and support it with solid research, he said. This year has been one of the best of his 25-year teaching career.

“I’ve seen a lot of lower level students blossom,” he said.

State renews charters for 3 school systems

The Arkansas Board of Education on Monday renewed the charters for three of the state’s most-acclaimed, independently run charter schools: KIPP Delta Charter Schools in Phillips and Mississippi counties, eStem Public Charter Schools in Little Rock, and LISA Academy-North Little Rock.

Also Monday, the board approved the establishment of the Miner Academy Charter School, a district-operated conversion charter school that will feature flexible scheduling and the use of technology for students in grades six through 12 in the Bauxite School District.

The board renewed the KIPP and eStem charters for 10 years and approved merging the three eStem charters into one charter, or operating contract, with the state. The LISA Academy charter is renewed for five years but, with that renewal, the state board approved increasing LISA Academy’s 500-student enrollment cap by 100 students in each of the next two years to a maximum of 700 students.

Tom Kimbrell, Arkansas Education commissioner, said each of the newly renewed charter schools has done a good job in what it initially set out to do.

“KIPP is the charter that has led the way for how to go into an area of really high-need, high-poverty student populations and really make a difference,” Kimbrell said during a break in the meeting.

“LISA and eStem are trying to be responsive to the communities in which they serve, telling parents that ‘we are going to have high expectations and we are going to make sure teachers are teaching every day, and the focus is on children and not on adults,’” Kimbrell added. “I think that is what parents are looking for.”

The eStem elementary, middle and high public charter schools opened in downtown Little Rock in 2008-09 with separate state-issued charters. The name for the schools, which have a total of 1,485 students, stands for Economics of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

John Bacon, chief executive officer of the eStem system, asked that the eStem High Public Charter School's state charter be amended to include the elementary and middle schools, and that the original elementary and middle-school charters be surrendered.

Bacon said combining the charters would increase efficiency, in part by eliminating the need to compile duplicate reports for the state.

Also, the existing three governing boards for the schools will become one board with up to nine members. A second board, the eStem Charter Inc. board of directors, will continue to exist with some of its members coming from the schools' governing board.

The state Department of Education's Charter Review Council, an advisory body to the state Education Board, recommended the renewal and issuance of a single charter. The council noted improved student achievement and a waiting list of 4,600 students for the schools.

Bacon told the board that despite the demand for enrollment in the schools, school leaders were not seeking an immediate increase in the enrollment cap.

"We want to get it right and perfect for the kids we serve now," Bacon said. But he said streamlining the operation of the system will help set it up for expansion later. He told the board that the largest number of students on the waiting lists come from the 72209 area code in southwest Little Rock.

The Arkansas Education Department's charter council noted as a concern in its review that the eStem Middle Public Charter School is classified in the state's accountability system as "needing improvement" in math.

Bacon said that is the result of scores earned by the school's growing population of special-education students, and that the school has developed strategies to provide additional services to the students.

He told the board that, in general, the three schools are achieving on state exams at rates above those in the surrounding Little Rock, North Little Rock and Pulaski County Special school districts and are doing it at a lower cost per student. He also said the schools - which provide teacher incentive pay - outpace the statewide rate of growth on national exams in most grades.

Board member Sam Ledbetter of Little Rock called the eStem schools, "good schools with good people," but he said accurate comparisons can't be made between eStem and surrounding public school systems that have a higher proportion of poor students.

"It's not race, it's poverty that presents a challenge," Ledbetter said, adding that the eStem schools don't provide school bus transportation, which can be a barrier to low-income students who might want to attend the charter schools. Some eStem students do use the city bus system.

Charter schools are exempted from some state laws and rules in return for greater accountability for their student achievement rates. The eStem schools asked Monday to be exempted from publishing an annual progress report in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. Board member Alice Mahony of El Dorado questioned it, saying that all districts are required to publish their reports in the local newspaper.

"There is not a way to inexpensively run that in the paper," Bacon responded. "It seems very inefficient and we spend thousands of dollars on that. There are other local publications that we could cobble together and get the same message out without having that high of expense."

Board member Jay Barth of Little Rock asked Bacon about the student attrition rate at the school. Bacon responded that about 69 percent of the students who have not graduated have stayed with the school since its opening in 2008-09.

The board voted 6-1 for the charter renewal with Mahony casting the only “no” vote. She cited the fact that the middle school was categorized as needing improvement as the reason.

The KIPP Delta Public Charter Schools, which serve 1,161 students in kindergarten through 12th grades, is in its 11th year of operation in east Arkansas and is one of the state’s oldest charter systems.

“We feel we are making dramatic changes in the lives of children in the Delta,” Scott Shirey, the chief executive officer, said about the system that includes a national Blue Ribbon award-winning middle school and a high school recognized by U.S. News and World Report as the No. 2 high school in the state.

He said 100 percent of the graduates in the school’s first three graduating classes were accepted into college. Eighty one percent continue to be enrolled in college.

Shirey said the KIPP schools are beating the odds in the region, state and nation for low-income children.

“We are very proud of the KIPP-through-college culture that we have built.”

He said the school has shown in its first 10 years that children in the Delta can succeed at high levels, and the next 10 years will be devoted to showing “how high they can actually climb.”

The board approved a 10-year renewal of the charter for the KIPP schools in Helena-West Helena and Blytheville, which are part of a national network of charter schools. Mahony cast the singular “no” vote on the renewal. She cited the fact that the Blytheville campus that serves grades five through eight had been identified through the state’s accountability system as needing improvement in math.

Shirey said the school was identified on the basis of limited data from just two classes and that the system was working to improve the achievement rate.

Shirey also said that finding and retaining staff members is a challenge at the schools, and is one of the reasons the organization on Monday dropped its request to expand its enrollment cap by 90 students for the Blytheville campus.

State data showed that 27 of the 56 KIPP teachers changed between 2011-12 and 2012-13. Shirey said that rate is affected in part by the school’s reliance on Teach for America teachers who make only a two-year commitment to the school.

The state Education Board unanimously approved the 5-year renewal and 200-student expansion for the LISA Academy-North Little Rock. The school’s name stands for Little Scholars of Arkansas.

The school opened in 2008-09 and now serves 500 students in kindergarten through 12th grade in a former retail store on Landers Road in Sherwood.

Leaders of the school that emphasizes math and science instruction had asked for a longer extension, but Barth urged the shorter period because of some “instability” that he saw in the school’s enrollment in regard to middle-school transfers. About 30 percent, or 142 students of the 471 enrolled at the middle level since its opening, had transferred out.

The state Education Department's Charter Review Council found multiple strengths at the school, including academic achievement, a good financial balance and a waiting list of more than 1,000 students. The council did note that the small high school has been classified under the state's accountability system as "needing improvement" in math, missing the mark for an "achieving" rating by 0.02 point.

LISA student Vicktoria Carroll, a member of this year's first graduating class, praised the school that she has attended since seventh grade, citing the accessibility of teachers and the challenging curriculum.

"Now I have the opportunity to go to the college of my choice, possibly for free," Carroll, 18, told the Education Board, describing scholarship offers from Vanderbilt and Dartmouth universities.

The Education Board unanimously approved the Miner Academy that was proposed by the Bauxite School District to serve up to 250 students.

The school will be an alternative to the traditional middle and high school program for students who need or want to learn at a different pace than those in a traditional classroom.

Students to be served will include those who are behind in earning graduation credits, in need of an alternative program for personal or behavioral reasons, or want to take more courses than they are able to in a regular school day. More individualized instruction, a one to-one student-to-computer ratio and instruction from core academic teachers are features of the academy plan.

The school will feature an extended school year. Flexible daily scheduling would enable students to stay all day in the academy or spend just one or two periods before returning to the regular school setting.

Arkansas panel backs change to charter school process (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

A House committee has approved legislation that would change the way Arkansas approves charter schools applications.

The House Education Committee on Tuesday advanced legislation that would designate the state Education Department and not the Board of Education as the primary authorizer of charter schools. The proposal by Republican Rep. Mark Biviano of Searcy now heads to the House for a vote.

Biviano's proposal would require the state education commissioner to appoint a panel of his staff to review and approve charter school applications. The Board of Education would have the power to review that panel's decisions.

Biviano had originally proposed legislation that would have taken the power to approve charter schools from the state board and would have created a new independent commission to consider applications.

State renews charters for 3 school systems (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Arkansas Legislature: Life Begins At Conception Bill Clears Senate (Southwest Times Record)

LITTLE ROCK — Legislation that would expand the definition of unborn child in Arkansas criminal code and wrongful death statutes passed the Senate on Monday.

The House and Senate rejected separate bills that would change the dates of some school elections.

Sen. Jim Hendren, R-Gravette, sponsor of Senate Bill 417, said the proposal would make it a crime to harm an unborn child from conception to birth. Currently, state law allows for criminal prosecution of someone who harms a fetus 12 weeks or later into pregnancy.

Hendren told the Senate before the vote on his bill that it had nothing to do with abortion.

“This bill gives the same protections to the woman and the child,” he said.

SB 417 passed 35-0 and goes to the House.

The Senate also approved SB 803 by Sen. Bobby Pierce, D-Sheridan, which would allow the state Board of Correction to implement a co-pay charge for inmate-initiated health care requests. The co-pay would be \$3 per visit.

Pierce said the prison system supports the bill. Some inmates are abusing their rights to seek health care, and a co-pay would help reduce the number of visits, he said.

The bill passed 31-1 and goes to the House.

The Senate rejected SB 587 by Sen. Eddie Joe Williams, R-Cabot, which would align school elections with general elections. The bill needed 18 votes to pass and it received 17, with 13 voting against it.

Several lawmakers said they had received complaints about the bill from their local school districts.

Williams said the proposal had nothing to do with millages.

The Senate later expunged the vote by which the bill failed, making it easier for the sponsor to bring it back for reconsideration.

The House rejected HB 1357 by Rep. Allen Kerr, R-Little Rock, which would require most elections to be held either in May, on the date that primary elections are currently held, or in November, on the date that general elections are now held.

Kerr said the bill would “increase voter turnout exponentially.”

The bill was opposed in committee by the Arkansas School Boards of Association. Kerr said he amended the bill to exclude school board elections and was willing to let the bill be amended on the Senate side to exclude millage elections.

No one spoke in the House against the bill, which failed in a 45-49 vote.

The House approved HB 1535 by Rep. Sheilla Lampkin, D-Monticello, which would allow school districts to choose textbooks without being limited to the recommendations of the state Textbook Selection Committee, which would be eliminated. The bill is part of the state Department of Education's legislative package.

Lampkin said the bill would save the state money and increase local control of public education.

Rep. Charlotte Douglas, R-Alma, spoke against the bill, saying she questioned whether school districts would make sure that textbooks align with the Common Core curriculum and was concerned that the expense involved in selecting textbooks would be passed from the state to local districts under the bill.

The bill passed 91-2 and goes to the Senate.

The House voted 78-9 to approve HB 1749 by Rep. Mary Broadaway, D-Paragould, which would allow wineries to ship wine directly to Arkansas consumers. The wineries could only take orders in person, not over the phone or the Internet, and would have to collect the same sales and excises taxes they would collect if the sale took place at an Arkansas winery. The bill goes to the Senate.

In a voice vote, the House approved House Resolution 1027 to honor Leon Majors for his service to the Arkansas House and to his country. Majors served as an Army medic in World War II and began working at the Capitol in 1974, first as a secretary of state's office employee and then as a custodian in the House, a job he still holds.

House members gave Majors a standing ovation.

Alums Disappointed Over Board's Decision To Close Weiner High (KARK, Channel 4)

That will likely be the last time the fans will cheer on their cardinals.

"Everyone's here," said Misty Pickle, "Probably the whole town 800, 900 people."

Pickle's daughter plays on the team for a town she says relies heavily on the high school.

"All our small businesses, grocery stores," she said. "They'd all be affected."

"We have five yes', the motion carries," affected by the Arkansas' Board of Education's decision Monday to close the high school.

"Of course I'm extremely disappointed," said Gary Sitzer.

Sitzer is an alumni of the school and said it's been a huge part of his life.

Something he impressed upon the board members during a hearing on whether to shut the school's doors.

"My family's been in the Weiner community for over five generations," he said. "My wife does teach at the Weiner campus."

The superintendent for the Harrisburg School District, where the Weiner students will now go to school, told the board decreasing enrollment, fewer options available for college credit courses, and financial gaps were the main reasons the school needed to be closed.

"That gap of pupil expenditure is one reason but not the only reason we've petitioned you to close the Weiner campus," said Danny Sample. "And bring those students to the Harrisburg campus."

Effective July 1st, 2013 the only Weiner campus will be the town's elementary school.

"I would imagine that'll be their next target," Sitzer said.

And just like that, the cardinals no longer have a team to root for.

Board votes to close Weiner High School (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

The Arkansas Board of Education voted Monday to close Weiner High School, against the objections of some community members who had hoped to save it.

Board members voted 5-2 in favor of closing after hearing from Superintendent Danny Sample, who said the school's population decreased more than 20 percent in the past four years and that a "more rigorous" academic and extracurricular program would be available if the students were merged into the larger Harrisburg High School.

Afterward, Weiner High School supporters said they intend to fight the decision through various means, including a bill filed Friday by State Rep. Randy Alexander, R-Fayetteville, that would enact a two-year moratorium on school closures.

Michelle Cadle, a parent who attended the meeting, called the argument for closing Weiner "simply untrue." She embraced her 12-year-old son, Andrew, after the hearing. The board's decision moved him to tears.

"It's his home," Cadle said. "It's the only thing he's ever known ... We're not going to stop fighting."

Sample said moving the Weiner students to Harrisburg would give them access to pre-Advanced Placement classes in grades seven and eight, additional class choices and more after-school opportunities.

The closure is scheduled to go into effect next school year, unless Alexander's bill passes. It calls for a two-year moratorium on all school closings until the impact of Act 60, which required districts with fewer than 350 students to consolidate, is further studied.

"I think if you got 12 people off the street and presented the information they heard this morning, it would take them about 30 seconds to make a decision and they would have made the opposite decision," Alexander said after the vote. "I was frankly stunned."

The Weiner School District was annexed into the Harrisburg district in 2010 under Act 60.

The local school board voted 4-1 in December to close the grades 7-12 high school in Weiner, but the decision came before the state board because it wasn't unanimous.

Several community members attended the meeting in Little Rock to voice opposition to the move, including two who addressed the board.

Ray Keller told the board members that Weiner is performing in "an excellent manner" despite being on "death row" since the district consolidation.

"Can you imagine trying to study or trying to teach in that kind of an atmosphere?" he asked. "... In spite of the pressure and in spite of the stress, this school has been performing at an outstanding rate."

Keller said if the Weiner campus were closed, it would translate into big bills for students, who will need to drive the 35-mile round trip to and from school, and for families who visit with any frequency.

Watson Chapel School Board meets at Edgewood to highlight millage campaign (Pine Bluff Commercial)

The Watson Chapel School District Board of Directors held its monthly meeting Monday evening at Edgewood Elementary School to focus attention on the district's campaign to persuade voters to support a 2.3-mill increase to the existing 31.8 millage rate in a May 14 special election.

The increase is being sought by the district to raise funds that will go toward the construction of a new Edgewood building to replace the existing school.

Immediately before the board meeting, district superintendent Danny Hazelwood and Edgewood principal Jennifer Barbaree spoke to a group of Edgewood parents and teachers about the importance of getting voters behind the plan.

"The state department of education has already said that this building must be replaced," Hazelwood said. "The only question is whether we get the millage passed and replace the building ourselves or we don't get it passed and the state takes over the school district and they build it."

Hazelwood said the state has agreed to provide 60 percent of the funding for the \$10.2 million project which he said comes out to a \$6,058,000 investment by the state and a need for the district to come up with the remaining \$4,142,000.

"If you have a \$50,000 home that comes out to an increase in your property tax of just six cents per day," Hazelwood said.

Hazelwood said that with the average district millage rate in Arkansas at 37, the new rate of 34.1 would still be well below that number.

"We haven't had a millage increase in this district since 1974," Hazelwood said. "The state gives us two chances to get this done and since our millage campaign last year failed we are down to our last chance to do this."

Barbaree asked the audience for input into how best to communicate the district's position to the voters and received several answers, including: make a special effort to reach out to the 18-year-old voters who are likely to vote for the measure; contact all patrons by telephone; and create a one-page document listing the pros of passing the millage increase that can be distributed throughout the area.

Hazelwood said another informational meeting is being planned with a date to be announced soon.

Meeting

Personnel Policy Committee president and L.L. Owen teacher Lorene Green informed the board of the need for direct deposit of teacher paychecks.

“Each month teachers give their suggestions to us and every month they talk about direct deposit,” Green said. “When put to a vote we found that 96 percent of them favor this. We have been told in the past that the district cannot do it because of the extra work involved. We found that many other school districts use direct deposit, including Pine Bluff, White Hall, Helena-West Helena and Star City. When we talked to people in those districts we were told that it is actually not difficult at all to begin direct deposit.”

Green said the use of direct deposit would be both time-efficient and cost-effective.

“We are not asking for something impossible,” Green said. “We looked into it and the cost per month to the district for direct deposit would be \$40 compared to between \$400 and \$500 per month for checks.”

Hazelwood had a statement for Green.

“The PPC is a vital and important part of the school district and we would like you to present a report to the board every month,” Hazelwood said.

Green replied that she would.

Bus purchases

In other business the board voted to approve Hazelwood’s recommendation to purchase two 2014 Type C buses from Central Bus Sales, the low bidder, for a total cost of \$162,420.

“We currently have between 40 and 50 buses in our fleet and we need to rotate out some of the oldest ones each year,” Hazelwood said. “This year we have the money to replace two.”

Board communications

Board vice president Robin Barker recognized the Watson Chapel High School Quiz Bowl Team for winning first place at the Oklahoma-Arkansas National Academic Challenge and earning a spot in the national competition in New Orleans. Barker also recognized the junior varsity Quiz Bowl Team for earning a spot in the national competition in New Orleans.

Board president Sandra Boone asked if it would be possible to have a motivational speaker come to the high school to encourage students to go to college.

Hazelwood said that he would look into it after consulting with principal Leydel Willis.

Proposed calendar

The board approved the proposed 2013-2014 calendar for the new school year.

“The earliest that we can start next year is August 19 so that is the date I have in the calendar,” Hazelwood said. “I submitted it to the Personnel Policy Committee for input but they didn’t have anything to add to it.”

Finances

Hazelwood presented the financial report for the month ending Feb. 28 and said that the district had \$2,096,510 in revenue; \$2,010,874 in expenditures; and an ending balance of \$8,494,467.

Personnel

The board voted to hire Ruthie J. Wells as a substitute cafeteria worker.

Hazelwood reported that he received retirement notices from Linda Collins and Helen Burns.