

SS SCS SB 125 -- EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

This bill changes the laws regarding educational accountability.

SCHOOL CLASSIFICATION AND UNACCREDITED SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The bill:

(1) Requires the State Board of Education within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish rules for classifying the public schools of the state but requires the scoring guides, instruments, and procedures used in determining the accreditation status of a district to be subject to a public meeting upon notice in specified newspapers at least 14 days in advance of the meeting. The meeting must be conducted by the department at least 90 days prior to the district's application in accreditation. Notice must also be made to each school district board and superintendent, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President Pro Tem of the Senate, and the members of the Joint Committee on Education at least 14 days prior to the meeting. All comments received must be reported to the state board;

(2) Requires, upon a district's classification or reclassification as unaccredited, the state board to establish the conditions under which the existing school board will continue governing a district or determine the date that the district will lapse and the alternative governing structure for the district. Currently, a district must be classified as unaccredited for two successive school years by the state board before specified action can be taken;

(3) Requires, if a school district is classified as unaccredited, the department to conduct at least two public hearings within the district regarding the district's unaccredited status. The hearings must provide an opportunity to convene the community resources that may be useful or necessary in supporting the district as it attempts to return to accredited status, continues under revised governance, or plans for the continuity of educational services and resources upon its attachment to a neighboring district. The hearings must continue to be held twice a year while the district is not fully accredited;

(4) Specifies the makeup of the special administrative board the state board can appoint for the operation of the unaccredited district which must include no fewer than five members, a majority of whom must be district residents; requires the administrative board to appoint a superintendent of schools for the unaccredited district; and requires the administrative board to be responsible

for the operation of the district until it is classified by the state board as provisionally accredited for at least two successive years;

(5) Allows the state board to determine an alternative governing structure when lapsing an unaccredited district that must include a rationale for its decision, a method for district residents to provide public comment at specified times, the expectations for progress on academic achievement, and annual reports to the General Assembly and Governor on the progress toward accreditation;

(6) Requires the state board to lapse a district that has been unaccredited for three consecutive school years and failed to attain accredited status after the third school year or has been unaccredited for two consecutive school years and the state board determines that the district's academic progress will not allow the district to attain accredited status after the third school year;

(7) Allows the special administrative board to enter into contracts with accredited districts or other education service providers to deliver educational programs to students in an unaccredited district and specifies that a student who graduates while attending a school building that is operated by an accredited district will receive his or her diploma from the accredited district. A special administrative board and its members and employees are not to be considered state agents for any purpose. The state and its agencies and employees are immune from liability for any and all acts or omissions relating to or in any way involving the lapsed district, the administrative board, its members, or its employees; and

(8) Repeals provisions regarding:

(a) The assignment of funds, assets, and liabilities of the lapsed district to other districts;

(b) The requirement that an unaccredited district develop a plan to be submitted to the voters of the school district to divide it up into smaller districts if it cannot regain accreditation within three years; and

(c) The power of the special administrative board to appoint a superintendent if the state board replaces the chair of the administrative board.

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT SCORES

The statewide assessment scores as well as all other performance data cannot be used for three years to calculate a receiving

district's performance through the Missouri School Improvement Program if a school district receives additional students due to a change in the district's boundary lines.

TEACHERS AND EMPLOYEES IN THE ST. LOUIS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

The bill:

(1) Allows a teacher in the St. Louis City School District to also be permanently removed for incompetence and specifies that a teacher must be notified 30 days prior to the presentment of charges by the superintendent for incompetency or inefficiency in the line of duty;

(2) Specifies that the appointment of a new teacher in the district cannot be made while a properly qualified teacher on unrequested leave of absence is available to fill the position and removes the current stipulation that a new teacher cannot be appointed while a qualified available teacher under 70 years of age is on leave of absence. The leave of absence must not impair the tenure of a teacher and the leave must not continue for more than three years unless extended by the school district board;

(3) Allows the district to use the "St. Louis Plan" for teacher professional development if the state requires school districts to provide professional development for teachers and the district and teacher agree to participate in the plan; and

(4) Repeals the "last in, first out" provision for noncertificated employees who are on leave of absence in the district.