



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

July 15, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents of Education
FROM: Eric G. Mackey *EGM*
State Superintendent of Education
RE: 2026 Enactments

This memorandum addresses the implementation of bills passed during the 2026 Legislative Session. Please note that this memorandum does not cover all 2026 Enactments. The Department will circulate additional guidance as necessary.

Act 2026-508 – Volunteer Campus Chaplains

[Act 2026-508](#) allows each public school governing body, beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, to vote on whether to allow volunteer campus chaplains.

Each local board of education and the governing body of each public charter school may take a recorded vote on whether to adopt a policy authorizing a school under its jurisdiction to accept a campus chaplain. The campus chaplain would serve as a volunteer and may be made available to provide support, services, and programs at the request of any teacher in the local school district. Each volunteer chaplain must have completed a recognized chaplain training program, but no educator certification is required. Additionally, public schools that utilize volunteer chaplains under this Act must ensure that he or she complies with Section 16-22A-5 of the *Code of Alabama*, relating to criminal history background information requirements. Individuals who have been adjudicated or convicted of an offense that requires registration as a sex offender under Chapter 20A of Title 15 of the *Code of Alabama* may not be accepted as a campus chaplain volunteer by a public school. **The Act became effective July 1, 2026.**

Act 2026-549 – National Signing Day Activities

[Act 2026-549](#) requires public high schools to excuse students from class to participate in National Signing Day activities.

The Act specifies that public high schools shall excuse from class those students who sign commitment letters during a ceremony that occurs during instructional time as part of organized National Signing Day activities related to their acceptance of athletic scholarships or commitments to postsecondary school or university educational commitments, apprenticeship programs, and military enlistments. The Act also requires schools that host National Signing Day activities to provide reasonable accommodations that include, but are not limited to, meeting space, internet access, and seating. The provision of these accommodations is not to interfere with instruction. Guests may be permitted to attend these activities pursuant to the local board of education policy, and the principal may excuse other students from class to attend. **The Act becomes effective October 1, 2026.**

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Act 2026-577 – Sexual Risk Avoidance Education

[Act 2026-577](#) changes the rules regarding the teaching of sex education and the human reproductive process in public schools. The Act requires any curriculum in Alabama public schools that includes sex education to teach sexual risk avoidance content and other requirements.

Additionally, schools may not use the services of any individual or organization that fails to comply with the regulations provided by the Act or if the individual or organization performs abortions, provides referrals to abortion services, or provides funding, advocacy, or other support for abortions. **The Act becomes effective October 1, 2026.**

Act 2026-286 – Retired State Employees Allowed to Work as School Bus Drivers

[Act 2026-286](#) allows for employees retired under ERS or TRS to be hired as full-time school bus drivers.

Schools may hire these employees provided that they do not exceed the earnings limit and the individual has drawn his or her retirement benefit for twelve (12) consecutive months. If an individual who retired under the ERS/TRS on or before January 1, 2026, has not drawn his or her retirement for twelve (12) consecutive months, but fulfills all other conditions, that individual may be hired as a full-time bus driver. Employment as a full-time bus driver does not suspend the retired employee's retirement allowance. **The Act became effective June 1, 2026.**

Act 2026-376 – Religious Released Elective Credit

[Act 2026-376](#) amends the law regarding student religious released time. The Act requires school districts to accommodate religious released time classes and allows students to receive elective credit for participation in religious time, provided that the student is receiving instruction from a sponsoring entity. "Sponsoring entity" is defined as a church or other local community-based religious organization.

Each local education agency (LEA) shall allow a parent or guardian to choose whether their student may attend a religious released time program conducted by a sponsoring entity unless:

- The local board of education (or its designee) or the local superintendent has reasonable belief that the sponsoring entity is in violation of state law in a manner that would pose substantial risk of physical harm to a student, or has reasonable belief that attending a released time program would pose substantial risk of physical harm to the student; or
- The student's participation in religious released time would cause the student to be excused from the minimum instructional time for any course or subject as prescribed by the State Board of Education (SBOE) or from any student intervention required under state or federal law.

Nothing in the Act shall be construed to endorse any religious belief, practice, or instruction by the SBOE or the LEA. The Act does not limit the LEA's authority over developing school schedules or policies to meet specific needs of the LEA, provided that the policies reflect the requirements of the Act and comply with applicable law, rules, and regulations. The student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork.

Each local board may adopt a policy to establish requirements for the sponsoring entity. The sponsoring entity is required to conduct a criminal history background check for all employees/contractors who are likely to have direct and ongoing contact with a student excused for released time. Any current local policies regarding religious released time should be updated to reflect these changes. **The Act became effective July 1, 2026.**

Act 2026-428 – Ten Commandments

[Act 2026-428](#) requires local boards of education to display a poster or framed document containing the Ten Commandments, along with other historicized references, beginning January 1, 2027, subject to the availability of donated funds or displays. The display should be at least 11 inches by 14 inches, and the layout and design must be approved by the State Superintendent of Education.

The display shall be displayed in every fifth through twelfth grade classroom where United States History is routinely taught, according to the Alabama Course of Study, as well as an additional entryway or other common area, such as the cafeteria or library. This requirement is not applicable to any school that serves only students in kindergarten through fourth grade. Additional guidance on accessing the displays is forthcoming. **The Act becomes effective October 1, 2026, but the displays are not required until January 1, 2027.**

Act 2026-283 – Teacher Excellence and Accountability for Mathematics and Science (TEAMS) Contract Changes

[Act 2026-283](#) makes changes relating to the TEAMS teacher contracts. The Act removes the requirement to offer a five-year contract to a teacher with 20 years of experience or more. **The Act becomes effective October 1, 2026.**

Act 2026-367 – School Terrorist Threats

[Act 2026-367](#) changes the existing laws regarding credible threats to schools. The Act now defines a credible threat as “a knowing and willful statement or course of conduct which, based on the totality of the circumstances, would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of another.”

The changes include a requirement that the principal notify appropriate law enforcement immediately upon notice of any individual making a terrorist threat as defined in Section 13A-10-241 or Section 13A-10-242 of the *Code of Alabama* (making a terrorist threat in the first or second degree). Principals must also notify appropriate law enforcement when any student or school employee violates LEA policies regarding drugs, alcohol, weapons, physical harm to an individual, or threatened physical harm to an individual.

If the individual involved is a student and his or her conduct warrants any criminal charges, the principal may sign a warrant or complaint and shall immediately suspend the accused student from attending regular classes and schedule a hearing at the earliest possible date. The scheduled hearing date shall not be later than 30 calendar days after the date of the warrant, or pursuant to the due process procedures provided in Section 16-1-14 of the *Code of Alabama*, whichever is earlier. If the student is charged with conduct that violates LEA policies, the outcome of the LEA disciplinary hearing shall determine the length of suspension. If the student is charged with making a terrorist threat in the first or second degree, the suspension will continue until the resolution of the criminal charges. Suspended students may not be readmitted until:

- The appropriate authorities dispose of all criminal charges or offenses arising from the alleged conduct;
- The student completes a psychiatric or psychological evaluation and begins counseling if prescribed by the court; and
- The student has satisfied all other requirements imposed by the local board of education as a condition for readmission.

Boards are encouraged to consult their board attorneys when handling these matters. Disciplinary charges mandated by the Act shall be subject to the student’s existing rights and procedural safeguards under the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*. Any suspension under the Act shall not prevent a student from attending any hearings or official proceedings when summoned by the school administration or board of education.

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A student who is adjudicated or convicted of making a terrorist threat in the first or second degree as a juvenile or adult shall be expelled from school. The court may order restitution to law enforcement, emergency medical service providers, and to the local board of education for any costs incurred relating to the crime. **The Act became effective July 1, 2026.**

EGM:LAK

FY26-1014