

EDUCATION

# Which bills from Georgia's 2024 legislative session will affect schools?



Credit: Arvin Temkar/AJC

State representatives throw paper in the air to celebrate the end of the legislative session at the House of Representatives in the Georgia Capitol in Atlanta on Sine Die, Thursday, March 28, 2024. (Arvin Temkar / arvin.temkar@ajc.com)

By Ty Tagami

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sign into law, including numerous bills that would alter how education works in this state.

They did not, in the end, adopt some of the more controversial school legislation, such as [House Bill 1104](#), which targeted transgender students and would have pared back sex education, or [Senate Bill 390](#), which took aim at the American Library Association, a group that Republicans derided as Marxist.

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They did approve a measure that would pour more money into private schooling. And they addressed hazards such as drug overdoses, cyberbullying on social media, and cars that motor past stopped buses. They also agreed on more money for public schools while at the same time seeking to reduce the amount Georgians pay in taxes.

## Paying for school choice

**Senate Bill 233** would establish a new voucher program for private schooling. With the signature of Gov. Brian Kemp, who pushed for the measure, Georgia would fund \$6,500-a-year accounts for the private education of students zoned for a low-performing public school. The cost to the state: up to 1% of the education budget — an estimated \$140 million initially.

**House Bill 1122** would authorize more funding for charter schools overseen by the state, so they could hire more administrators. The legislation also would require the state to produce a single score, on a 0-100 scale, for each public school and school system.

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government buildings, in vending machines on college campuses and in public schools, where teachers could carry and administer the opioid-overdose antidote without fear of civil liability.

**House Bill 874** would require an automated external defibrillator at each public school.



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**House Bill 409** would increase the penalty for passing a stopped school bus to at least \$1,000. The legislation includes possible jail time. It also would ask schools to redo bus routes to minimize street crossings by children after [Adalynn Pierce](#), an 8-year-old in Henry County, was struck and killed while crossing a road to board a school bus in February. As often happens at the last minute, the bill was amended in a seemingly unrelated way, by allowing some charter school boards to delegate more decisions to the contractors they hire to run their schools.



## Social media

**Senate Bill 351**, another vehicle for amendments, is a 31-page amalgam of several bills that would collectively require that schools teach students about the risks of using social media while also implementing technological barriers on school-owned devices that limit access to internet content. Social media platforms could be fined \$2,500 for each failure to “make commercially reasonable efforts” to confirm users are 16 or older while porn sites could be fined \$10,000 for allowing viewers under 18.

## Funding

**House Bill 916**, the budget, would give teachers a \$2,500 raise and schools an additional \$200 million toward busing costs, plus over \$100 million for safety enhancements and personnel. State-authorized charter schools would get another \$40 million. Lawmakers also put nearly \$8 million toward unfunded literacy mandates they adopted last year, with \$6 million for personnel and \$1.6 million for reading tests.

Lawmakers also adopted numerous bills that could reduce tax revenue available for schools and other public services through tax exemptions, some of them subject to voter approval:

**House Bill 581**, **House Bill 808** and **House Bill 1019**.

## About the Author



**Ty Tagami**



Ty Tagami is a staff writer for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Since joining the newspaper in 2002, he has written about everything from hurricanes to homelessness. He has deep experience covering local government and education, and can often be found under the Gold Dome when lawmakers meet or in a school somewhere in the state.

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