

See which new education laws are taking effect in Georgia



Credit: Steve Schaefer

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Shamaudie McClendon works with her third grade students on their reading skills at Kimberly Elementary School in Atlanta on Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2023. In the new state budget, Georgia lawmakers inserted nearly \$8 million toward literacy mandates they adopted last year. (Steve Schaefer/steve.schaefer@ajc.com)

New laws that focus on safety for public school students, in both the physical world and online, are among the many education-related pieces of legislation that take effect Monday in Georgia.

Gov. Brian Kemp signed numerous school-related bills in the weeks after this year's legislative session ended this spring, with many of them taking effect at the start of the new fiscal year on July 1.

One of those new laws targets drivers in school zones: [House Bill 409](#) increases the penalty for passing a stopped school bus to at least \$1,000, with possible jail time. It also asks 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 her bus in February. An unrelated amendment lets some charter school boards delegate more decisions to the contractors they hire to run their schools.



Credit: Jason Getz / Jason.Getz@ajc.com

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DeKalb County Schools buses are shown at the DeKalb County Schools Administrative and Instructional Complex, Monday, Feb. 13, 2023, in Stone Mountain. A new Georgia law increases the penalty for passing a stopped school bus to at least \$1,000. (Jason Getz /AJC)

Three other laws also address health and safety.

[Senate Bill 395](#) is a reaction to deaths by fentanyl overdose. It requires public schools to make a “reasonable effort” to stock an antidote. It lets teachers carry naloxone and shields them from liability when they administer it. It also provides for keeping the medication in certain government buildings and in vending machines on college campuses. Addressing another health risk, [House Bill 874](#) requires an automated external defibrillator in every public school.

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New laws in Georgia

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[Education laws taking effect in Georgia July 1](#)

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A fourth school safety law deals with the internet. [Senate Bill 351](#), a priority of Lt. Gov. Burt Jones, targets online bullying. It requires schools to teach about the risks of social media while also implementing technological barriers on school-owned devices to limit access to online content. The law also punishes online platforms who fail to make meaningful attempts to screen children: It allows social media platforms to be fined \$2,500 for each failure to “make commercially reasonable efforts” to confirm users are 16 or older; porn sites can be fined \$10,000 for allowing viewers under 18.

[House Bill 916](#), the annual appropriations measure, gives teachers a \$2,500 raise and gives schools an additional \$200 million for their busing costs, plus over \$100 million for safety enhancements and personnel. State-authorized charter schools get another \$40 million. Lawmakers also inserted nearly \$8 million toward [unfunded literacy mandates](#) they adopted last year, with \$6 million for personnel and \$1.6 million for reading tests.

Another new law nibbles at the edges of rising school costs. [House Bill 51](#) lets schools use smaller vehicles to transport students. Testimony for the legislation described schools being forced to send a full-sized bus to pick up a couple of students for extracurricular activities.

A couple of other laws will help school employees. [Senate Bill 105](#) fractionally increases pensions for personnel in positions that don't require teaching credentials, including driving a bus, cleaning, maintenance and food service. The base value of their monthly retirement payments will rise by 50 cents per year of service: The \$16.50 multiplier now rises to \$17.



Chef Reggie Sloan (right), district chef for Fulton County Schools, and kitchen food service worker Valerie Gardner (left) prepare meals in the cafeteria kitchen at Heards Ferry Elementary School in Sandy Springs on Monday, Feb. 3, 2020. A new Georgia law increases pensions for food service workers and other school employees. (AJC file photo)

And full-time school district employees will now get double the parental leave due to [House Bill 1010](#). Their time off for childbirth, adoption and foster care placement rises to six weeks, an increase that also applies to state employees.

One of the most-watched bills during the legislative session is already on the books. [Senate Bill 233](#) took effect when Kemp signed it April 23. It will give parents \$6,500 a year starting in fall 2025 if they pull their child out of a low-performing public school and switch to a private school or homeschooling. Before then, officials must establish a new authority to oversee the program. The anticipated cost of \$140 million a year is expected to be balanced by a similar reduction in funding for public schools that lose such students. The law, pushed by Republicans and endorsed by the governor, the lieutenant governor and House Speaker [Jon Burns](#), R-Springfield, allows kindergartners to go straight to private education without enrolling in a public school.

