



Input on SB 2565

Relating to high quality instructional material and teacher autonomy

March 29, 2023

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** offers the following neutral input on SB 2565 by Creighton, which is related to instructional material and technology, adoption and revision of state curriculum and standards, and allotments for procurement of instructional materials.

ATPE members pride themselves on creating engaging lessons that are differentiated and individualized to meet the needs of all students. One of ATPE's foundational tenets states in part:

“ATPE members are committed to making positive contributions to the education profession and the lives of students by assuming the responsibilities for professional teaching practices and performance.”

It is important for policymakers to understand what teachers mean when they ask for more time. Teachers are asking to be relieved from burdensome administrative tasks they complete throughout the day that keep them from doing the activities core to teaching—the very things they got into teaching to do, which include lesson planning and design. **Teachers want to structure their own lessons and materials**—a recurring theme in a qualitative survey ATPE conducted following the creation of the Texas Education Agency's Teacher Vacancy Task Force. (Results are available at atpe.org/let-us-teach.) These professional duties are at the core of teaching. What teachers are saying when they say they need more time is that they want the freedom *to* teach, not freedom *from* teaching.

Teachers make informed decisions about their lessons and planning with the needs of their students in mind. Although lesson planning is time-consuming, educators often express it to be one of the most rewarding parts of their jobs and that it pays off in immeasurable ways, including establishing a deeper connection between students and subject matter.

Although on its face this bill does not require educators to use a mandated curriculum, it creates strong incentives for districts to do so.

TEKS are foundational concepts, and we agree they make sense at a state level to ensure some continuity between classrooms teaching the same subject across the state. Curriculum is the flesh on the skeleton of the TEKS. If the TEKS identify what students will learn, which should be common across all students, then curriculum refers to how teachers will present the

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with approximately 90,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school educators.

concepts found in the TEKS—or how they will teach. Unlike the TEKS, which are standard for all students, good curriculum allows for a high degree of differentiation from one student to the next. Lesson plans are a class outline or executive summary that provides a roadmap of the TEKS and the curriculum for a particular lesson. Instructional materials refer to items such as textbooks, worksheets, and manipulatives. Like the bill’s author, Texas educators want access to high-quality instructional materials. However, SB 2565 as currently written conflates the term “instructional materials” with TEKS standards, curriculum, and lesson plans. Although interrelated, these are discrete categories that must work in harmony to ensure coherent instruction.

Although we wholeheartedly agree parents have a right to transparency, we are concerned about the likely, even if unintended, effects of this bill to increase the administrative burden it purports to want to reduce. The section on materials review will likely add administrative burdens on classroom educators and campus administrators. ATPE recommends clearer limits on the amount of time teachers might be required to spend on materials review, including hard limits on the number of reviews that can be requested of any one teacher and the amount of material that can be requested of the teacher.

We need to support our teachers by truly understanding and responding to their needs. We don’t need to write their plans or tell them how to teach; rather, we need to give them the time to write their own curriculum plans, workshop and collaborate with others in their content areas, and create magic for students. In short, we need to empower teachers, not micromanage them.

We appreciate the concern shown by the Legislature this session toward ensuring that teachers have high-quality instructional materials, as well as protected planning time. We acknowledge that SB 2565 aims to make strides toward that ultimate goal, and ATPE appreciates the opportunity to work with the Legislature to improve teacher workload and transparency for parents. We respectfully ask for your consideration of the above recommendations that we believe will help this bill reach its intended goal. For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.