

SB305 INTRODUCED



1 SB305
2 EJ11892-1
3 By Senators Orr, Smitherman, Waggoner, Bell, Chesteen
4 RFD: Finance and Taxation Education
5 First Read: 08-Apr-25



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SYNOPSIS:

This bill would enact the Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence (RAISE) Act to establish a process to provide additional funding for public K-12 schools for the purpose of addressing the educational needs of the student population and improving educational outcomes.

This bill would also require the State Department of Education to develop a unified system that streamlines applications and reporting for all state and federal funding programs away from multiple plans and reports into a single application.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to the funding of public K-12 education; to add Article 16 to Chapter 13 of Title 16, commencing with Section 16-13-360, to the Code of Alabama 1975; to create the Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence (RAISE) Act; to establish a process to provide additional funding for public K-12 schools for the purpose of addressing the



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29 educational needs of the student population and improving
30 outcomes; to establish the Renewing Alabama's Investment in
31 Student Excellence (RAISE) Fund and provide for its funding
32 and appropriation; to require reporting of student data by
33 local education agencies; to establish priorities for use of
34 the additional funding; to establish goals for student
35 achievement; to require accountability reports on the
36 expenditure and use of the additional funding through the
37 Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence (RAISE)
38 Fund; to establish a review committee on the Renewing
39 Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence (RAISE) Act to
40 identify needed revisions for continued improvement; to
41 establish an accountability review board to review
42 accountability reports and progress in achieving student
43 achievement goals; and to require the State Department of
44 Education to develop a unified system that streamlines
45 applications and reporting for all state and federal funding
46 programs.

47 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

48 Section 1. Article 16 is added to Chapter 13 of Title
49 16, Code of Alabama 1975, commencing with Section 16-13-360,
50 to read as follows:

51 §16-13-360

52 This act shall be known and may be cited as the
53 Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence (RAISE)
54 Act.

55 §16-13-361

56 For purposes of this act, the following terms have the



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57 following meanings:

58 (1) AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP (ADM). Average enrollment
59 from the first 20 days of school after Labor Day of the
60 preceding year.

61 (2) BASE FUNDING FACTOR. The sum certified by the
62 Legislative Fiscal Officer prior to October 1 of each fiscal
63 year beginning with the 2025-2026 fiscal year and calculated
64 by dividing the total state and local cost of the Foundation
65 Program by the average daily membership for the immediately
66 preceding fiscal year, using the Foundation Program State
67 Allocation report for the enacted Education Trust Fund
68 appropriations act.

69 (3) CHARTER SCHOOL. A public charter school as defined
70 in Section 16-6F-4.

71 (4) COMMISSION. The Alabama Commission for Evaluation
72 of Services (ACES).

73 (5) CONCENTRATED ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS. A large
74 percentage of students in a local education agency having been
75 identified as English Language Learners.

76 (6) DEPARTMENT. The State Department of Education.

77 (7) DIRECT CERTIFICATION. A student that is homeless,
78 foster, runaway, or eligible for free or reduced-price school
79 meals or milk through the direct certification eligibility
80 guidelines established pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751-1769. If
81 changes in the direct certification program occur, the
82 department may recommend alternative measures that could be
83 utilized in its place.

84 (8) ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ELL). A student



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85 identified in accordance with federal or state law as entitled
86 to receive English as a second language or bilingual services
87 on the basis of the student's English language proficiency.

88 (9) FOUNDATION PROGRAM. The program established in
89 Article 11 of Chapter 13 to provide the basic funding support
90 for public K-12 schools.

91 (10) GIFTED STUDENT. A student who gives evidence of
92 high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual,
93 creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific
94 academic fields, and who needs services or activities not
95 ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop
96 those capabilities.

97 (11) LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA). A county board of
98 education, city board of education, or charter school.

99 (12) PUBLIC SCHOOL. A school within an LEA providing
100 instruction in grades K-12 that is supported by public funds.

101 (13) RENEWING ALABAMA'S INVESTMENT IN STUDENT
102 EXCELLENCE FUND (RAISE FUND). The fund established by this act
103 to provide additional funding to local education agencies to
104 address the educational needs of students in public K-12
105 schools.

106 (14) RAISE ACT REVIEW COMMITTEE. The committee
107 established in Section 16-13-366 to determine the
108 effectiveness of the RAISE Act program and any needed
109 revisions for continuous improvement.

110 (15) RAISE ACT ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPLEMENTATION BOARD.
111 The board established in Section 16-13-367 to monitor the
112 progress of LEAs and schools in reaching their goals of



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113 achievement and to ensure that RAISE Act funds are spent
114 effectively.

115 (16) SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT. A child who has been
116 identified with at least one of the specifically defined
117 physical, emotional, learning, or cognitive disabilities and
118 is identified for special education services under the
119 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 20 U.S.C. § 1400
120 et seq, or as otherwise defined in state law.

121 (17) STATE BOARD. The State Board of Education.

122 (18) STATE SUPERINTENDENT. The State Superintendent of
123 Education.

124 (19) UNIFIED APPLICATION. A system that aligns policy
125 priorities, planning, and budgeting for LEAs in one
126 application and streamlines applications and reporting for all
127 state and federal funding programs.

128 (20) WEIGHTED ALLOCATION. Additional funding from the
129 RAISE Fund for each qualifying student using the most recent
130 available data, and which shall be calculated by multiplying
131 the percentage for each weighted allocation by the base
132 funding factor.

133 §16-13-362

134 (a) There is established a fund in the State Treasury
135 for the public schools of this state which shall be known as
136 the Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence
137 (RAISE) Fund. The fund shall be used to provide additional
138 funding for public schools for the purpose of addressing the
139 educational needs of the student population and improving
140 student outcomes as provided in this article. The fund shall



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141 be comprised of all funds appropriated from the Education
142 Trust Fund or allocated by the Legislature from other funds
143 for the purposes of this act. The Legislature shall
144 appropriate or allocate to this fund amounts sufficient to
145 sustain the operation of the RAISE Act program. All funds
146 received by the RAISE Fund shall remain in the fund and not
147 revert or be expended for any other purpose other than those
148 set out in this act.

149 (b) The fund shall be administered and distributed in
150 accordance with this act and the provisions of the annual
151 Education Trust Fund appropriations act. The additional
152 funding appropriated pursuant to this act is subject to and
153 shall be allocated only in accordance with funding as provided
154 by the Legislature in the annual Education Trust Fund
155 appropriations act or other legislative act and shall be
156 budgeted and allotted in accordance with Sections 41-4-80
157 through 41-4-96 and Sections 41-19-1 through 41-19-12. Any
158 monetary interest that accrues to the RAISE Fund shall be
159 retained in the fund from year to year and shall be subject
160 only to this act.

161 (c) Any LEA as defined in this act shall be eligible to
162 receive an allocation from the RAISE Fund, subject to the
163 following conditions:

164 (1) The LEA provides the data required in Section
165 16-13-363.

166 (2) The LEA provides the accountability reports
167 required by Section 16-13-365.

168 (3) The LEA ensures that all funds received from the



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169 RAISE Fund are used to serve the student groups that generated
170 the funds under Section 16-13-364.

171 (4) The LEA submits the unified application, including
172 data and accountability reports through the unified
173 application for the 2028-2029 school year, as required in
174 Section 16-13-368.

175 §16-13-363

176 (a) The department shall implement this act commencing
177 with the 2025-2026 school year contingent upon additional
178 funding being appropriated by the Legislature for such
179 purpose.

180 (b) The funding described in this act shall be
181 allocated in accordance with this act and rules adopted by the
182 state board.

183 (c) On or before July 1, 2025, and each June 1
184 thereafter until the unified application created pursuant to
185 Section 16-13-368 is implemented, the department shall create
186 and publish a RAISE guide outlining the department's
187 procedures for administering this act. At a minimum, the RAISE
188 guide shall do the following:

189 (1) Identify the data the department must receive from
190 each LEA for purposes of administering this act.

191 (2) Explain how and when the data identified in
192 subdivision (1) shall be submitted to the department.

193 (d) The department shall create or procure, and make
194 available no later than January 1, 2027, and at no cost to
195 participants, a professional learning series on the RAISE Act
196 and RAISE guide. The series must include, at a minimum, an



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197 overview of RAISE, RAISE logistics and data, the investments
198 that will increase student achievement of the student group
199 generating weighted allocations through the RAISE Fund, and
200 how to budget the additional funding provided by the RAISE
201 Fund for the specific purposes outlined in the annual
202 Education Trust Fund appropriations act. LEA employees that
203 are involved in budgeting at the school and system level, such
204 as superintendents, assistant superintendents, chief school
205 finance officers, other school business officers, and
206 principals of schools, including leaders from public charter
207 schools, shall be required to participate in the RAISE
208 professional learning series. The department shall also make
209 the professional learning series on the RAISE Act available to
210 other education leaders and LEA employees upon their request.

211 (e) A professional learning series created or procured
212 pursuant to this section may be provided to participants
213 virtually or in person at the discretion of the department.
214 The department shall make all instructional materials used as
215 part of the series publicly available on the department's
216 website.

217 (f) For the 2028-2029 school year, the professional
218 learning series on the RAISE Act and the RAISE guide shall be
219 incorporated into the professional learning series on the
220 unified application created pursuant to Section 16-13-368.

221 §16-13-364

222 (a) (1) DETERMINING THE ANNUAL COST OF THE RAISE
223 PROGRAM. Subject to available funding for the RAISE Fund for
224 any fiscal year of the state, the RAISE Fund weighted



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225 allocations for each qualifying student group shall be
226 established in the annual Education Trust Fund appropriations
227 act for that fiscal year and shall include weights for:

- 228 a. Poverty;
- 229 b. Special Education;
- 230 c. English Language Learners;
- 231 d. Charter school students;
- 232 e. Gifted students; and
- 233 f. Other student groups as deemed necessary.

234 (2) The amount of funds determined necessary and
235 available to provide the weighted allocations shall be
236 appropriated from the RAISE Fund by the Legislature in the
237 annual Education Trust Fund appropriations act.

238 (3) The weighted percentages established in this
239 subsection may grow over time, as funding allows and
240 determined necessary, but not to exceed the maximum weighted
241 percentages established in this section.

242 (4) The weighted allocation for each qualifying student
243 shall be calculated by multiplying the percentage for each
244 weighted allocation by the base funding factor. LEAs will
245 receive weighted allocations for each qualifying student in
246 each student group.

247 (5) It is the intent of the Legislature that LEAs are
248 given flexibility in spending decisions when serving the needs
249 of the student groups that generated the funds.

250 (b) The weighted allocations for each qualifying
251 student shall be established as follows:

252 (1) A student who is identified through direct



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253 certification shall generate weighted allocations for poverty
254 up to 20 percent.

255 (2) A student who is identified for special education
256 services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
257 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq. shall generate a weight based on any
258 exceptionality identified in their Individual Education Plan
259 (IEP). Three tiers shall be established in the annual
260 Education Trust Fund appropriations act, with input from the
261 department, based on the additional resources required to
262 support students in each special education tier. A student
263 shall generate a weighted allocation for each tier as follows:

264 a. The weighted allocation for a Tier I is within a
265 range of up to 25 percent.

266 b. The weighted allocation for a Tier II is within a
267 range of up to 50 percent.

268 c. The weighted allocation for a Tier III is within a
269 range of up to 150 percent.

270 (3) A student who is identified as an English Language
271 Learner (ELL) shall generate weighted allocations of up to 15
272 percent. An LEA shall generate an additional weighted
273 allocation for concentrated ELL within a range of up to five
274 percent for school districts where the percentage of ELL
275 students enrolled is over a level specified in the Education
276 Trust Fund appropriations act.

277 (4) An LEA shall generate a gifted student weighted
278 allocation within a range of up to five percent, with an
279 assumption that five percent of its ADM is made up of gifted
280 students. The LEA may use these funds for any gifted or



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281 enrichment program for students who give evidence of high
282 achievement capability.

283 (5) A student at a public charter school shall generate
284 a weighted allocation within a range of up to 10 percent. This
285 weighted allocation shall only be allocated to charter schools
286 that are physically located in a county or city school system
287 that receives local funding from all revenue sources exceeding
288 the value of 10 mills of ad valorem taxes for that county or
289 city school system.

290 (c) A student shall generate funding for each weight
291 for which that student qualifies.

292 (d) Funding allocations made pursuant to this section
293 are based on data collected for an LEA during the immediately
294 preceding school year and reported to the department pursuant
295 to Section 16-13-363.

296 (e) When making future funding decisions, priority
297 shall be given to the special education weight in order to
298 meet the federal maintenance of effort requirements under the
299 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 20 U.S.C. § 1400
300 et seq.

301 §16-13-365

302 (a) Each local education agency shall produce an
303 accountability application and report that:

304 (1) Establishes goals for the achievement of qualifying
305 students in weighted categories. These goals shall be in
306 alignment with the student achievement goals established in
307 Alabama's plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) or
308 its successors, and guidance provided by the department.



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309 (2) Describes the LEA's planned expenditures at the
310 district and school level for student groups receiving
311 weighted allocations through the RAISE Fund.

312 (3) Provides a reflection on the previous year's
313 progress on student groups receiving weighted allocations
314 through the RAISE Fund and any needed revisions to spending.
315 This will begin for the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

316 (b) The report required by this section must be
317 submitted to the department by November 1, 2026, and each
318 November 1 thereafter until the unified application created
319 pursuant to Section 16-13-368 is implemented. Beginning no
320 later than the 2028-2029 school year, the report shall be
321 submitted using the unified application created pursuant to
322 Section 16-13-368. Prior to the unified system and application
323 becoming available, the State Department of Education shall
324 provide an accountability application and report format for
325 LEAs to submit information outlined in this section.

326 (c) The State Department of Education shall add a
327 section to the Education Report Card website established
328 pursuant to Chapter 6C where additional funding for each
329 student group that receives a weighted allocation through the
330 RAISE Fund is reported alongside the academic outcomes of
331 students from those groups on state summative assessments.
332 This section shall be added to the Education Report Cards for
333 the state, every LEA, and every school. The following should
334 be reported:

335 (1) Academic outcomes shall be disaggregated and
336 include both academic achievement and growth on state



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337 summative assessments.

338 (2) Total and per-pupil funding disaggregated by each
339 student group that receives a weighted allocation through the
340 RAISE Act.

341 §16-13-366

342 (a) By January 1, 2028, the Legislature shall establish
343 the RAISE Act Review Committee to review the overall progress
344 of the RAISE Act and make recommendations for continuous
345 improvement.

346 (b) The committee shall be led by the Chair of the
347 Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee and the Chair
348 of the House Ways and Means Education Committee.

349 (c) The membership of the committee shall include the
350 following:

351 (1) The Governor, or his or her designee.

352 (2) The State Superintendent of Education, or his or
353 her designee.

354 (3) The Director of Finance, or his or her designee;

355 (4) The Chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation
356 Education Committee.

357 (5) The Chair of the House Ways and Means Education
358 Committee.

359 (6) The Chair of the Senate Education Policy Committee.

360 (7) The Chair of the House Education Policy Committee.

361 (8) One member of the Senate, appointed by the
362 President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

363 (9) One member of the Senate, appointed by the Minority
364 Leader of the Senate.



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365 (10) One member of the House of Representatives,
366 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

367 (11) One member of the House of Representatives,
368 appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of
369 Representatives.

370 (d) The RAISE Act Review Committee shall meet at least
371 one time per year before November 1 and shall regularly review
372 the RAISE base funding factor and weighted allocations, review
373 the academic data from each student group targeted through
374 weighted allocations at the state and LEA levels to determine
375 the effectiveness of the RAISE program, and identify any
376 needed revisions for continuous improvement to the RAISE Act.

377 (e) The RAISE Act Review Committee shall prepare an
378 annual report on the RAISE Act and shall provide the report,
379 on or before November 1 of each year, to the Governor, the
380 State Board of Education, the Senate Finance and Taxation
381 Education Committee, the House Ways and Means Education
382 Committee, the Senate Education Policy Committee, and the
383 House Education Policy Committee, and the public. The report
384 must include a review of academic achievement and growth data
385 from each student group targeted through weighted allocations
386 at the state and LEA levels and recommendations on needed
387 revisions to the RAISE Act. ACES may provide research and
388 analysis to support the work of the committee.

389 §16-13-367

390 (a) By July 1, 2028, the Legislature shall establish
391 the RAISE Act Accountability and Implementation Board to
392 establish a hearing process to monitor the progress of LEAs



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393 and schools to ensure that RAISE Act funds are spent
394 effectively and hold them accountable for results.

395 (b) The RAISE Act Accountability and Implementation
396 Board shall be led by the Chair of the Senate Finance and
397 Taxation Education Committee and the Chair of the House Ways
398 and Means Education Committee.

399 (c) The membership of the RAISE Act Accountability and
400 Implementation Board shall include the following:

401 (1) The Governor, or his or her designee.

402 (2) The State Superintendent of Education.

403 (3) The Chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation
404 Education Committee.

405 (4) The Chair of the House Ways and Means Education
406 Committee.

407 (5) The Chair of the Senate Education Policy Committee.

408 (6) The Chair of the House Education Policy Committee.

409 (7) One member with school turnaround experience and/or
410 education policy experience appointed by the President Pro
411 Tempore of the Senate.

412 (8) One member with school turnaround experience and/or
413 education policy experience appointed by the Minority Leader
414 of the Senate.

415 (9) One member with school turnaround experience and/or
416 education policy experience appointed by the Speaker of the
417 House of Representatives.

418 (10) One member with school turnaround experience
419 and/or education policy experience appointed by the Minority
420 Leader of the House of Representatives.



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421 (11) Two members of the Office of School Improvement
422 team appointed by the State Superintendent.

423 (12) One member with experience in the charter school
424 sector appointed by the Governor.

425 (13) Two members with school turnaround experience
426 and/or education policy experience appointed by the Governor.

427 (d) If a member no longer meets the qualifications for
428 the member's position on the board, then the member's position
429 on the board is vacated and replaced by the appropriate
430 appointing authority.

431 (e) With the support of the department, the board shall
432 annually monitor progress of LEAs and schools, and review
433 provide feedback on accountability application and reports
434 submitted pursuant to Section 16-13-365.

435 (f) The department shall propose a hearing process to
436 determine if RAISE Act funds are being used by LEAs to
437 adequately improve student outcomes for student groups
438 identified in this act. The hearing proposal shall include the
439 process, timeline, and metrics used to determine adequate
440 progress of LEAs. The RAISE Act Accountability and
441 Implementation Board shall approve or amend the proposed
442 hearing process.

443 (g) At the end of a five-year period, the department
444 shall identify LEAs, or individual schools under the
445 jurisdiction of the LEA, that have not made adequate progress
446 in reaching the goals of achievement established pursuant to
447 Section 16-13-365, and shall recommend them for a hearing
448 before the RAISE Act Accountability and Implementation Board.



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449 The RAISE Act Accountability and Implementation Board shall
450 approve or amend the department's recommendations. With the
451 support of the department, the RAISE Act Accountability and
452 Implementation Board may then hold the hearings.

453 (f) Following any hearings, the department shall
454 recommend corrective action for LEAs or individual schools
455 under the jurisdiction of the LEAs. The RAISE Act
456 Accountability and Implementation Board shall approve or amend
457 any proposed corrective action. Corrective action may include,
458 but not be limited to, the loss of autonomy to make budgeting
459 decisions with RAISE Fund allocations; state academic
460 intervention; and/or other relevant academic interventions,
461 such as those included in the Alabama Numeracy Act in Section
462 16-6H-12.

463 §16-13-368

464 (a) The State Department of Education shall develop,
465 with the support of an external partner with expertise in
466 streamlining state and federal funding, a unified system and
467 application that aligns policy priorities, planning, and
468 budgeting in one application. The unified system shall
469 streamline applications and reporting for all state and
470 federal funding programs away from multiple plans,
471 applications, budgets, and reports into a single application.
472 The unified system and application shall be operational for
473 the 2028-2029 budget cycle.

474 (b) In implementing the unified application, the
475 department shall do all of the following:

476 (1) Set state priorities for funding that focus on



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477 achieving key improvements for students and student outcomes.

478 (2) Align grants to support each spending priority,
479 maximize dollars leveraged for student outcomes, and eliminate
480 redundancies.

481 (3) Design an application process that meets state and
482 federal compliance requirements and ensures spending is
483 aligned with state priorities.

484 (4) Support districts to build a strong plan for
485 student learning and federal grant spending and articulate
486 adequate achievement and growth goals for students.

487 (5) Review applications against a set of criteria for
488 plan approval and discretionary awards.

489 (6) Approve and allocate funding that supports a clear
490 set of plans to support student achievement.

491 (c) As part of the development of the unified
492 application, the State Superintendent, with the support of an
493 external partner, shall conduct an audit to identify
494 out-of-date, unnecessary, or otherwise burdensome state laws,
495 regulations, reporting requirements, and processes that apply
496 to public schools. The audit shall include considerations and
497 recommendations from school and system leaders, educators,
498 advocates, and families. The State Superintendent shall file a
499 report with the Governor and Legislature by November 1, 2026,
500 outlining the findings of the review and recommendations for
501 corrective actions, including executive orders, statutory
502 changes, or regulatory reforms to empower schools, reduce
503 bureaucracy, and improve student achievement.

504 (d) Beginning June 1, 2025, the department shall



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505 complete the following actions:

506 (1) Hire an external partner to support audit and
507 development of the uniform application.

508 (2) Launch the audit established in subsection (c) and
509 the development of the uniform application.

510 (e) During the 2027-2028 school year, the department
511 shall complete the following actions:

512 (1) Complete the development of the unified application
513 no later than February 2028, to allow districts to be able to
514 use the unified application for strategic and financial
515 planning for the 2028-2029 school year.

516 (2) Develop and launch professional learning about the
517 unified application no later than February 2028.

518 (f) LEAs shall use the unified application to plan
519 their district's budget beginning with the 2028-2029 school
520 year.

521 Section 2. This act shall become effective on June 1,
522 2025.