



THE COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL POLICY INSTITUTE

CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY - L. DOUGLAS WILDER SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

2014 General Assembly K-12 Education Update

January 31, 2014

The 2014 General Assembly session began Wednesday, January 8, 2014. The session runs 60 days and is scheduled to end on March 8. "Cross-over day," the last day for each house to act on its own bills, is February 11. House and Senate versions of the two-year budget for fiscal years 2015 and 2016 will be released on February 16.

The House Education Committee is scheduled to meet on Mondays and Wednesdays at 8:30 a.m. in House Room D. The Senate Education and Health Committee will meet on Thursdays at 8:30 a.m. in Senate Room B. Sub-committees will meet periodically throughout the session. Click [here](#) for the schedule of weekly meetings.

Overview

New Secretary of Education Anne Holton appeared before the House Appropriations Committee this past week. Committee members quizzed her on issues that included Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, grading scales and charter schools. She indicated that she expected a standing Commission to be established to examine the SOL assessment program. She also shared her concern about the ramifications of the A to F grading system for schools, approved by the legislature last year, on parents, students and communities.

Education Legislation

The Education Reform subcommittee of the House Education Committee heard testimony this past week on the many bills introduced pertaining to SOL assessments. It is the intent of the subcommittee chairman to consider the various proposals for incorporation into one bill (likely to be [HB 930](#)) that will be considered for action by the subcommittee and full House Education Committee next week.

A common, chief component of several of the introduced bills is that they provide for the number, manner and frequency in which SOL tests would be administered. Other issues raised include requiring SOL assessments to be available to local school boards in advance of each school year, giving flexibility to school boards on when to administer the tests, and requiring that all revisions to any SOL test be finalized by December 31 of the school year prior to the school year in which the revised assessment is administered.

Recall that House Republicans have laid out an education agenda for K-12 that calls for reforming the SOL assessments by reducing the number of tests from 34 to 26 and creating

SOL “Revision Committees” to promote critical thinking and problem solving skills. In the Senate, [SB 636](#) directs the Board of Education (BOE) to review the SOL tests and to develop a plan to reduce, by the 2015-2016 school year, the number of such assessments by at least 25 percent. The bill easily passed the Senate Education and Health Committee on a 13 to 1 vote and awaits approval on the Senate floor.

Both the House and Senate are on a path to delay implementation of the A to F grading system for reporting individual school performance, slated to be in place this October pursuant to legislation adopted in 2013. A House Education subcommittee unanimously endorsed [HB 1229](#) to delay implementation of the system by one year and to require the Education Reform subcommittee, during the coming months, to review and make recommendations on how to implement the system.

The Senate Education and Health Committee is taking a more aggressive approach. It narrowly approved [SB 324](#), which delays the assignment of letter grades to schools for three years, to October 2017. It also would have school performance graded by taking into account the following factors: the standards of accreditation; state and federal accountability requirements; state mandated assessments; any assessment developed or approved for use by the relevant local school board; any international benchmarking assessments; student growth indicators; student mobility; the experience and qualifications of staff; total cost and funding per pupil; remediation programs offered; extracurricular activities; parental engagement & satisfaction levels; any external awards or recognitions; & school safety.

The House of Delegates has approved the “Tebow bill” (explained last week) at its meeting on Monday. The vote on [HB 63](#) was 13 to 8. This bill prohibits public schools from joining the Virginia High School League if the organization does not allow participation by qualifying home school students in interscholastic activities. The vote to approve the bill was 60 to 39.

Discussion of companion bills to provide that textbooks approved by the BOE shall include, when referring to the Sea of Japan, that it also is referred to as the East Sea, has been lively and emotional over the past 10 days. The bill has brought the hiring of lobbyists to oppose the bill, and scores of Korean Americans to the Capitol to advocate for it. The Senate has overwhelmingly approved [SB 2](#), while in the House, a subcommittee is recommending adoption of [HB 11](#).

The following bills have passed the House:

- [HB 134](#) requires local school boards to permit students diagnosed with diabetes, with parental consent and written approval from any prescriber, to check and treat glucose levels on school property. [SB 532](#) is similar bill that awaits action in the Senate Education and Health Committee.
- [HB 157](#) provides that in the case of the conversion of an existing public school, students who attend the school, and their siblings, may be given the opportunity to enroll in advance of the lottery process. It also removes the requirement that at least one-half of public charter schools per division be for at-risk students. [SB 276](#) is a similar bill that awaits approval on the Senate floor.
- [HB 307](#) permits local school boards to provide after-school hunter safety education programs in grades seven through 12. School board providing such programs shall display information on them in each school and distribute information about them to the

parents. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is to establish a uniform curriculum for such programs.

- [HB 388](#) requires local school divisions to provide additional funding to charter schools for students with disabilities and school personnel beyond the funding received by the locality from state and federal sources.
- [HB 977](#) extends from five business days to 10 business days the deadline for a teacher to request a hearing after receiving written notice of a recommendation of dismissal.
- [HB 1054](#) requires school boards to consider all computer science course credits earned by students to be science course credits, mathematics course credits, or career and technical education credits.

In other action from this past week:

- Discussions are underway on the perennial legislation to overturn the state's post-Labor Day school opening law and allow all schools in Virginia to open before the September holiday. Several bills were recommended for approval by a House Education subcommittee. [HB 577](#) would allow schools that have not achieved full accreditation to start school prior to Labor Day. [HB 610](#) has been amended to return control of calendar to local school boards, but to also require that the Labor Day weekend be a four-day weekend. Finally, [HB 333](#) simply gives control of the school calendar to local school boards.
- [HB 66](#) was sent to the House Appropriations Committee and subsequently defeated. It would have required a school resource officer in each public elementary and secondary school, with costs of this requirement to be paid with Literary Fund dollars.
- [HB 493](#) requires each school division to adopt a policy to permit a student speaker to express a religious viewpoint at all school events at which a student is permitted to publicly speak. It has been referred to the Courts of Justice Committee.
- [HB 1096](#) awaits approval on the House floor. It requires the BOE to amend its guidelines on concussions in student-athletes to include a "Return to Learn Protocol" for school division policies, with requirements that school personnel (i) be alert to cognitive and academic issues that may be experienced by a student-athlete who has suffered a concussion or other head injury, and (ii) accommodate the gradual return to full participation in academic activities by such student-athlete.

Senate Education and Health Committee has approved [SB 155](#), which requires at least 20 minutes of physical activity per day during the regular school year for students in grades kindergarten through five. This requirement would be effective beginning with the 2016-17 school year. On a narrow, 8 to 7 vote, the Committee approved [SB 499](#), which would delay the initial transfer of supervision of certain schools from local school boards to the Opportunity Educational Institution by one year, from after the [2013-14](#) school year to after the [2014-15](#) school year.

E-mail Response

Questions or seeking more information? Please [contact CEPI](#) if you have any questions or need additional information about the 2014 General Assembly.