



THE COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL POLICY INSTITUTE

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2015 General Assembly K-12 Education Update

The 2015 General Assembly session began Wednesday, January 14, 2015. The session runs 46 days and is scheduled to end on February 28. "Cross-over day," the last day for each house to act on its own bills, is February 10. House and Senate amendments to the two-year budget for fiscal years 2015 and 2016 will be released on February 8.

The House Education Committee meets on Mondays and Wednesdays at 8:30 a.m. in House Room D. The Senate Education and Health Committee meets 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.

During the course of the session, legislative updates will be available weekly on the CEPI website at [General Assembly Updates](#). Specific information about the General Assembly session, action on bills and resolutions, committee and subcommittee meetings, and information about legislators can be found at [2015 session](#).

January 16, 2015 – Review of Education Legislation

State policymakers lined up in advance of the General Assembly convening to lay out their education policy objectives for the session. Members of the House Republican caucus indicated they plan to focus on teacher professional development issues and additional reforms to the state testing system. Specifically, they say they will push for additional funding for teacher professional development and will develop a process to share teaching best practices across the state.

They will also recommend that the Board of Education (BOE) and Department of Education (DOE) consider the inclusion of interdisciplinary assessments in the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests (see [HB 1615](#)). This would allow teachers to use different subjects like science, math, reading and writing and to promote critical thinking and problem solving in one test. They also want to provide expedited test retakes for students under certain conditions (see [HB 1302](#), [HB 1490](#) and [HB 1706](#); [SB 874](#) is the Senate version) and to have the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) develop a standardized system for granting college credits to students who have successfully completed one or more Advanced Placement tests (see [HB 1336](#)).

House Republican leaders also want to reform the Standards of Accreditation (SOA) to provide flexibility in how often schools are accredited. Presently, every school must go through the accreditation process every year. Under this proposal (see [HB 1674](#)), schools with a track

record of success would be able to apply for a waiver, allowing them to seek an alternative accreditation cycle of three or five years, depending on their past accreditation performance.

Governor McAuliffe also announced education proposals he intends to advance during the session. In addition to proposals he recommended in budget amendments (explained in last week's report), the governor announced plans to seize upon recommendations of the SOL Innovation Committee he established last year. These include proposals, similar to those laid out above, to have the BOE develop guidelines to create additional accreditation ratings to recognize schools that make significant progress toward accreditation from one year to the next ([HB 1873](#)), and to provide expedited retakes of SOL tests for students who barely miss the benchmark for progress to the next grade level (see [HB 1668](#), [SB 757](#), and [SB 897](#)). He also would extend a provision allowing retired educators to teach in schools with teacher shortages without impacting their retirement.

Over 1,900 bills and resolutions have been introduced as of this writing, with the final bill introduction deadline a week away. Below is a list of some of the key education legislation introduced so far; additional bills will be listed in next week's report.

[HB 324](#) and [HB 1361](#) would establish the Virginia Virtual School for the purpose of providing online instructional programs and services.

[HB 1299](#) and [SB 821](#) abolish the Opportunity Educational Institution. HB 1299 requires each school division that contains a school that has been denied accreditation to execute an agreement with the BOE that permits the Board to make any changes to improve the school's accreditation rating, including changes to the school's budget, personnel and instructional practices.

[HB 1307](#) prohibits the DOE and local school boards from requiring any student or his parent to provide the student's federal social security number. Instead, the DOE is to develop a system of unique identification numbers and school boards shall assign such a number to each student.

[HB 1309](#) permits local school boards to arm school security officers with batons, stun weapons, or any spray device designed to incapacitate a person and to allow school security officers to use such devices under the appropriate circumstances. [HB 1467](#) allows school boards to designate one or more qualified person for every school who may carry a concealed handgun on school property.

[HB 1313](#), [HB 1368](#) and [SB 727](#) would eliminate the A-F school grading system. HB 1313 also would allow the BOE to rank schools and school divisions based on the information contained in each School Performance Report Card. [HB 1672](#) repeals the system and requires the BOE to consult with the Standards of Learning Innovation Committee to redesign the School Performance Report Card for approval by the legislature's education committees and implementation by July 1, 2016.

[HB 1415](#) provides for representation on the VHSL Board commensurate with the student enrollment-based formula it uses to charge membership dues.

[HB 1443](#) and [SB 782](#) require the BOE to adopt regulations on the use of seclusion and restraint in public schools.

[HB 1484](#) and [SB 842](#) conform the county budget preparation and approval process to that of municipalities, specifically providing for approval by May 15 rather than May 1.

[HB 1491](#) and [HB 1592](#) provide for the BOE to award verified units of credit to students who have demonstrated proficiency in a SOL content area by achieving a satisfactory score on a locally-developed alternative assessment in lieu of the SOL test.

[HB 1514](#) and [SB 1091](#) require utilization of use value assessment of real estate in calculating the local composite index (LCI) of ability to pay for purposes of public education funding. ([SJ 288](#) requests a DOE study on the effect of local use value assessment on the LCI).

[HB 1537](#) authorizes principals to request that parents meet with the principal to receive training in bullying prevention and authorizes the relevant juvenile and domestic relations court, upon petition from the local school board, to order a parent to meet to receive such training.

[HB 1550](#) makes local school boards responsible for setting the school calendar and determining the opening date of the school year, thus eliminating the post-Labor Day opening requirement and "good cause" scenarios for which the BOE may grant waivers (see also [HB 1838](#), [HB 1941](#), [SB 830](#) and [SB 1078](#).) In addition, [HB 1585](#) provides for 1) an alternative school schedule for the operation of schools on a year-round basis, or 2) a different opening day for schools that have failed to be fully accredited or for the entire division if more than 15% of all schools in division have failed to achieve full accreditation status.

[HB 1626](#) allows local school boards to deem certain homeschool students to be eligible to participate in interscholastic sports, notwithstanding any VHSL rules.

[HB 1627](#) allows a student to receive credit for and be exempt from instruction in economics education and financial literacy if they pass a test on the subject as developed by the BOE.

[HB 1675](#) permits local school divisions to waive the 140 clock hour instruction and SOL test score requirements in order to earn a verified unit of credit, upon satisfactory proof that a student has learned the relevant SOL content and skills. [HB 1684](#) waives SOL testing requirements and allows earning of a verified unit of credit in the relevant subject for students taking AP or IB exams. [SB 982](#) eliminates the clock hour requirement only.

[HB 1713](#) would allow any student assigned to a school accredited with warning for three consecutive years or denied accreditation, to enroll at another school in the school division upon the request of a parent or guardian.

[HB 1752](#) and [SB 724](#) prohibit the BOE from adopting revisions to the Standards of Learning that implement the Common Core State Standards, unless there is prior approval of the General Assembly.

[HB 1894](#) and [SB 852](#) provide express permission for an athletic coach to require a student-athlete to participate in conditioning or exercise, such as doing push-ups or running laps, as part of a disciplinary process, if the student-athlete and his parent have so agreed by signing a form.

[HB 1962](#) adds more topics to the professional development activities required of local school board members and requires members to certify their compliance annually with the clerk of the school board.

HB 2004 requires local school boards to employ at least one school nurse per 750 students in average daily membership in grades kindergarten through 12.

SB 823 requires at least 20 minutes of physical activity per day or an average of 100 minutes per week during the regular school year for students in grades kindergarten through five, effective with the 2017-18 school year.

SB 856 directs the BOE to promulgate regulations to limit the number of school-sponsored fundraisers that are exempt from federal nutrition requirements to 30 per school per school year.

SB 900 requires the BOE to promulgate regulations authorizing local school divisions to determine the date for administering SOL assessments.

SB 916 requires the BOE to establish criteria for awarding a diploma seal of bi-literacy to any student who demonstrates proficiency in a language other than English.

SB 980 would revise the teacher grievance procedure to give a teacher who has been recommended for dismissal by the superintendent the option of requesting a hearing before a three person fact-finding panel, an option eliminated two years ago.

SB 998 requires school divisions to establish a management plan for implementation of and compliance with its policies and procedures regarding suspected concussions in student-athletes.

E-mail Response

Questions or seeking more information? Please [contact CEPI](#) if you have any questions or need additional information about the 2015 General Assembly.