

**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](#).

February 6, 2015 – Review of Education Legislation**State Budget Issues**

The clock is ticking for General Assembly money committees to release their proposed amendments to the introduced budget. The House Appropriations and Senate Finance committees have been busy figuring out ways to pay for the spending plans they will propose. The committees will announce their recommendations on Sunday; line item amendments should be available by Tuesday and floor votes on the respective plans are expected next Thursday.

Governor McAuliffe on Friday announced a bump in estimated revenues for the remainder of the biennium. The governor said the State is projected to have \$338 million more than anticipated through the end of FY16. Subtracting required deposits to the "rainy day" fund leaves about \$162 million to devote to expenditures. The forthcoming House and Senate budget proposals may include revised revenues as projected by General Assembly leaders. As previously indicated, House leaders want to include salary raises for several classes of public employees, including teachers, in their plan. Senate budget writers also are believed to be looking to increase worker pay, and scale back or eliminate the \$30 million reduction in aid to localities.

Education Legislation

Legislative committees worked frantically this past week to clear their dockets of bills in order to beat the Tuesday deadline for each chamber to complete consideration of its own legislation.

Both chambers continued their push to repeal the A to F grading system approved just two years ago. [HB 1672](#) is on the House floor for approval after having been unanimously reported from the House Appropriations Committee. It would repeal the system and require the Board of Education (BOE), in consultation with the Standards of Learning (SOL) Innovation Committee, to redesign the School Performance Report Card by July 1, 2016. Meanwhile, the Senate version of the bill, [SB 727](#), was approved on a 32 to 6 vote by the Senate today.

Legislation to direct the BOE to establish additional accreditation ratings for individual schools is moving forward in both houses. The bills recognize the progress of schools that do not meet accreditation benchmarks, but that have significantly improved their pass rates; are within specified ranges of benchmarks; or have demonstrated significant growth for the majority of their students. [HB 1873](#) is on House floor for approval, while [SB 1320](#) has passed the Senate.

The General Assembly is poised to approve proposed Constitutional amendments that would authorize the BOE to approve applications to establish charter schools. After several days of delay and then a spirited floor debate, the Senate approved [SJ 256](#) on a 21 to 17 vote. The House version, [HJ 577](#), narrowly was endorsed in the House Privileges and Elections Committee on a narrow 12 to 10 vote. It will be on the House floor for approval next week. Proposed Constitutional amendments must pass two sessions of the General Assembly, with an election in between, and in the same form before being put to the voters.

The House and Senate are taking somewhat different approaches to waiving “seat time” requirements. [HB 1675](#), as approved overwhelmingly by the House, 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. [SB 982](#) passed the Senate on a unanimous vote. It stipulates that BOE course and credit rules provide that no verified unit of credit shall require a minimum number of clock hours of instruction.

The House Education Committee first defeated and then approved bills to give local school boards the responsibility for determining the opening day of school. The votes to approve [HB 1550](#) and [HB 1838](#) were 9 to 6. The bills are on the House floor for a vote next week. Should they pass, they face a rough road ahead, given that the Senate Education and Health Committee already has defeated it two versions of the bills, [SB 1131](#) and [SB 1249](#).

[HB 1744](#) had a rocky week. After initially being heard in the House Education Committee, the bill that altered local employee grievance procedures was referred to the House Counties, Cities and Towns Committee to deal with the local government portions of the bill. The patron then removed those sections from the bill, and the Committee promptly referred it back to the House Education Committee, where its future is uncertain.

The following bills also are on the House floor for approval:

[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 appropriate circumstances.

[HB 1361](#) would establish the Virginia Virtual School for the purpose of providing online instructional programs and services. It requires school divisions to forward to the virtual school the per-pupil state SOQ funding and up to three-quarters of local per-pupil funding for each of their students enrolled in the online school.

[HB 2238](#) would allow parents of disabled students to establish an educational savings account for use at a private school. The fund would consist of the student's state per pupil funds and certain special education funds.

[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.

Finally, [HB 1627](#) was defeated for the year. It would have allowed 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. Debate centered on the value of taking the course and learning real world implications versus being able to show a student knows the content and not being knocked out of taking other courses. [HB 2010](#), which would have required the BOE to establish a statewide grading scale, also was defeated in Committee

After being considered in the Senate Education and Health Committee this past week, the following bills are on the Senate floor for a vote next week:

[SB 1286](#) requires each local school division to publish the annual school budget in line item form on its website; current law requires publishing the budget on the website.

[SB 1293](#) prohibits the Department of Education and local school boards from requiring any student enrolled in a public school or his parent to provide the student's social security number.

[SB 1386](#) requires every person seeking initial teacher licensure or license renewal to receive professional development on the screening, intervention, accommodation, and use of technology for students with reading disabilities, including dyslexia. It would take effect July 1, 2016.

[SB 900](#) requires the BOE to promulgate regulations authorizing local school divisions to determine the date for administering SOL assessments.

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.