



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. The last day for Committee action is Monday, February 23.

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 20, 2015 – Review of Education Legislation

State Budget Issues

A conference committee of senior legislators is working to reach a compromise spending plan for the remainder of the current biennium. The members are meeting now and through the weekend to resolve differences between their respective spending plans by the first to middle part of next week. Members of the budget conference committee are as follows: Delegates Jones, Landes, Cox, O'Bannon, Greason and Joannou; and Senators Stosch, Colgan, Howell, Norment, Hanger and Watkins.

Governor McAuliffe announced late last week that January revenue declined by 1.1 percent, attributable in part to one less deposit day and tax refunds being greater during the month. However, on a fiscal year-to-date basis, total revenue collections are up 5.3 percent, ahead of the forecast of 3.1 percent growth. This past Monday, the governor announced an additional \$136 million in anticipated state budget revenues as a result of the final mid-session analysis, on top of the \$338 million revenue increase he announced earlier this month. The latest bump is attributable to additional information on retail sales tax collections for the holiday shopping season and final individual income tax estimated payments for 2014. The House budget plan approved last week anticipated about \$378 million more in revenue than projected by the spending plan introduced by Governor McAuliffe, while the approved Senate plan estimated \$430 million more.

Recall that the House and Senate budget proposals both contain funding and flexibility to provide the state share of a pay increase for school instructional and support personnel. Also, both would pay down even more of the unfunded teacher liability than the introduced budget, which included \$150 million from the sale of unclaimed property stock to offset a portion of the unfunded teacher liability. This will result in both State and local savings.

Click [here](#) for a State Superintendent's memo that contains additional details on the proposed House and Senate amendments to the budget.

Education Legislation

With this past week's winter weather, it is timely to note in this report that [SB 1021](#) passed the General Assembly on Wednesday. The bill permits the Board of Education (BOE) to add closings related to severe weather conditions or other emergency situations to the current list of reasons for which school divisions can be relieved of providing additional teaching days or hours to compensate for school closings resulting from a declared state of emergency.

The General Assembly also has approved [HB 324](#) to establish the Virginia Virtual School for the purpose of providing online educational programs and services. For each student enrolled, the average per-pupil share of state SOQ funding would be transferred to the virtual school. The bill must be passed again in 2016 in order for it to become effective.

Bills to reform the A to F grading system are nearing passage. [HB 1672](#) and [SB 727](#) have been reconciled to repeal the system and require the BOE, in consultation with the Standards of Learning (SOL) Innovation Committee, to redesign the School Performance Report Card by July 1, 2016.

Thursday was a busy day in the Senate Education and Health Committee. After a lengthy debate and hearing opposition from statewide associations representing school boards, superintendents and teachers; and from the American Civil Liberties Union and McAuliffe administration, the Committee approved, on a party-line vote, [HB 2238](#). The bill 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. However, the Committee did ship the bill to the Finance Committee, where it will be considered on Monday.

The Committee defeated [HB 1309](#), which would have allowed local school boards to arm school security officers with batons, stun weapons or a spray device. Committee members had many questions about appropriate training for such officers, as well as concerns about situations in which such devices could be used. The Committee also defeated on a party-line vote an Administration bill, [HB 1962](#), which would have added more topics to the professional development activities required of local school board members. Some Committee members were concerned that the General Assembly was singling out school board members for state-required training.

The Committee approved the following: [HB 1320](#) to provide that no teacher seeking renewal of a license shall be required to satisfy such requirement by completing coursework and earning credit at an institution of higher education; and [HB 1698](#), which requires parents to receive additional information about student surveys or questionnaires on sexual, medical or mental health information or information on health risk behaviors. Such information would include how

input collected by the questionnaire or survey will be used, who will have access to such information and steps that will be taken to protect student privacy.

The House and Senate have competing bills to relieve students of seat time requirements. [HB 1675](#), as approved 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 proof that a student has learned the relevant SOL content and skills. The bill, which would take effect in 2016, would utilize a locally-developed, BOE-approved assessment. The Senate position in [SB 982](#) is simply to stipulate that BOE course and credit rules provide that no verified unit of credit require a minimum number of clock hours of instruction. Differences in the bills will have to be resolved next week in a conference committee.

The House Education Committee has defeated [SB 823](#), which would have required at least 20 minutes of physical activity per day or an average of 100 minutes per week for students in grades kindergarten through five, effective with the 2017-18 school year. It did approve [SB 821](#) to abolish the Opportunity Educational Institution (OEI), which was established two years ago to provide for management of low-performing schools to be transferred to this statewide school division. It is on the House floor for approval.

House Rules tabled [SJ 288](#) requesting the Department of Education to study the effect of local use value assessment of certain real estate on the Composite Index of Local Ability to Pay.

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.