

**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 23, 2015 – Review of Education Legislation**State Budget Issues**

Earlier this week, lawmakers released hundreds of amendments to the proposed spending plan introduced by Governor McAuliffe in December. Various salary increase proposals for state employees, state-supported local employees and teachers were submitted. Several amendments would provide the state share of a 6% salary increase for SOQ instructional and support positions at a cost of over \$241 million. Several other amendments would provide varying levels of funding to restore the Cost of Competing Adjustment (COCA) rate for school support positions in primarily Northern Virginia school divisions. Amendments propose \$2.5 million the second year to establish a grant program to assist school divisions in providing pay incentives designed to attract and retain teachers with needed expertise in hard-to-staff or low-performing schools. Other amendments would provide additional dollars to help schools purchase EpiPens, and to expand preschool and kindergarten readiness as well as Project Discovery. More detailed information about proposed budget amendments submitted by legislators is available [here](#).

Elsewhere on the budget front, state revenue collections through the first six months of the current fiscal year were 6.8 percent higher than the same period a year ago. Collections are running about \$200 million ahead of estimates. However, the budget is based on revenue growth of just 3.1 percent for FY15. Budget writers will receive an updated revenue estimate in

February (to account for January collections) to be used in shaping the state budget over the final weeks of the session.

Education Legislation

General Assembly consideration of bills was fast and furious this past week, as committees began considering the many bills that were introduced. In the House Education Committee, Republicans began to make good on their promise to address SOL testing and accountability issues. The Committee unanimously approved [HB 1490](#) to direct the Board of Education (BOE) to promulgate regulations to provide the same criteria for eligibility for an expedited retake of any Standard of Learning (SOL) test, with the exception of writing SOL tests, to each student regardless of grade level or course. Writing was excluded because it takes longer and costs more. The bill contains an emergency clause, meaning it would take effect upon passage. It was sent to the House Appropriations Committee, where legislators will look for the \$200,000 needed to implement the bill. The Senate is on track to approve its version of the bill, [SB 874](#), but without an emergency clause. A subcommittee also favorably recommended [HB 1302](#) to allow expedited retakes at local expense.

Also unanimously reported was [HB 1615](#) that would allow the use of assessments that include multiple subject areas; that is, to include different subjects like science, math, reading and writing, and questions that promote critical thinking and problem solving, in one test. It is on the House floor for a vote next week.

[HB 1674](#) allows the BOE to review the accreditation status of schools every one to three years, taking into consideration each school's accreditation history, most recent accreditation status, and School Performance Report Card metrics. It was approved in Committee with only one “no” vote.

[HB 1585](#) proposes a different approach to providing flexibility in the local school calendar. It allows 1) an alternative schedule for year-round schools, or 2) a different opening day for schools failing to be fully accredited or for the entire division if more than 15% of all schools in division have failed to reach full accreditation. It was approved on a 16 to 5 vote.

In the Senate Education and Health Committee, legislators unanimously approved [SB 821](#) to abolish the Opportunity Educational Institution (OEI). Approved two years ago, the OEI legislation provided for management of low-performing schools to be transferred to this newly-established statewide school division.

The Committee also approved [SB 823](#) to require at least 20 minutes of physical activity per day or an average of 100 minutes per week during the regular school year for K-5 students, effective with the 2017-18 school year. After much discussion, the panel reported [SB 782](#) which will require the BOE to adopt regulations on the use of seclusion and restraint in public elementary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth that are consistent with (rather than specifically incorporating) federal guidelines.

[SB 724](#), reported on a 9 – 6 vote, would 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. [SB 1105](#) establishes a School Health Advisory Board in the executive branch to advise the General Assembly on pending legislation concerning health policy that affects elementary and secondary schools. It was approved 12 -3.

Over 2,250 bills and resolutions were introduced by Friday afternoon's bill introduction deadline. Here are some additional bills of interest that were submitted prior to the deadline:

[HB 2137](#) changes the path to initial teacher licensure with an endorsement in the areas of career and technical education and mathematics.

[HB 2149](#) requires newly elected or appointed school board members in a school division with one or more schools denied accreditation or accredited with warning for three consecutive years to participate in at least 15 hours of high-quality professional development training in their first year.

[HB 2220](#) requires per pupil funding to be allocated to a public charter school by the local school board on a non-categorical basis.

[HB 2231](#) permits a school board or a committee thereof to reduce the long-term suspension or expulsion of a student or students who received a greater punishment in certain cases.

[HB 2318](#) requires the BOE formula for assessing high school graduation rates to exclude from rates of on-time graduates, each student who fails to graduate on time due to circumstances outside of the control of the local school board.

[HB 2380](#) requires certain school division staff to receive training about local services that will be available to students with intellectual disability or emotional disturbance upon completion of high school, and to meet with students and their parents to provide such information.

[SB 1063](#) allows public charter schools to designate in their applications whether their employees will participate in the Virginia Retirement System.

[SB 1054](#) requires the State Executive Council for Comprehensive Services for At-Risk Youth and Families to promulgate regulations through the Administrative Process Act.

[SB 1199](#) provides enhanced penalties for certain acts of violence, if the act is committed on the property of a public or private elementary or secondary school.

[SB 1286](#) requires each local school division to publish its school budget in line-item form on its website; current law does not require the published budget to be in line-item form.

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

[SB 1403](#) provides that evidence of achievement of a certain composite score on the SAT, the Preliminary SAT, the ACT, or an International Baccalaureate assessment satisfies the evidence-of-progress requirement for home schooled students.

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.