



Washington State PTA Legislative Update
March 10, 2008

Welcome to the 8th edition of the Grassroots Connection for the 2008 Legislative Session! Each Grassroots connection provides you with a brief recap of last week's events and a preview of the next week. As a reminder, Washington State PTA's top 5 legislative priorities are:

1. K-12 Education Funding
2. Math and Science Education
3. Quality Teaching
4. Student Support Services
5. Special Education Funding

Last week in Olympia

Last Monday the 3rd was the cut-off for bills to come out of fiscal committees. Into the weekend, legislators spent most of every day debating and voting on long lists of bills. Many days continued into late evening hours.

Friday the 7th was the cut-off for bills to be considered on the Floor in the "opposite house"; bills that didn't get passed out of both houses by 5PM are mostly dead – I will discuss the exceptions in this week's analysis.

Priority Issue Bill Update – Bills that have passed still need to be signed by the Governor. Bills that have been included in a proposed budget may still be funded as part of the budget negotiation process.

1. K-12 Education Funding – [SSB 6879](#) - Regarding the joint task force on basic education finance. **Bill passed.**
2. Math and Science Education – [2SHB 2598](#) - Regarding an online mathematics curriculum. House refuses to concur in Senate amendments. Asks Senate to recede from amendments. **Bill is in conference committee.**

SHB 2809, a study bill regarding recruitment of math and science teachers. **Bill has died.** There was disagreement over some of the provisions. This issue is not going to go away. I expect that it will be brought back next year. We could get involved in the interim on this. Some of the work is being done as part of the work of the Basic Education Finance Task Force assignment.

3. Quality Teaching – SHB 2775 which would add an additional bonus for Nationally Board certified teachers who teach in high poverty areas – **Bill has died in the Senate.**

4. Student Support Services – [ESSB 6380](#) - Enhancing school library programs. House Appropriations. (We were more supportive of the House version because of it more closely aligned with our issue. That version died.) **Bill has died in the house. However, since it was included in the Senate budget, it could still be resurrected in the budget negotiation process.**

5. Special Education Funding – No bills currently fit our issue. However, additional funding (23.2 million) is being added to the Special Education safety net funding, based on approved awards.

Other issues of interest:

Assessment System -

ESHB 3166 concerning the redesign of the WASL and end of course assessments. **Passed.**

It would direct OSPI to develop statewide end-of-course assessments for high school mathematics and phase them in beginning in 2009-10. Beginning with the graduating class of 2014, the end-of-course assessments would replace the high school math WASL. The bill also would direct OSPI to redesign the WASL in all areas except writing and all grades except high school to shorten test administration. This bill definitely fits with our assessment system issue. We consistently testified and this one and feel that it is definitely a step in the right direction.

World Language – [2SHB 2523](#) - Creating the position of world language supervisor in the office of the superintendent of public instruction. **Died**

Education Reform –

[SHB 2810](#) - Enhancing resources and assistance in school districts with concentrations of English language learners. Senate Ways and Means. **Died**

ESSB 6673 creating extended learning opportunities and instructional support for English language learners, low-income students, and students with learning disabilities. **Senate did not agree with House amendments. This bill is in conference committee.** (This bill is a top priority because it is the only bill that deals with providing addressing the needs of those students who are not on track to graduate and who will not graduate because they have not passed the WASL.)

Foster Kids - [SHB 2679](#) - Creating programs to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care. **Passed**

Release of Student Information – HB 2026 which would grant other government program recruiters such as Americorps and Peace Corps, the same access as military recruiters. Senate Rules. (This is quite different from our issue, but we are following it. There was an unsuccessful attempt to get this bill amended to address our issue.) **Bill died.** One of the sponsors promises to bring this bill back next year.

Other bills which may interest you that have passed:

For those who are interested in the connection between healthcare and education, here is a bill which has passed this session which might interest you:

PROVISIONS IN SB 5100:

By August 1, 2008, the OSPI must select up to six school districts from urban and rural areas and including Eastern and Western Washington, to implement the following pilot project:

(1) Beginning in 2008-09, as part of its enrollment process, each participating school annually inquires whether a student has health insurance and includes a statement explaining that an outreach worker may contact families with uninsured students about options for health care coverage. Provisions must be made for the parent or guardian to authorize sharing of information for this purpose.

(2) Each student's health insurance status is recorded in the district's student information system.

(3) By December 1, 2008, the school develops a list of students without insurance for whom parent authorization to share this information has been granted. The list includes student identifying information and contact information for the parent or guardian.

(4) By January 1, 2009, each participating school and a local outreach organization, where available, works to put in place an agreement to share student information in accordance with confidentiality requirements. Once the agreement is in place, the school shares the list of students with the outreach organization. An outreach organization is a nonprofit organization or a local government entity either contracting with the DSHS to provide outreach regarding access to health coverage or otherwise qualified to provide education and enrollment services to uninsured children.

(5) The outreach organization contacts families and assists them to enroll students on a medical program.

By September 1, 2008, the OSPI and the DSHS must develop and make available a model agreement to enable schools in the pilot project to share student information in compliance with state and federal confidentiality requirements.

By July 1, 2009, the participating schools must report to the OSPI on the number of students identified without health insurance and whether an agreement is in place with an outreach organization. By December 1, 2009, the DSHS and the OSPI must submit a joint report to the Legislature that provides summary information on the number of students identified without health insurance, the number of agreements with outreach organizations, the impact of outreach efforts, the cost of collecting and reporting the data, and any recommendations.

There were many bills introduced regarding autism this session. Here is one that passed:

SB 6743 has the following provisions:

1. Subject to funding, the autism guidebook developed by the Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force shall include several specified guidelines to address the unique needs of students with autism. Requires the OSPI, by September 1, 2008, to print and distribute the guidebook, as well as make it available on its web site.
2. Requires the PESB and the OSPI, together with others as appropriate, to develop recommendations for autism awareness and methods of teaching for educator preparation and professional development programs. Provides that, by December 1, 2008, the recommendations must be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature, and also made available to school districts via the OSPI web site. If approved by the Legislature, each school district must use these recommendations to develop and adopt a school district policy regarding professional development for teachers and appropriate classified staff.
3. Subject to funding, OSPI, in collaboration with other named agencies and entities, will distribute information regarding the location, evaluation, and identification of children who may be eligible for early intervention or special education services. Also requires the OSPI to develop and distribute posters with information on autism.

Achievement Gap - HB 2722 has passed. It was initiated by the African American community to assist them in researching and addressing achievement gap issues. As a result of this initiative other communities have stepped up and are asking for a direct appropriation to do similar work. Will let you know what happens with that as well.

In its current form, the bill requires the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning (CISL) to convene an advisory group to develop a plan to address the achievement gap for African-American students. There will be 15 members, including educators, parents, and representatives of community-based organizations, the Washington Commission on African-American Affairs, and the Office of the Education Ombudsman. Five members will be appointed by the Speaker of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI). The advisory committee is to conduct a detailed analysis of the achievement gap for African-American students; examine the extent that current initiatives address the needs of African-American students; identify best practices and promising programs; develop a comprehensive plan with school and community-based strategies, including implementing the suggestions of the Black Education Strategy Roundtable; and develop performance improvement measures and benchmarks to monitor progress. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy must assist the advisory committee in examining detailed data on achievement indicators and trends. A final report is due December 1, 2008, to the SPI, the Governor, the State Board of Education, the P-20 Council, and the education committees of the Legislature. Beginning in January 2010, the CISL must annually report on the implementation of strategies to address the achievement gap for African-American students and on the progress of improvement of education performance measures for African-American students.

Anaphylactic Policy Guidelines - The House has passed SB 6556, requiring the office of the superintendent of public instruction to develop anaphylactic policy guidelines.

For our members, the bill requires OSPI, in consultation with DOH, to report school anaphylactic policy guidelines to the Legislature and to school districts for schools to prevent anaphylaxis and related medical emergencies. Each school district must use the guidelines to develop and adopt a school district policy on anaphylaxis prevention for each of its schools by September 1, 2009. OSPI must also report to the school health task force by October, 2008 on the implementation of the 2008 Guidelines for Care of Students with Life-Threatening Food Allergies. The school anaphylactic policy guidelines must be developed with input from pediatricians, school nurses and other health care providers, **parents of affected children**, school administrators, teachers, and food service directors.

This week in Olympia

There are two important steps left in the session.

1. **Reconciling Bills:** Bills often emerge from the House and the Senate with significant differences, but the process requires that they pass both chambers in identical form. Sometimes these bills are sent to a conference committee, with representatives from both. The result will then go back to both chambers for a final vote. Another option is for one

body to ask that the other concur with or recede from an amendment that has been added. They also may combine the bills at this point, in order to try to get a final opportunity to vote.

2. **Finishing the Budget:** House, Senate and Governor's office representatives continue to meet until all final details have been decided. The final version will be submitted to the full House and full Senate for a final vote. This is a harder process to follow, because so much of it happens in small groups out of public view. There is no bill status report to keep updated.

The Governor gets the last say...but really has been involved all along. All through the process, the legislature has been aware of the Governor's role as the final bill signer. Also, the Governor wants bills and a budget that she can sign. The Governor can become personally involved. She also has many staff members who represent her during the entire process to meet with key legislators and work out details. In particular the Office of Financial Management works closely with the staff of Ways and Means, Appropriations and Finance Committees, in order to iron out differences and try to avoid last minute surprises. A special session is called if this can not be accomplished on time.

This year's session is expected to end as scheduled this Thurs. the 13th, with a budget for the Governor to sign. Here are the Governor's options:

Policy Bills – She can sign the whole bill into law, veto the whole bill, or veto sections of the bill.
Budget – She can veto specific items.

Advocates may continue to influence the process by contacting the Governor about bills they support.

It is easy to send the Governor a quick message to convey your wishes.

- **CALL** (directly at **360-902-4111**, or TOLL FREE **1-800-562-6000**)
- **EMAIL/WRITE** (Go to: www.governor.wa.gov and click on "Contact the Governor")
- **KEEP THE GOVERNOR INFORMED** of how you feel about the bills being voted on. Remember, she has the power to sign, or veto any bill or budget item that is passed.

Planning for the Interim Session has already begun! This is really important because it tells you what directions legislators might be headed in as we begin to think about what we want to focus on for next session.

While the session is winding down legislators start to discuss their plans for ongoing conversations during the off-session. Here are a couple of interesting updates on these sessions:

Childhood Hunger Presentation by the Children's Alliance

On Friday, Kim Howard attended a work session that Children's Alliance organized for the House Early Learning and Children's Services Committee. This was an educational session which attempted to position the committee for next year's work. The stated goal of the coalition that presented was that "Every child in every corner of the state gets three nutritious meals each and every day." The group related this effort to education by saying that if kids are fed appropriately, they won't learn. More specifically they said that pouring money into education reform and healthcare won't work if kids are hungry.

They presented some compelling information about children in this state, which has implications for our work in the education sector. The good news is that we are now below the national average in very low food security. We have made progress over the past 5 years. The bad news is that the national averages are not a goal to strive for. The latest data show that 88,000 Washington households went hungry in 2006 despite progress and that 251,000 were stretched so close to the edge that they couldn't be sure they'd have money to put food on the table every day. This is called "food insecurity". It is estimated that these households contain nearly 300,000 children.

Did you know that approx. 50% of the infants in this state are served by the WIC program, which serves families that have an income below 185% of the federal poverty level (approx. \$38,000 per year for a family of 4)? WIC provides Federal grants to States for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. Looking at their chart, King County has the lowest participation at 36.7% (King is also the only county with participation rates under 40%) and Adams County has the highest rate at 83.2%.

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education Interim planning hearing on March 10, 2008 at 8:30 – This morning Kim Howard listened via TVW to this session. When I could clearly identify who was speaking I noted this. (For the full discussion you can go to the TVW archives.) Here are some of the ideas under consideration for discussion during the interim:

- Discussion of what direction we need to be going in with regard to the funding formulas. Should we be moving toward greater flexibility of dollars by reducing the number of categorical programs or should we work to improve the categories we have so that they make more sense and are perhaps a bit more flexible? Several discussed this.
- Need to look at issues around teacher preparation
- Need to have an accountability discussion, which looks at outcomes.
- Online education is growing in importance. Need to make sure we understand what is happening and that we are not behind in addressing emergent issues. There have been some unintended consequences in allowing this model to develop, which include that very small districts are overseeing very large online programs by for-profits - Hunter
- Professional certification for teachers. We require continuing education for teachers, but we do not fund it. What impact does this have on the system?
- Oversight of the education funding task force – Jarrett
- Impact of healthcare issues on education - Jarrett
- WASL and impacts – How are we going to prepare all kids for the future? How are we going to continue to serve kids that aren't passing in the system? How do we make sure these kids understand their options?

I have pasted the Committee members below. Of note, when Dave Quall was speaking during the hearing his microphone was not working, so I could not hear his contributions. Many other members were not present. However, if you have issues that you would like them to consider during the interim I encourage you to contact them, especially if you are a constituent.

[Kathy Haigh](#) - Chair (D)
[Pat Sullivan](#) - Vice Chair (D)
[Skip Priest](#) - Ranking Minority Member (R)
[Glenn Anderson](#) - Asst Ranking Minority Member (R)
[Don Barlow](#) (D)
[Larry Crouse](#) (R)
[Bill Fromhold](#) (D)
[Larry Haler](#) (R)
[Jaime Herrera](#) (R)
[Ross Hunter](#) (D)
[Fred Jarrett](#) (D)
[Ruth Kagi](#) (D)
[Phyllis Kenney](#) (D)
[Timm Ormsby](#) (D)
[Dave Quall](#) (D)
[Larry Seaquist](#) (
[Larry Springer](#) (D)
[Deb Wallace](#) (D)

One final hearing of interest will feature an interim planning discussion:

Early Learning & Children's Services – 3/12/08 9AM

House Hearing Room D – John L. O'Brien Room