

March 10, 2019

Floor action a flurry of education policy and funding bills

Prepared by Marie Sullivan, WSPTA Legislative Consultant, legconsultant@wastatepta.org

Lawmakers hit the floor last week for bill action, starting early in the day and going late many nights to address a variety of bills that range in topics from education bills we're watching to issues to behavioral health, daylight savings time, moving up the presidential primary, and much more. Surprisingly, few education bills remain in the "gatekeeper" Rules Committee, and both House and Senate education committees have scheduled public hearings next Tuesday, Thursday and Friday morning.

From the Top 5 list, bills that address social emotional learning, school construction, teacher shortages, and funding for special education passed their respective chambers. Also passing, from the Supported List, were bills on seated meal times, school safety, and early learning programs.

On Friday night, the House overwhelmingly passed a new version of [E2SHB 1599](#), a bill that would delink the requirement to pass state assessments in English Language Arts, math and science, and replace that link with a list of six different "pathways" a student can use to earn a diploma. Unfortunately, the bill does not include the pathway of being accepted into 2-year college or 4-university; a job track linked to a student's High School and Beyond Plan; or locally determined courses/locally determined assessments which were allowed for the class of 2018. It also phases out the Certificate of Individual Achievement for the class of 2021 (but keeps a grace period through August 31, 2024). The "expedited appeals waiver" would apply to the class of 2019.

Section 201 lays out the new pathways, starting with the class of 2020 (this year's Juniors), as:

1. Meet or exceed the Smarter Balanced Assessment scores in English Language Arts (ELA) and math;
2. Earn college and high school credit through Running Start or College in the High School, or a course approved by an accredited college in ELA and math;
3. Do a transition course in conjunction with a college which ensures college-level placement in ELA and math courses in college;
4. Meet or exceed SBE-determined cut scores on SAT/ACT in the English/writing portions and math sections;
5. Earn a C+ or better on AP, IB, Cambridge courses (AP courses that count are listed in the bill);
6. Pass the military entrance exam; or
7. Take a sequence of CTE courses that lead to apprenticeships, careers or college ... like Tech Prep, CORE Plus, or skills center courses that offer a progression of courses.

Students could use a combination of the paths in 1-5, with one path in English Language Arts and one path in math. But every student would be required to earn an ELA and a math element to get a diploma. It wasn't entirely clear if path 7 required both a CTE sequence in ELA and math or just a sequence.

Section 503 would require OSPI to contract for a web-based High School and Beyond Plan that could be used and viewed by students, families, teachers and counselors. It appears that starting in the 2020-21 school year, all school districts would be required to offer the web-based tool, even if one is currently in use.

Earlier in the week the House passed HB 1089, which would do a full delink of the testing requirements for graduation. Both bills will be sent to the [Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee](#) for further consideration and possible modification. Committee members should be contacted with concerns.

Status of Top 5 Legislative Priorities (all bills may be accessed [here](#))

The following bills are still under consideration:

The following bills are still under consideration:

- Social and Emotional Learning:
 - SSB 5082 is scheduled in the House Education Committee on March 14 at 8 AM.
- School Construction and Simple Majority for Bonds:
 - SB 5066 remains in the Senate Rules Committee while SJR 8201 was pulled to the Senate floor. The bills would reduce the 60% to pass school bonds to a simple majority and remove the requirements of securing a 40% validation threshold.
 - ESSB 5853 was modified on the Senate floor, so that the School Construction Assistance Program couldn't comprise more than one-third of state bonding capacity. The bill would increase student space allocations from 90 square feet to 130 square feet in grades K-6, starting in FY 2022 through FY 2024. Student space allocation also would be increased in grades 7-8 and 9-12 under the proposal. OSPI would be directed to come back with recommendations for modifications to the school construction program by June 30, 2022.
- Preventing Gun Violence:
 - No action yet on SHB 1010, which would allow the Washington State Patrol to destroy firearms in its custody. The bill is ready for floor action.
- Strategies to Address the Teacher Shortage:
 - HB 1139 passed out of the House 93-2 March 8th. This is a comprehensive bill that addresses a variety of programs and scholarships to improve educator recruitment and retention.
 - SHB 1621 passed the House unanimously. The bill would remove passing the state basic skills test as a pre-requisite for admission to a teacher preparation program.
 - SB 5801 would allow retired teachers to return to work. The bill has three more days before cutoff to pass the Senate floor.

- Strategic K-12 Investments to Close Gaps:
 - Levies: Allow school district choice.
 - SSB 5313 remains in Senate Ways & Means. The bill would change the levy authority rules, returning it to a percentage of the prior year’s state and federal funding as a base. However, the bill would also give districts a choice of the percentage approach or \$3,500 per student.
 - HB 2140 was introduced by Reps. Pat Sullivan and Laurie Dolan. The bill is a “title only bill,” but sources say this will be the House bill for their levy proposal, as well as any additional education funding proposals covered by new revenue. A possible increase to LEA may be included in what gets revealed.
 - Close Special Education funding gaps
 - 2SSB 5091 unanimously passed the Senate floor Saturday, March 9. The bill would raise the multiplier to 1.0.
 - Increase prototypical school funding to Initiative 1351 levels to improve student well-being:
 - No action yet on SSB 5315, which would increase staffing ratios for school guidance counselors, nurses, social workers and psychologists in elementary, middle and high schools. The ratios would be phased in, starting with school districts at or above 50% free or reduced-price meal ratios in 2019-21, and 35% in 2021-23 and all districts in 2023-25.
 - Lower the High-Poverty LAP threshold to the state annual average of free or reduced-price meal-eligible students to increase services to more students: No bills currently.

Look for bills and committee hearings that relate to WSPTA’s “Also Supported Positions” adopted at Legislative Assembly and WSPTA resolutions below and in the Bill Tracking List.

WSPTA’s Week in Review

- With the focus on the floor, WSPTA members had no testimony opportunities. The next four weeks, however, will offer many opportunities, and individuals interested in representing the association on testimony should contact Advocacy Director Nancy Chamberlain at PTALegDir@wastatepta.org.

The Week Ahead (Schedule subject to change)

Tuesday, March 12

8 a.m., House Education Committee, HHR A

Public hearing:

- ESSB 5395 – concerning comprehensive sexual health education

Wednesday, March 13

5 PM is cutoff for bills to pass the chamber in which they started

Thursday, March 14

8 a.m., House Education, HHR A

Public hearing:

- SSB 5689 - Concerning harassment, intimidation, bullying, and discrimination in public schools.
- 2SSB 5082 - Promoting and expanding social emotional learning. (Support/High)
- 2SSB 5141 - Concerning school resource officer mandatory training and policies.

10 a.m., Senate Environment, Energy & Technology, SHR 1

Public hearing:

- E2SHB 1112 - Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from hydrofluorocarbons.

3:30 p.m., Senate Ways & Means, SHR 4

Public hearing:

- EHB 1074 - Protecting youth from tobacco products and vapor products by increasing the minimum legal age of sale of tobacco and vapor products.

Friday, March 15

8 a.m., Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education, SHR 1

Public hearing:

- ESHB 1130 - Addressing language access in public schools.

8 a.m., Senate Health & Long-Term Care, SHR 4

Public hearing:

- 2SHB 1039 - Concerning opioid overdose medication at kindergarten through twelfth grade schools and higher education institutions.

Olympia [Capitol Campus Map](#)

HHR refers to hearing rooms in the John L. O'Brien Building

SHR refers to hearing rooms in the John A. Cherberg Building