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Legislature adjourns March 12

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The Legislature adjourned “sine die” on March 12, leaving \$2 billion in the Rainy-Day Account and nearly \$1 billion in reserves. To support COVID-19 efforts, the Legislature appropriated \$200 million, of which \$25 million was set aside in a new unemployment account created to support employees who need unemployment benefits during school and business closures and time off to care for self or affected family members.

On the final day of session, several amendments were adopted, including one that gives the State Board of Education the authority to grant waivers for students in the class of 2020 or before who are on track to graduate but are affected by school closures. OSPI is keeping updated information on its [website](#) in response to the statewide schools closure that starts March 17.

As one of Governor Inslee’s many announcements this past week, public bill signings have been canceled. The Governor has until April 4 to sign bills passed by the Legislature (20 days after the end of session, not including Sundays). The signings will be streamed on TVW.

Conference Budgets Adopted

The 2020 supplemental operating budget includes new funding for K-12 education, including:

- \$45.7 million for LEA hold harmless in districts with flat levy revenues and higher-than-expected assessed value.
- \$31.8 million for 0.5 school counselors, starting with high-poverty elementary schools (50% or higher students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL)).
- \$21.5 million for transportation funding formula hold harmless.
- \$14.3 million for two additional days of paraeducator training in the 2020-21 school year, rolling forward as four days in the 2021-22 school year.
- \$4 million for grants to school districts for enrichment purposes – OSPI will prioritize districts that need help, only available for schools with 650 students or fewer.
- \$2.6 million for Educational School Districts (ESDs) to support school safety and suicide prevention.
- Additional funding for safety net.
- It appears that there may be additional funding for the multiplier related to students who spent at least 80% or more of their time in general education classes (although an amount isn’t called out).
- \$600,000 for schools to implement HB 1660, the student ASB/activities bill.
- \$100,000 for the Education Ombuds to continue outreach efforts.

- While not specifically listing funding, professional development of teachers and principals around the new early screening for dyslexia requirements is referenced under the Educational Service Districts section (Section 508 (8)).

There are a number of reports due just by budget proviso, and three new task forces in the budget, including a work group to create a family engagement framework.

The 2020 supplemental capital budget also was approved. It funds the School Construction Assistance Program at more than \$1 billion, provides \$23.4 million for small rural school modernization grants, \$13.2 million for the School Seismic Safety Retrofit Program, and an additional \$4.2 million for early learning facilities. The seismic funds are for projects designated as very high risk by OSPI.

WSPTA Legislative Priorities (all bills may be accessed [here](#))

Overall, Washington State PTA had a successful session. Thank you to the many parents and WSPTA board members who travelled to Olympia to testify on budget and policy issues. Parent voice always makes a difference, and this session was no different. An end-of session summary will be developed later this month, but here's a quick overview of policy bills (or budget) on their way to the governor:

Social Emotional Learning

ESHB 2816 directs the Washington State School Directors' Association to develop and update a model policy and procedure for nurturing a positive social and emotional school and classroom climate, and requires school districts to adopt elements of the model that protect the integrity of learning environments for all students by the start of the 2021-22 school year.

Preventing Gun Violence

E2SHB 2467 establishes a centralized single point of contact background check system for firearms transfers.

SHB 2555 closes a loophole, by requiring a licensed firearm dealer to conduct a background check on applicants for the purchase or transfer of a firearm frame or receiver once a state firearms background check system is established within the Washington State Patrol.

SHB 2622 establishes compliance hearing processes with contempt of court procedures for orders to surrender and extreme risk protection orders.

ESSB 5434 makes it unlawful for a person to possess a firearm and other weapons on childcare center premises, center-provided transportation, or in areas of facilities being used exclusively by a childcare center. The bill also requires family day care providers to store any firearm, ammunition, or other dangerous weapon in a secure area inaccessible to children when children for whom the provider is licensed to provide care are present on the premises.

ESSB 6288 creates the Washington Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention within the Department of Commerce to coordinate and promote effective state and local efforts to reduce firearm violence.

Strategic K-12 Investments to Close Gaps

School staffing gets a boost under the budget (see above) with 0.5 of a school counselor added for high-poverty schools. Legislators said this was a down payment on staffing enrichment that needs to start next session.

While one-time, the \$4 million for school districts with low fund balances and high enrichment needs should help students in districts stretched thin by recent legislative policy changes.

Fund Paraeducator Training

Washington State PTA joined with PSE/SEIU 1948 and the Washington Education Association to advocate for the full four days of foundational training for all paraeducators. The 2019-21 biennial operating budget had funded only two days for the 2019-20 school year and left the future up in the air. The supplemental budget ensures four days of training over two school years, and then four days starting in the 2021-22 school year.

School Construction

2SSB 5572 creates a new program for school districts with 1,000 or fewer students to modernize their school buildings through grants. In the 2020 fiscal year, 38 small districts received planning grants. The capital budget includes \$23.4 million for 10 projects on the prioritized list.

Resolutions

2SHB 2864 requires OSPI, in consultation with the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), to establish the Running Start Summer School Pilot Program for two years in three community colleges.

SHB 2711 directs OSPI, in collaboration with other entities, to convene a work group focused on students in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, or both.

ESSB 5395 requires every public school to provide comprehensive sexual health education to each student by the 2022-23 school year. The requirement is phased in, beginning with all public-school students in grades 6-12 in the 2021-22 school year, and then all public-school students in the 2022-23 school year. For K-3 students, the focus is on social and emotional learning only. Schools must provide notice and an opportunity to review the curriculum to parents and guardians, and parents and guardians have the option of opting out their student or students from the instruction. Instruction is offered by grade bands: once in grade band K-3; once in grade band 4-5; twice in grade band 6-8; and twice in grade band 9-12. School districts may select curricula that serves their community but aligns with statewide learning standards, as is the case with any curricula.

To bring information up to date, [ESHB 1551](#) removes the requirement for separately taught instruction on HIV/AIDs, replacing the reference with “sexually transmitted diseases, consistent with [RCW 28A.230.020](#) and [RCW 28A.300.475](#).”

[ESSB 6141](#) requires all districts with a high school, beginning in the 2020-21 school year, to provide both a financial aid advising day and notification of financial aid opportunities at the beginning of the school year to parents and guardians of any student entering the 12th grade.

Other Bills that Passed

- [2SHB 1191](#) | Concerning school notifications about juvenile offenses.
- [3SHB 1660](#) | Concerning the participation of students who are low income in extracurricular activities.
- [EHB 2040](#) | Concerning non-high school districts.
- [ESHB 2116](#) | Establishing a task force on improving institutional education programs and outcomes.
- [2SHB 2277](#) | Concerning youth solitary confinement.
- [ESHB 2455](#) | Supporting access to childcare for parents who are attending high school or working toward completion of a high school equivalency certificate.
- [ESHB 2551](#) | Permitting students to wear traditional tribal regalia and objects of cultural significance at graduation ceremonies and related events.
- [SHB 2589](#) | Requiring contact information for suicide prevention and crisis intervention organizations on student and staff identification cards.
- [HB 2619](#) | Increasing early learning access through licensing, eligibility, and rate improvements.
- [ESHB 2660](#) | Increasing the availability of school meals provided to public school students at no cost.
- [ESHB 2731](#) | Student concussion reports.
- [2SHB 2737](#) | Updating the children’s mental health workgroup.
- [EHB 2811](#) | Environmental education.
- [HB 2853](#) | Promoting the effective and efficient administration of the Washington state charter school commission.
- [SB 6066](#) | Ethnic studies materials.
- [SB 6102](#) | Adjusting stop signal requirements for school buses.
- [SSB 6142](#) | Creating the Washington common application for colleges and universities.
- [SSB 6191](#) | Assessing the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences in middle and high school students to inform decision making and improve services by updating the Healthy Youth Survey.
- [SB 6263](#) | Creating a model educational data sharing agreement between school districts and tribes.
- [ESB 6313](#) | Increasing opportunities for young voters.
- [SSB 6521](#) | Creating an innovative learning pilot program.