HOT TOPICS
Legislator Contact Form

Name: ____________________________________________________________________________________

School District: _____________________________________________________________________________

Legislators contacted / summary of discussion: ____________________________________________________
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Please provide us with your feedback:
• Log your activities and meetings during the “Day on the Hill.”
• Return the form to a WSSDA/WASA staff member, or fax, email, or mail your comments to us.

By taking the time to record your activities, you support the ongoing advocacy efforts of our organizations. Thank you.
In 2012, when the Supreme Court ruled in the McCleary decision that the state was failing to provide ample funding of its constitutional “paramount duty” and, in addition, was forcing an unconstitutional overreliance on school district levies, it set up a protracted fight over educational funding— with an ultimate deadline of September 1, 2018. The Legislature was a bit perplexed about how to comply with the decision even though the Legislature had already laid the groundwork for a new education funding system with the adoption of ESHB 2261 (2009) and SHB 2776 (2010). These two bills were the roadmap to an updated definition of basic education, along with the necessary new education finance system to ensure implementation. In fact, the Court essentially told the Legislature to simply fully implement ESHB 2261 and SHB 2776 by the deadline they had already established and the state would be well on its way to solving the McCleary riddle.

As time went by, legislators’ attempts to comply with McCleary continued to fall short and the Supreme Court twice ordered the Legislature to submit “a complete plan for fully implementing its program of basic education.” Continued failure to comply prompted the Court to issue a Contempt Order in 2015 with the imposition of sanctions ($100,000 per day) in 2015.

Things came to a head in October 2016 when the Court specifically clarified that the deadline to fully implement its program of basic education must be in place by the final adjournment of the 2017 Legislative Session. The Court also clarified that the details of full funding of basic education “must be in place by the final adjournment of the 2017 Legislative Session.” This included “funding sources and accountability mechanisms to address a school funding lawsuit in Seattle School District while the 2017 Legislature eliminated those funding and accountability mechanisms to address a similar school funding lawsuit in McCleary.” This meant, according to the Court order, 2017 was the last opportunity to solve the McCleary problem, setting the stage for the 2017 Session.

The 2017 Legislature struggled to come to common ground on a McCleary solution; however, EHB 2242 was ultimately adopted as its funding plan meant to comply with the Supreme Court’s McCleary decision. The key component of the bill is to establish an education finance system that ensures the state is fulfilling its constitutional paramount duty by fully funding the actual costs of providing all students with the opportunity to learn, thereby reducing local school districts’ overreliance on local levy funding to support the costs of basic education. In short, EHB 2242: revises and increases state salary allocations for education staff; reforms state and local education funding contributions; and increases transparency and accountability of education funding. Following the 2017 Session, the Legislature forwarded its plan contained within EHB 2242 to the Court. On November 15, 2018 the Supreme Court issued its most recent McCleary Order. Briefly, Justices said the Legislature has “satisfied the Court’s mandate to fully fund the program of basic education” as established by ESHB 2261 and SHB 2776. Where the Legislature remains deficient, however, is the funding of basic education salaries. Justices stated they were “satisfied that the new salary model established by EHB 2242 provides for full State funding of basic education salaries sufficient to recruit and retain competent teachers, administrators, and staff,” but noted EHB 2242 and the budget fall short in fully funding salary increases by September 1, 2018, as Ordered by the Court.

What’s Happening Now:

Although new structures and funding established in 2017 through EHB 2242 provides significant investments and opportunities to support basic education, those enhancements present challenges and do not fully fund the actual cost to school districts to offer a basic education program that provides all students with the opportunity to learn. WASA/WSSDA/WASBO specifically urge the Legislature at a minimum to address and update the following components in EHB 2242:

- **Special Education.** Though additional funding was provided in 2017 by increasing the special education cap to cover more students (from 12.7 percent to 13.5 percent), this approach does not address the per-student shortfall and overall, special education remains underfunded.
- **Salary Allocations and State Schedule.** Additional funds are provided to support educator compensation; however, that enhancement is still not sufficient for the actual salary or staffing costs. EHB 2242 eliminates the Salary Allocation Model (SAM) and institutes a new one-size-fits-all statewide average salary allocation, while also eliminating an essential equity funding mechanism: the staff mix factor. Interestingly, SAM and staff mix were created and implemented to address the Supreme Court’s ruling in the Seattle School District school funding case, while the 2017 Legislature eliminated those funding and accountability mechanisms to address a similar school funding lawsuit in McCleary. Under the new funding scheme, districts with more experienced staff will be forced to raise additional revenue to retain those educators or be forced to discriminate against more senior staff in hiring decisions—or make additional cuts.
- **Levies and Local Effort Assistance.** The implementation of levy reductions and change in the Local Effort Assistance (LEA or “levy equalization”) formula in EHB 2242 is out of sequence with the timing of state funding increases. This will result in damaging cuts to student programs and services.
- **Regionalization.** EHB 2242’s calculation methodology and application of regionalization factors intensifies current district inequities, forcing needless competition for staff between neighboring districts.
- **Hold Harmless.** EHB 2242 includes hold harmless language for salaries, to ensure districts receive the greater of new salary allocations or the salary allocations for the 2017–18 school year. This provision was assumed to be funded in the budget ($5.0 million); however, explicit language in that regard is absent.

KEY MESSAGE: EHB 2242 must be amended to ensure the original intent of the bill can be implemented. We support: increases in per-student special education funding (via the excess cost multiplier); implementation of a simplified mandatory state salary schedule and allocation model that includes an “experience” factor (staff mix) to ensure consistency, uniformity and equity across the state; delayed implementation of new levy and LEA policy to allow districts more time to plan for local funding reductions and also allow the Legislature ample time to develop a more workable and equitable levy reduction plan; reconsideration of EHB 2242’s regionalization structure and implementation of a system that would “smooth” regionalization factors between districts; and a hold harmless model that more accurately reflects the total funding of new state allocations, local levies, and LEA in 2018–19 and 2019–20 are greater than what the district received in the 2017–18 school year.
High School Graduation

Background:
All public school students are required to meet statewide graduation requirements in order to earn a diploma. The goal is that more students will be better prepared to meet 21st-century demands in their working and personal lives. Washington’s state graduation requirements are designed to ensure students have a solid foundation of reading, writing, math, and science skills, no matter the path they choose after high school.

To be eligible to graduate in Washington, high school students must:
• pass state exams in English language arts, mathematics, and science;
• earn all required 24-credits and any additional credits required by their local school district; and
• successfully complete a high school and beyond plan.

In 2017 the Legislature adopted HB 2224 as the means to further delay the science assessment graduation requirement until the Class of 2021, and to provide students who do not meet standard on statewide assessments with more pathways to high school graduation, including the ability for students in the Classes of 2014 and beyond who did not meet the science standard to receive their diplomas. The continuing delay of the science requirement is largely due to the 2013 change in state learning standards when the state adopted the Next Generation Science Standards that necessitated changes in the high school science assessment from the End of Course Biology to a comprehensive science test. The rationale was to give districts, schools, and students sufficient time to transition to the new standards and for a new science assessment system to be developed.

WASA/WSSDA/WASBO believe that state-mandated tests should not be required for students to graduation. While our associations support the important role state assessments have to gather information on system efficacy, and honor the importance of rigorous and relevant pathways and graduation requirements for students, we believe a high school assessment should be used to inform the classes and other supports students need to pursue their desired paths, not as a barrier for students. By delinking, districts will be better able to focus the necessary resources toward supporting more connected and relevant pathways and support structures to assure every student has the necessary skills and knowledge to prepare them for their next steps beyond high school.

What’s happening now:
Washington is one of 13 states that had graduation tests in place for the Class of 2017. Many more states have recently ended or placed a moratorium on graduation tests. In the 2017 session, the House passed HB 1046 out of their chamber three times by an overwhelming majority of votes. That bill would have delinked or decoupled passing all three tests in order to graduate. The bill never made it to the Senate floor in any of the three special sessions. This session, the bill is currently awaiting another vote of the House in order to progress to the Senate. Also this session, two new delink bills have been introduced: SB 6144 and HB 2621.

KEY MESSAGE:
• Our students need certainty. Please support adoption of any of the three bills (HB 1046, HB 2621, or SB 6144) that call for a full delink of requiring passage of all three ELA, math, and science assessments in order for students to graduate. State-mandated tests of any kind should not be required for students to graduate.

• Further delayed action on this issue will continue to rob students of learning opportunities in the classroom. Our focus needs to be supporting strong implementation of the 24-credit graduation requirements, high school and beyond planning, and creating opportunities that supports every student in the pathway they choose, and that does not hinge their success on passing one or more standardized tests.

• State-mandated high school assessments were never intended to be used as an individual student exit exam. It is not appropriate to hold students accountable to a test that is not designed to determine individual student proficiency.