Last week, the first of the Legislature’s self-imposed cut-off dates arrived. All bills needed to be moved out of their original house policy committee by February 7 in order to remain alive. The deadline for original house bills to be adopted by fiscal committees (House Appropriations, House Finance, House Capital Budget and Senate Ways & Means) came shortly after, on February 11. Following these two deadlines, most of the legislative action moved to the House and Senate chambers (and behind closed doors in party caucuses). Legislators are working through lengthy floor calendars in an effort to adopt priority legislation before the next cut-off date: all bills must be out of their house of origin (House bills out of the House; Senate bills out of the Senate) by Tuesday, February 18, in order to remain alive. Remember, however, that budget bills or bills considered to be budget-related (known as “Necessary to Implement the Budget” or NTIB) are exempt from these early deadlines. And, of course, there are procedural ways to revive other bills; no bill is truly dead in Olympia until the session adjourns.

One of the major education issues in this session was late-arriving, but has quickly gained momentum—and is quickly moving. SB 6552 would provide a fix to the 1,080 instructional hour conundrum. A draft bill was released February 4, officially introduced and referred to the Senate Early Learning & K–12 Education Committee on February 5, heard in Committee that afternoon and adopted on February 6. The bill received a public hearing in the Senate Ways & Means Committee on Monday and was adopted on Tuesday. The bill was adopted by the full Senate on Thursday and heads to the House.

The details:
Substitute Senate Bill 6552, as adopted by the Senate Early Learning & K–12 Education Committee would do the following:

- Require school districts to grant academic credit in science or mathematics to students that pass CTE courses identified by OSPI as being equivalent to science or mathematics courses that meet high school graduation requirements. Language clarifies that a school district must only grant equivalencies if the course is offered.
- Delay the implementation of the required increase in instructional hours until the 2015–16 school year (rather than the 2014–15 school year).
• Restructure the instructional hour requirement. The bill strikes the language adopted last session requiring 1,000 instructional hours per grade for grades 1–6 and 1,080 instructional hours per grade for grades 7–12. Instead, grades 1–8 must have a district-wide annual average of 1,000 hours; and grades 9–12 must have a district-wide annual average of 1,080 hours. (NOTE: This restructuring would NOT change instructional hour requirements in kindergarten. Kindergarten hours would NOT be a part of the calculation of the “district-wide annual average,” therefore maintaining a complete 450 instructional hour requirement for half-day kindergarten and a complete 1,000 instructional hour requirement for full day kindergarten.)

• Address the senior graduation week issue by allowing the last five days of school for seniors to be counted as instructional hours.

• Authorize the SBE to implement the 24-credit diploma, based on its Career and College Ready framework, beginning with the Class of 2019. Language clarifies that school districts will be authorized to waive up to 2 credits on an individual student basis.

Prior to adopting the bill (as Second Substitute Senate Bill 6552), the Senate Ways & Means Committee added a section detailing the “reprogramming” of the $97 million instructional hour appropriation provided in the 2013–15 Operating Budget. Language provides that the previous appropriation will be “repurposed” to allow implementation of the 24-credit diploma requirement. The funding is specifically provided for:

• **MSOC Enhancements** Allocations for Maintenance, Supplies and Operating Costs (MSOC) are increased by $137 per student in grades 9–12. (This allocation is expected to be in addition to the MSOC appropriation to be provided in the 2015–16 school year.)

• **Lab Science Enhancements** Funding is provided to enhance lab science class sizes. The formula will drive funding similar to the high poverty K–3 class size reduction, providing bonus teaching units beyond the 28.74 class size in grades 9–12. Eligible enrollment is 2/24th (or 1/12th) of all students in grades 9–12, which equates to the two lab science classes out of the total 24 credits needed for graduation. Eligible students will be provided teaching units for a class size of 19.98. The teaching units calculated in the general education class size are subtracted from the lab science teachers; the difference is the lab science class size enhancement.

• **Guidance Counselors** Funding is provided to increase high school guidance counselors from 2.009 to 2.539 for each of the prototypical high schools—an increase of 0.53 units for every prototypical high school. The original 2013–15 Operating Budget already has an increase for guidance counselors that were not adopted in statute. This bill will add the currently funded amounts and the new amounts. Budget language is expected to be added in the Supplemental Operating Budget (if there is one) stating Skills Center and CTE educational staff associates (ESA) will be increased by 0.53. ESAs include school nurses, guidance counselors, school psychologists, librarians and other similar positions.

The total cost of these three enhancements is $96.5 million. $200,000 of the previous instructional hour appropriation will be available to address the CTE course-equivalency.

The Ways & Means Committee also adjusted the bill’s language regarding the 1,000/1,080 district-wide averaging. The new language specifically clarifies that the grades 1–8 1,000 hours requirement and the grades 9–12 1,080 hours requirement can be averaged district-wide, grades 1–12. This results in an average of approximately 1,027 hours per grade. The sponsors’ intent was clear, but the original language was less-than-clear. Hopefully, this addresses the problem.

On Thursday evening, the bill was moved to the Senate floor for final action. Prior to debate, an amendment was adopted (making the bill Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6552).
The amendment is a purely technical change that corrects a drafting error in the version of the bill adopted by Ways & Means.

In final debate, the words of school district superintendents echoed on the Senate floor. Sponsors of the bill, Senators Christine Rolfes (D-Bainbridge Island) and Bruce Dammeier (R-Puyallup) clearly relayed to their colleagues that school district leaders asked for this relief and the proposed legislation provides the flexibility to school districts to implement an adjustment to instructional hours and a phase-in of a 24-credit diploma. Rolfes specifically said the bill “targets investments to increase student achievement, not just student seat-time.” Dammeier noted that passage of this bill was an example of the correct role for the state in education: establishing the “what” (24-credits), but allowing school districts to determine the “how” (instructional hours), and providing flexibility to implement. The amended bill was adopted with a vote of 45–4 and advances to the House for action.

Passage of this bill by the full Senate was never in doubt; however, there are major obstacles to passage in the House. Our main argument has been that the current requirement would result in only a few minutes being added onto each class period and would not result in a meaningful increase in student achievement. This concern, coupled with the suggestion that allowing the use of funding to begin implementation of the 24-credit requirement would positively impact student achievement, worked in the Senate. In fact, it worked so well, similar language has been embedded in the intent section of E2SSB 6552. We trust the argument will also be saleable in the House. We encourage you to maintain contact with your Representatives and urge them to support this bill.

One final note: There have been concerns raised that restructuring the 1,080 instructional hour requirement will be an amendment to 2009’s HB 2261 and a redefinition of basic education—which could blow the door open to additional adjustments to that bill (and basic education) and the accompanying new education funding structure. We have argued that SB 6552 does not eliminate the 1,080 instructional hour requirement, it simply delays the implementation and allows for a more flexible implementation. So, this would arguably be a technical change to HB 2261, but it should not be considered an overt redefinition of basic education.

TPEP/Federal Waiver Update

Last year, the US Department of Education designated Washington’s No Child Left Behind waiver as “high risk” and directed Washington to require the use of federally required state test scores as one of the measures of student growth in Washington’s teacher and principal evaluation. Coming into the 2014 Legislative Session, it was clear amendments to the Teacher/Principal Evaluation Project would be one of the hot education issues to be addressed.

On Day 3 of this session, the Senate Early Learning & K–12 Education Committee held a public hearing on three separate waiver-related bills. Each bill would make a change in TPEP to ensure Washington would not lose its federal NCLB waiver. Each bill took a different approach, however. SB 6055, request legislation from Superintendent Dorn, contained waiver language stating “student growth data elements must include state-based tools” when relevant. Additionally, the bill includes an implementation delay. It states, “evaluation results must be used as one of multiple factors in making human resource or personnel decisions,” but delays that requirement from the 2015–16 school year until the 2016–17 school year. The bill was heard, but died lacking any further action.

A second bill, SB 5960, included necessary waiver language requiring that “one of the multiple measures of student growth must be the student results on the relevant assessment” (reading/language arts or mathematics). Additionally, OSPI would have been directed to provide school districts with relevant state-level assessment information to determine student growth. This bill was also heard, but died lacking any further action.
A third bill, **SB 5246**, introduced last session, would require “one of the multiple measures of student growth must be student results on the relevant assessment” (reading/language arts or mathematics). The bill would also dictate that any rules adopted by OSPI regarding student growth goals “must assume a goal that students will achieve one year of student growth in a given academic year.” The original bill further specified that: (1) student growth data “must be weighted such that it consists of 50 percent of the summative performance” of teachers and principals for at least three of the evaluation criteria; and (2) “seniority must not be weighted more than 10 percent” when making human resource or personnel decisions.

During the second week of session, an amended SB 5246 was adopted by the Committee. The adopted bill amends the language regarding the weighting of student growth data and seniority. The amended bill requires student growth data to be used to create a rank ordering of teachers and principals based on the amount of student growth achieved. The bottom quartile of teachers and principals must be identified by districts as requiring additional support. Additionally, seniority may only be used as a tie-breaking factor when making human resource or personnel decisions.

In final debate before the bill was adopted by the Committee, minority members of the Committee noted one of their priorities this session was to ensure that Washington kept its federal waiver. They voted against SB 5246, however, because they were concerned that the language beyond that which was required by the US Department of Education muddies the water in Olympia. Senator Mark Mullet (D-Issaquah) noted his belief that, had the Committee adopted a bill with only language that adjusted Washington’s evaluation system to satisfy the federal government, the bill would have been adopted unanimously by the Committee, would have been fast-tracked through the full Senate and would have been quickly adopted in the House. He expressed his concern that by adding additional (and controversial) elements, the bill will be dragged down and, it will have difficulty in the House—potentially jeopardizing Washington’s waiver.

Well, the bill did have a split vote in the Committee, but the full Senate has not yet acted on the bill. It has been on the Senate Floor Calendar since January 21; however, there has been no sign of imminent action. Senator Steve Litzow (R-Mercer Island), the bill’s sponsor and the Chair of the Senate Early Learning & K–12 Education Committee, has been scrambling in the Senate to garner support and has been unable to cobble together the necessary 25 votes for passage. The word is the 24 Senate Democrats have locked up against the bill and, while the Senate Majority Coalition Caucus has 26 votes, its members are split on the issue. The main concern, as addressed in Committee debate, is the additional “baggage” contained in the bill beyond the language necessary to secure the state’s waiver.

It is unclear what will happen with the bill, although in recent days there has been talk that Sen. Litzow will relent and strike the language regarding rank ordering of employees. If that occurs, the Senate will likely move the bill. The bill’s prospects in the House continue to remain in doubt, however. Concerns remain that House Democrat leadership believe the US Department of Education is bluffing and will not repeal our waiver. If House leaders truly believe this, they may just sit on the bill. It is possible this could become an “end-game” issue, as well, being used as a bargaining chip for various potential issues, including an educator COLA. To be continued….

**Budget(s) Update**

**Operating Budget**

There is still little discussion regarding a 2014 Supplemental Operating Budget. As recently as last week, Senator Andy Hill (R-Redmond), Chair of the Senate Ways & Means Committee, has been quoted as saying there is no need for a budget this year. The Senate, however, continues to adopt bills with fiscal impacts which may indicate some type of budget could be in the works.
The Economic & Revenue Forecast Council meets next week, February 19, to adopt its update of the state’s revenue forecast. Recent tax collections indicate the forecast should be positive; however, even the most optimistic observers are not expecting a huge projected upswing in revenues. Predictions range between about $50–150 million above the previous forecast, adopted in November. Assuming the higher prediction, the state’s Unrestricted Revenue Balance would hover around $360 million—not much additional cash to play with.

Comments following the forecast update should give us an indication if a budget may be forthcoming. It is the Senate’s “turn” to initiate the budget process. If they intend on releasing a proposal, it should be released shortly after next week’s forecast; however, they may stall, even if they do plan on moving a budget. The real question is whether the House will submit its own budget plan if the Senate balks—or stalls.

**Capital Budget**

The state’s debt capacity is fairly limited, so the adoption of a 2014 Supplemental Capital Construction Budget also remains in doubt—and any potential budget would be relatively small. We continue to hear rumblings about a construction package in response the Supreme Court’s January 9 McCleary Order. The Court clearly articulated that enhanced funding of all-day kindergarten and class size reduction is essential, but “the state must account for the actual costs to schools of providing these components of basic education,” noting that the duty to amply fund education “must be borne by the state, not local districts.” The Court cited estimates from OSPI’s 2013 Facilities Capacity Report which call for additional capital expenditures of approximately $105 million for all-day kindergarten and $599 million for K–3 class-size reduction.

Legislation to secure approximately $700 million for school construction and drive the funding specifically for class-size reduction and all-day kindergarten continues to be discussed. Options to raise the necessary revenue outside the debt limit continue to be explored and potentially creative ways to drive the money to school districts continue to be reviewed.

**Transportation Budget**

Discussions about the Transportation Budget are a bit different than the Operating or Capital Budget. One major difference is that if a Transportation Budget were to be adopted, it would not be a Supplemental Budget, as the Legislature was unable to adopt a full, 2013–15 Transportation Budget. Last session, they adopted a “skinny” budget, which mostly provided for reappropriations, and few new projects. Legislators worked throughout the session—and the special sessions—attempting to craft a compromise budget that could be adopted, but an agreed-upon budget never came together. Transportation leaders continued to meet through the interim and there were high hopes that a package could be completed before Thanksgiving. If that happened, Governor Inslee was prepared to call a special session. Agreement never came and a possible special session was hoped to be called before Christmas. Again, that deadline passed and discussion ensued about a special session just prior to the regular session. No dice.

Last session, the House was able to adopt a Transportation Budget (albeit very late in the game), but the Senate refused to act on it. Since before this session started, the House Democrats, along with Governor Inslee, have pressed the Senate to act on a budget first, so the House, which had previous adopted a plan could respond. For the last few weeks, Senator Curtis King (R-Yakima), Co-Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee has said the Senate Majority Coalition Caucus was working on a plan and would release it “soon.” Each time a potential deadline was set, it would be moved. At one point King said that a package would not be released until after the 2014 session was over and suggested that the package could be adopted in a lame-duck special session after the November election. Ultimately, that plan was scrapped.
Yesterday, the Senate Majority Coalition Caucus finally unveiled its proposed Transportation Budget—and funding package. It would support $12 billion worth of projects and is dependent on a 11.5 cent increase in the state gas tax.

So, what does the Transportation Budget have to do with K–12 education? Not much directly (except for minor school-related funding, such as Safe Walking Conditions). There are, however, potentially major indirect impacts. For example, the Majority Coalition’s support for the revenue and spending package is dependent on a series of major changes. No surprise, they call these changes “reforms.” (Their mantra for transportation is “reform before revenue.” Sound familiar? You do have to give them credit for staying on message.) One key change is a proposed transfer of sales tax revenue on road projects from the General Fund to a new fund for future road projects, called the Connecting Washington Account. This shift and other proposed fund shifts could have a tremendous impact on the General Fund—directly impacting the amount of available revenue for K–12 and other non-transportation programs.

Revenue-raising options are also impacted. A significant increase in the state gas tax, whether it be adopted by the Legislature or sent to the voters for their approval, could greatly reduce the public’s willingness to accept future revenue increases—which likely will be needed for the state to meet its McCleary funding obligations without decimating other state services.

McCleary Bits & Pieces

Although there have been no real plans to specifically address McCleary or the Supreme Court’s January 9 Order (other then Superintendent Dorn’s budget request or Governor Inslee’s proposed $200 million K–12 investment), the education funding case continues to be a topic of conversation (we regularly invoke McCleary in testimony)—and an excuse to support or oppose various causes. For example, Senate and House Democrat transportation leaders complained about the Senate Majority Coalition Caucus transportation proposal, in part, because it relies on multiple fund shifts which would take money away from education and will impact the ability to comply with McCleary.

Redefining Basic Education

Earlier this week, Senator Michael Baumgartner (R-Spokane) introduced SB 6563 to provide a “more thoughtful definition of basic education.” His plan, dubbed the “3-2-1 Plan,” would de-emphasize class-size reduction in grades 2 and 3, while increasing the emphasis on supporting students in pre-schools and college. Specifically, the bill would: triple early-learning funding by 2018 (the “3”); cut higher education tuition at state colleges and universities by half (the “2”); and focus on reducing class sizes in first grade (the “1”) and kindergarten. The lost revenue from the tuition cut would be backfilled with projected revenue increases and marijuana sales tax income. Eliminating the requirement for class size reduction in grades 2 and 3 would “save” over $600 million in the 2017–19 biennia, which would be redirected toward high-poverty schools and rewarding the state’s top teachers with a two-year, $100,000 annual salary grant.

Baumgartner says his bill is “not a reduction in education funding compared to 2009’s HB 2261, upon which the state Supreme Court’s decision is based. It’s just a smarter, more thoughtful way to approach funding education in Washington.”

Baumgartner was the “thoughtful” Senator who tweeted the message: “My proposed response to the state Supreme Court’s absurd budget demand” linked with a picture of a hammer and a bag of sand—a not-so-subtle jab that they can “go pound sand.”

Local Education Funding

A major tenet of the Doran decision (1977) and the McCleary decision is that local school districts should not be forced to overly rely on local levy funding. One of the purposes behind HB 2261 was to reform the state’s basic education funding, move to fully fund the system and relieve school districts from their overreliance on levies. HB 2261 established several work groups to provide the Legislature with information and guidance regarding major
components of education funding. One of the subject areas was local funding of education, which was reviewed by the Levy and Local Effort Assistance Technical Working Group. This group was to develop options for a new system of K–12 supplemental funding through local school district levies and local effort assistance. They wrestled with levy lids, grandfathered levy lids, uses of levies, the purpose and uses of Local Effort Assistance and surrounding issues. Apparently their work just wasn’t good enough.

**SB 6499** has been introduced to rehash the same issues. This time, however, the newly established Joint Task Force on Local Education Financing Reform would be comprised of eight legislators, with no assistance from education representatives. The governor and the state superintendent would be ex-officio, non-voting members of the Task Force. The Task force would be required to fast-track a report (by December 1, 2014) with recommended approaches to address “identified equity issues and provide a system for state and local funds that are distributed in an equitable manner.”

The Task Force would have to review the work of the Levy and Local Effort Assistance Technical Working Group, the Compensation Technical Working Group (added in Committee), other relevant studies, the use of local levies by school districts, and equity issues related to various aspects of the local levy process.

The bill was heard and adopted by the Senate Early Learning & K–12 Education Committee and the Senate Ways & Means Committee. It awaits action by the full Senate.

**Education Investment Review**

The Supreme Court’s McCleary decision declared that the state is not meeting its constitutional obligation to amply fund basic education. In simple terms, the Court has told the Legislature to fully implement and fund its promised reforms, established in HB 2261 and HB 2776. These are bills that were fully vetted and adopted by the Legislature and they were used as a defense in court as evidence that the state was on its way to fully funding basic education.

Even though these bills were developed following the Washington Learns study and the review by the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance, some legislators believe there is a better way. SB 6555 was introduced to review legislative investments in education to ensure those investments are providing better educational outcomes. The bill would require the Washington State Institute of Public Policy to review, on an ongoing basis, state investments in the educational system to identify the investments that result in the most effective and evidenced-based practices. Funding provided in the 2013–15 Budget would be the focus of the initial analysis.

Determining a return on investment seems appropriate; however, this bill is very concerning. First, the Institute, while a well-respected organization, is not built for this kind of analysis. They simply do not do this kind of research; they perform a meta-analysis of other research studies. Second, K–12 education is a complex system with multiple moving parts and innumerable variables. Focusing in on one specific investment without viewing the overall system will provide skewed information. Additionally, while the overall system is underfunded, it will be difficult to determine if one particular investment is effective or not.

If this bill passes (it was heard and adopted in the Senate Early Learning & K–12 Education and Ways & Means Committees and awaits action by the full Senate), a major concern is that legislators will use this kind of unreliable “evidence” to unravel HB 2261.

**Implementation Plan Pending?**

The Supreme Court’s January 9 McCleary Order directs the state to “submit, by April 30, 2014, a complete plan for fully implementing its program of basic education for each school year between now and the 2017–18 school year.” The plan must also include “a phase-in schedule for fully funding each of the components of basic education.” Last week, we reported that we had heard rumblings of legislator appointments to a 5-corners (four political caucuses and governor’s office) committee who would be meeting to review an implementation plan.
Well, apparently Governor Inslee HAS invited legislators to meet with him about McCleary, however, there currently is no formal “committee” and no current plans to regularly meet.

**Legislator Town Hall Day**

The Legislature has set aside Saturday, February 22, as Town Hall Day. Many legislators are scheduling meetings in-district to discuss progress of the session to address constituent concerns. We are trying to track down a single-source list of scheduled meetings and will provide that next week, if one is available. Until then you are encouraged to mark this down on your calendar and attend one of these meetings if you are able. Town Halls are a great opportunity to remind legislators, on your own turf, of your concerns, needs and priorities. They will be hearing about a whole range of issues and it would be a shame if they don’t hear from educators, too.

**This Week in Review**

With action moving to the House and Senate chambers this week, there has been a flurry of activity as legislators move through lengthy Floor Calendars to adopt priority bills before next Tuesday’s house of origin cut-off deadline. For up-to-date status of the bills WASA is tracking, please review our Bill Watch located at the end of this and every TWIO.

In addition to all the floor action, the House Education Committee also held a public hearing on a series of bills. This hearing, held on Thursday, came after the house of origin policy committee deadline, so each bill is technically dead. These bills essentially received a “courtesy” hearing and likely will not be advanced. The issues, however, will get a jump-start on the process for next session. The following bills were heard:

- **HCR 4216/HB 2441** – This constitutional amendment, and its accompanying necessary statutory changes, would authorize the simple majority approval of school district bond issues. After a 30 year fight for the simple majority approval of school district levies, the focus has now shifted to construction bonds. As we move closer to full implementation of HB 2261, which requires all-day kindergarten and a dramatic decrease in K–3 class sizes, and the state moves closer to authorizing the State Board’s 24-credit framework, which requires additional lab classes, the need for additional facility space is nearing a crisis point. Passage of this constitutional amendment would assist local voters to approve bond issues—allowing those schools to access state assistance—and modernize, expand or build school buildings to address growing facility needs.

- **HB 2319** – This bill would allow school districts to publish notice of certain activities on a public website maintained by the school district, instead of in a newspaper of general circulation. School districts must provide public notice of various meetings and additional activities, including: rentals, leases or sales of certain surplus property. Allowing school districts to provide notice using technology would be more efficient and would provide broader and more easily accessible notice that via newspapers, which have limited delivery areas and have a dwindling readership.

- **HB 2291** – This bill would adjust the current process for transferring school district territory between districts. Introduced to address an ongoing boundary dispute between Ridgefield and La Center School Districts (although it would impact all school districts), the bill would maintain the current citizen-initiated petition process, but would change the process for transfers initiated by school boards. It would provide that changes in school district boundaries may only be initiated through a written agreement signed by a majority of the school board members of each of the affected school districts, rather than by a petition signed by a majority of school board members in one of the districts.

- **HB 2560** – This bill addresses school libraries and librarians. It would: change the name of the School Library Media Program to the School Library Information and
Technology Program; require school boards to provide the resources and materials necessary for the proper education of students as provided in the prototypical school model; and redefine teacher-librarians as certificated teachers, rather than as certified teachers, and requires them to collaborate with their schools in accomplishing certain goals. We expressed our concerns that the adjustments contained in this bill may dictate to local school districts how to spend the allocations provided by the state. HB 2261 and HB 2776 redesigned the education funding system and established new funding formulas. The bills clearly state, however, that (except in limited specific circumstances) the formulas are for “allocation purposes only.” The formulas are established to drive dollars out to districts, not to dictate how districts spend those funds. We were assured by the prime sponsor, by committee staff and proponents of the bill that there is no “mandate” in the bill. We’ll continue to watch closely. Although this bill is technically dead and is not expected to move, its Senate companion, SB 6105, has been adopted by the full Senate and has been referred to the House Education Committee.

AEA

By Mitch Denning

On Monday, AEA testified in Senate Ways & Means in support of SB 6552, modifying instructional hours and high school graduation requirements. We thanked Senators Dammeier and Rolfes for working through this complex issue, and reaching an agreement that would allow districts to continue this year to implement the 1,080 requirement, but would move the $97 million allocated in the 2013–15 Operating Budget to school districts in the prototypical school funding model through MSOC and guidance counselors. We also appreciate the extension of the 1,080 hour requirement to the 2015–16 school year, as well as the recognition that the last five school days for seniors would be counted as instructional time. Then last night, the Senate passed the bill, 45–4, and it’s on its way to the House.

Yesterday the House overwhelmingly passed HB 2410, by a vote of 91–7. Now going to the Senate, the bill would create a competitive kitchen equipment grant program to enhance school nutrition, known as the Apple a Day Program. WSNA leadership is pleased that the bill has passed the House, and will continue to advocate for its passage. OSPI would administrate the grant program with funds from within the $1.5 million grant.

Yesterday in House Education, we testified in support of HB 2441 and HJR 4216, which would provide for a Constitutional amendment, if passed by 2/3 of both houses. The measure would give voters the opportunity to decide if they wish school bond issues to pass by a simple majority, similar to school levies.

Finally, also in House Education yesterday, we testified in support of HB 2319, which would give school districts the option of advertising board meetings and other specified district level meetings on the district’s website instead of in a newspaper of general circulation.

All three bills are heard after the first committee cutoff, so we’ll be watching to see if these bills will move.

WSNA legislative leaders testified this week in opposition to HB 2536 and SB 6444, breakfast after the bell. Although the Senate version was changed to add a $100,000 appropriation to fund OSPI staff to do the legwork on the bill’s implementation, we still view the mandating of breakfast after the bell in high need schools beginning in the 2016–17 school year as the wrong approach to increasing the number of students eating breakfast. HB 2536 is in House Rules and may or may not be brought to the floor for debate and voting by the February 18 deadline. Meanwhile, SB 6444 did not move out of Senate Ways & Means on Tuesday. Senator Hargrove offered an amendment that would encourage rather than mandate breakfast after the bell in high need schools, but the committee took no action prior to the Tuesday night fiscal committee deadline.
Pensions/Health Benefits
By Fred Yancey/Scott Nelson – The Nexus Group

As reported earlier in the TWIO, action has now moved to the floor of both chambers. Policy bills that did not make the cut-off date are technically dead, although any that are deemed necessary to implement the budget can remain in play until the Session’s end.

Two bills dealing with pensions are worthy of note.

SB 5851, (Creating a defined benefit plan for public employees) passed the Senate last Session, (25/24). It has been pulled by the Rules Committee and moved directly to the Senate, awaiting action.

This bill, sponsored by Senator Barbara Bailey (R), proposes the addition of an additional pension option for future employees. “Plan 4” would give a new employee the choice of a defined benefit savings account similar to a 401K. This is in contrast to present pension systems which offer either a defined benefit (DB), Plan 2, or a hybrid pension plan that has a DB and a DC mix, Plan 3. If an employee makes no choice, the default plan will continue to be Plan 3. The bill would apply to all new hires after July 1, 2015.

Stating that legislators should lead in the transition, SB 6305, (Creating a defined contribution retirement plan option for elected officials), was moved to Senate Rules. Judges and justices would be exempt, as would members of PERS who are over 50 when elected. If passed, this bill would apply to anyone elected after July 1, 2016. As the prime sponsor, Senator Braun stated, “If it’s good enough for public employees, it should be good enough for us, too.”

These bills can be brought to the floor at any time. However, they are not likely to pass the House. However, they indicate a desire by the Senate Republicans to continue their assault on the defined benefit pension model.

The question members of WASA and AWSP need to ask themselves is: “Does the pension benefit help attract and retain quality employees?” The answer will determine how to respond.
Committee Meeting Schedule

Legislative Committees Meetings are scheduled to be held at the following times but are subject to change.

Up-to-date meeting schedules and agendas are available on the State Legislature website.

Mondays
1:30–3:25 p.m.
Senate Early Learning & K–12 Education
Senate Hearing Room 4

House Education
House Hearing Room 4

3:30–5:30 p.m.
House Appropriations
House Hearing Room A

Senate Ways & Means
Senate Hearing Room 4

Tuesdays
1:30–3:25 p.m.
House Education
House Hearing Room A

3:30–5:30 p.m.
House Appropriations
House Hearing Room A

Senate Ways & Means
Senate Hearing Room 4

Wednesdays
1:30–3:25 a.m.
Senate Early Learning & K–12 Education
Senate Hearing Room 4

3:30–5:30 p.m.
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education
House Hearing Room A

Senate Ways & Means
Senate Hearing Room 4

Thursdays
8–9:55 a.m.
House Education
House Hearing Room A

3:30–5:30 p.m.
House Appropriations
House Hearing Room A

Senate Ways & Means
Senate Hearing Room 4

Fridays
8:00–9:25 a.m.
Senate Early Learning & K–12 Education
Senate Hearing Room 4

Useful Links

Washington State Government
http://www.access.wa.gov

State Legislature
http://www.leg.wa.gov

Senate
http://www.leg.wa.gov/Senate

House of Representatives
http://www.leg.wa.gov/House

Legislative Committees

Legislative Schedules
http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/pages/calendar.aspx

Office of the Governor
http://www.governor.wa.gov

OSPI
http://www.k12.wa.us

TVW
http://www.tvw.org

Session Cutoff Calendar

January 13, 2014
First Day of Session.

February 7, 2014
Last day to read in committee reports in house of origin, except House fiscal, Senate Ways & Means, and Transportation committees.

February 11, 2014
Last day to read in committee reports from House fiscal, Senate Ways & Means, and Transportation committees in house of origin.

February 18, 2014
Last day to consider bills in house of origin (5 p.m.).

February 28, 2014
Last day to read in committee reports from opposite house, except House fiscal, Senate Ways & Means, and Transportation committees.

March 3, 2014
Last day to read in opposite house committee reports from House fiscal, Senate Ways & Means, and Transportation committees.

March 7, 2014*
Last day to consider opposite house bills (5 p.m.) (except initiatives and alternatives to initiatives, budgets and matters necessary to implement budgets, differences between the houses, and matters incident to the interim and closing of the session).

March 13, 2014
Last day allowed for regular session under state constitution.

*After the 54th day, only initiatives, alternatives to initiatives, budgets and matters necessary to implement budgets, messages pertaining to amendments, differences between the houses, and matters incident to the interim and closing of the session may be considered.
Bill Watch

*TWIO* tracks critical education bills each week as they are introduced. Detailed bill information can be accessed by clicking on the bill number. The following is a list of bills of highest interest to school administrators that remain alive—or may be considered “necessary to implement the budget.” Bills that were previously on this list, but are now technically dead, have been moved to our comprehensive bill watch list that is located on the WASA website.

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HB 2063 Establishing an education investment tax credit.  

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S Health Care Becker

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2SSB 6538 Concerning early education for children involved in the child welfare system.  S Rules 2  Rivers
SB 6546 Restoring resources to the capital budget.  S Ways & Means  Rivers
2SSB 6552 Improving student success by modifying instructional hour and graduation requirements.  S 2nd Reading  Rolfes
SB 6555 Requiring the Washington institute for public policy to conduct systematic reviews of investments in education.  S Rules 2  Litzow
SB 6563 Concerning basic education.  S Ways & Means  Baumgartner
SJR 8214 Amending the state Constitution to state that the Governor is subject to public records requests.  S Govt Ops  Roach