

March 14, 2008

Welcome to the 9th edition of the Grassroots Connection for the 2008 Legislative Session! 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 Thursday evening marked the end of this legislative session. However, the legislation process is not over until the Governor acts on those bills forwarded to her desk. She has 20 days, excluding Sundays to consider whether to sign, veto, or partially veto the bills. (If she does nothing, they automatically go into effect after the 5th.) The legislature can override vetoes, but it would require a special session to do so and is highly unlikely.

This report will cover the following two areas:

1. K-12 Highlights of the Supplemental Budget passed by both the House and Senate, but subject to final approval of the Governor. She can veto sections of the budget.
2. Bills we have been following closely that have been forwarded to the Governor for signature.

A follow up final report will include a larger look at bills that have passed as well as interim work to be done, budget projections for next session, the political picture etc. Stay tuned...

K-12 Highlights of the 2008 Supplemental Operating Budget passed on Wednesday

When comparing the final budget proposal with the two initial proposals, it is evident that disagreements were often handled through compromise. Note this pattern below.

. Salaries - The House proposed a 1% COLA (beyond the I-732 COLA) for educators; the Senate did not include this funding in its budget. The final budget splits the difference and provides a 0.5% COLA to educators.

. Extended Learning Opportunities - The Senate proposed an increase (\$26.9 million) for extended learning programs (including a significant increase in the Learning Assistance Program). The House provided an increase in LAP (\$1.6 million), but nothing else. The final budget includes \$17.9 million for a LAP enhancement. This funding is for both SHB 2810 (districts with high numbers of ELL kids) and 2SSB 6673 (extended learning for those not on track to graduate).

. Classified Staff Ratio - The Senate wanted to reduce the current classified staff ratio of 1 per 59 students to 1 per 58 students (\$12.5 million). The House did not include this funding. The final budget provides \$3.1 million to lower the classified staff ratio to 1 per 58.75 students.

. School Librarians - The Senate proposed \$11.7 million to enhance school library materials and services, while the House declined to include any funding. The final budget provides \$4.0 million, providing an allocation of approximately \$4 per student for library enhancements.

. Career and Technical Education - Both the House and Senate proposals included \$3.0 million for enhancements to career and technical programs. The final budget lowers that enhancement to \$2.8 million.

. Levy Equalization - Both houses adopted budgets increasing the "per pupil inflator" by 6 percent in the 2008-09 school year. The final budget includes the same funding (\$1.9 million) to increase state funding for Local Effort Assistance (LEA or levy equalization) as a result of the change in the per pupil inflator.

. OSPI Technology - The original House and Senate budgets included funding to update OSPI's apportionment system. The final budget provides \$1.8 million as proposed by both houses.

. End of Course Assessments - Neither original budget included funding for End of Course Assessments; however, legislation has been adopted requiring the development of the assessments in math. The final budget includes \$3.2 million to accomplish this.

. Non-Employee Related Costs - While the House budget included a NERC enhancement of \$13.1 million, the Senate did not include any new funding. The final budget includes \$6.5 million in additional NERC funding.

. WASL - Both the House and Senate proposals included \$25.4 million to renew OSPI's expiring assessment contract. Both proposals also included \$12.4 million in "savings" due to required changes to the WASL (specifically the reduction of "open-ended" questions and the increase in multiple choice questions). There was a minor difference in expected contract savings between the houses, however. The final budget includes an increase of \$16.6 million for WASL-related items (including \$3.2 million for End of Course Assessments addressed above). As the Senate proposed, however, the final budget transfers much of this funding to the Office of Financial Management (OFM). In order to release funding to OSPI, OFM will be required to conduct quarterly evaluations to ensure OSPI is meeting legislative requirements. Additionally, a legislative WASL workgroup is established to review and evaluate the state's assessment system and make recommendations to improve it.

. Full-day Kindergarten - The House proposed to "save" \$8.0 million by freezing the expansion of full-day kindergarten. The Senate proposal and the final budget maintain the funding provided in the underlying budget to phase-in full-day kindergarten to schools in the top 20 percent of poverty.

. Promoting Academic Success - While neither original budget made major changes to the PAS program, the final budget eliminates the program (saving \$19.3 million) at the end of the 2007-08 school year.

2008 Supplemental Capital Budget - Please take a look at this too!

Most of our organizational focus is on the K-12 Operating Budget. However,

the Capital Budget is very important to K-12 education as well. Here are the highlights from that budget, taken from last Thursday's WSSDA update.

The first item, which I will call "seed funding" for the development and implementation of a K-12 condition and inventory system is an important first step in determining the condition of school facilities statewide and fits with our School Construction and Renovation Issue.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee is provided with \$230,000 to develop a pilot facility condition and inventory system for K-12 public school facilities. Funding provided in the underlying budget (\$850,000) for OSPI to conduct this pilot is eliminated.

. The underlying budget provided Highline School District with \$3.5 million to deal with noise mitigation; this new budget provides an enhancement of \$1.5 million (for a total of \$5.0 million).

. Legislation to begin a "Community Schools" program was defeated this year; however, the Capital Budget provides \$4.6 million to the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development to acquire, rehabilitate, expand or improve surplus school buildings to be converted into community facilities for the delivery of nonresidential coordinated services for children and families.

. Sunnyside School District will receive \$150,000 to renovate an old building for gang prevention/rehabilitation activities.

. The underlying budget provided \$4.8 million to the Department of Ecology to school bus diesel retrofits. The Supplemental Budget increases that amount to \$5.4 million for "clean diesel school bus projects."

. As recommended by the Joint Legislative Committee on School Construction Funding, the Department of Natural Resources will receive \$30,000 to establish (with OSPI, which receives its own appropriation of \$25,000) a work group to analyze the feasibility of and develop options for using existing state lands in high growth areas of the state for potential future school sites.

. OSPI will receive funding for a series of projects:

- * \$1.2 million is provided for a new facility at Aviation High School.
- * \$2 million is provided for the Greenbridge Early Learning Center - a center for the Thrive-by-Five program within the Puget Sound ESD.
- * \$100,000 is provided for the East Yakima Early Learning Center.
- * \$50,000 is provided for the North Central Technical Skills Center.
- * \$75,000 is provided for a Seattle Skills Center feasibility study.
- * \$475,000 is provided for Satellite/Branch Campus Feasibility Studies regarding potential skills center satellite or branch campuses in underserved areas of Washington.
- * \$150,000 is provided to establish a work group to develop methods and options for making the current school construction assistance grant program more transparent.
- * \$1.1 million is provided to develop and implement a regional school construction technical assistance program for school districts primarily delivered through ESDs.
- * \$927,000 is provided for the Grant county/Moses Lake school district skills center.

- * \$550,000 is provided for the Northeast King County Skills Center.
- * \$3.1 million is provided for the Pierce County Skills Center.
- * \$150,000 is provided to contract for an evaluation of the accuracy and reliability of the current method used for forecasting school district enrollment for determining eligibility for the school assistance program.

Bills related to our top priority issues which were delivered to the Governor:

1. K-12 Education Funding -
<<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2008&bill=6879>> SSB 6879
- Regarding setting a Dec. 1 completion date for the work of the Basic Education Finance task force. Bill delivered to the Governor for signature. Action alert in support of this bill has been posted to the WSPTA website. Go to <<http://capwiz.com/npta2/wa/home/>> <http://capwiz.com/npta2/wa/home/>
2. Math and Science Education - 2SHB
<<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2008&bill=2598>> 2598 -
Regarding development of an online mathematics curriculum. Bill delivered to the Governor. (Follow link to see final reconciliation of amendments.)
3. Quality Teaching - SHB 2775 which would add an additional bonus for Nationally Board certified teachers who teach in high poverty areas - The bill died, but \$577,000 (approx. half of what the House had proposed) has been written into the final budget reconciliation. That means that this will receive funding.
4. Student Support Services -
<<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2008&bill=6380>> ESSB 6380
- Enhancing school library programs. The bill died in the house. However, like the previous item, money (4 million) was included in the final budget. As you can see, there are ways to get around the need to pass a bill!
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.

Assessment System -
ESHB 3166 concerning the redesign of the WASL and end of course assessments. Delivered to the Governor for signature. Action alert in support of this bill has been posted to the WSPTA website. Go to
<<http://capwiz.com/npta2/wa/home/>> <http://capwiz.com/npta2/wa/home/>

It directs 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 -
<<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2008&bill=2523>> 2SHB 2523
- Creating the position of world language supervisor in the office of the

superintendent of public instruction. This bill died, but again funding was provided in the budget. (\$136,000)

Education Reform -

<<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2008&bill=2810>> SHB 2810
- Enhancing resources and assistance in school districts with concentrations of English language learners. Senate Ways and Means. This bill died, but many of its provisions were added to E2SSB 6673 below. These bills were essentially combined.

ESSB 6673 creating extended learning opportunities and instructional support for English language learners, low-income students, and students with learning disabilities. (17.9 million allocated in the budget) 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. Delivered to the Governor. Action alert in support of this bill has been posted to the WSPTA website. Go to <<http://capwiz.com/npta2/wa/home/>>
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Foster Kids -

<<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2008&bill=2679>> SHB 2679
- Creating programs to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care. Delivered to the Governor.

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