

WSSC 2014 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Parents—the first and most important educators—have a fundamental right to choose the education best suited to the needs of their children, including public, private, and religious schools. Government, through such means as tax credits and publicly funded scholarships, should help provide resources for parents, especially those of modest means, to exercise this basic right without discrimination. Students in all educational settings should have opportunities for moral and character formation. - Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2011

The 2014 Legislature considered a number of K-12 and early learning/child care bills in their 60-day session. Notable bills for K-12 include high school graduation requirements, alternative learning programs, and career and technical education after heavy criticism about legislators assuming all students would be going to college. For early learning, notable bills included those on child care facilities and improving quality across the system. In addition, lawmakers approved a \$58 million increase in K-12 funding and a \$30 million increase in early learning funding.

K-12 Schools

Modifying Instructional Hour and Graduation Requirements - Senate Bill 6552: In 2014 the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted revisions to its 24 credit graduation requirement framework originally adopted in 2010, but not implemented. **SB 6552** authorizes SBE to implement the 24 credit graduation framework statewide, beginning with the class of 2019. The new requirements are designed to help prepare students for college or career. The current proposal differs from the requirements for the class of 2016 by requiring an additional credit in lab science and the arts, and two additional credits in world languages. One of the arts credits and both world languages credits may be substituted with personal pathway requirements.

The bill also restructures the instructional hours requirement by mandating that 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. Kindergarten hours remain unchanged. The implementation of the increase in instructional hours is delayed one year, until the 2015-2016 school year.

SB 6552 provides school districts with flexibility around meeting the increased 1,080 instructional hour requirement to focus on implementation of the new diploma. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will adopt career and technical education course equivalencies, allowing more students to take courses that can count as math and science credits. It also allows school districts to apply for a waiver through SBE to delay implementation of the 24 credit graduation framework, for the class of 2020 or 2021. The bill was signed by the Governor on April 3rd.

Delivery of Medication and Services - Senate Bill 6128: The Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission is the regulatory agency in Washington for the practice of nursing. Over the last several years as the needs of students have grown, concerns have been raised about the delivery of medication and services in schools. In the past a number of statutory changes were made to meet specific needs of students, such as for the management of diabetes, or care for asthma symptoms. **SB 6128**, signed by the Governor, allows school employees who are not nurses, but who are asked to administer medications or perform nursing services, to file a voluntary written, current, and unexpired letter of intent stating their willingness to administer any medication or perform a nursing service. The bill requires districts to designate a health professional to consult and coordinate with a student's parents and health care provider regarding medications or services to be delivered at school. The health professional must provide training

and supervise school district personnel in proper and current procedures to deliver the medication or nursing service. WSCC raised concerns about the bill's impact on private schools, and it was amended to remove references to private schools.

Improving Educational Outcomes for Homeless Students – Senate Bill 6074: Homeless students across the state number 30,609, a 12 percent increase from the previous year. Federal legislation requires school districts to identify homeless students and provide them with support. **SB 6074** requires OSPI to report to the Governor and legislature the number of homeless students, the number of students participating in the Learning Assistance Program, the Highly Capable Program, the Running Start Program, educational outcomes, including test scores, graduation rates, drop-out and truancy rates. OSPI will collaborate with community experts, such as Catholic Charities on homelessness and homeless education policy, and distribute information on training to each school district. In the packets distributed to students and families at the beginning of the school year or at enrollment, school districts must provide information about services and supports. The bill was signed by the Governor.

Expanded Learning Opportunities/Summer Learning Loss - Senate Bill 6163: SB 6163 creates the Expanded Learning Opportunities Council to research and provide recommendations for reducing summer learning loss. Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs) are school-based programs and programs offered by community based organizations in partnership with schools that provide extended learning and enriching experiences beyond the traditional school day or calendar. To combat summer learning loss and close educational opportunity gaps, the bill creates a Summer Knowledge Improvement Program (SKIP) to provide state funding for 20 additional student learning days in up to 10 low-income elementary schools. The Council will monitor progress, serve as a resource, and oversee an evaluation of SKIP. The bill was signed by the Governor on April 3rd.

Paraeducator Development - Senate Bill 6129: Paraeducators are instructional aides that provide classroom support and assistance. In Washington, the majority of paraeducators work in special education programs. **SB 6129**, signed by the Governor, directs the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to convene a work group to develop program specific standards for paraeducators, recommend professional development, develop a career ladder, and design an articulated pathway for teacher preparation from paraeducator certificates through teacher certification. The bill also requires community and technical college apprenticeship and certificate programs for paraeducators to offer transferrable course credits beginning in 2015-16. PESB's final report is due January 10, 2016.

Seal of Biliteracy - Senate Bill 6424: With the Governor's signature, **SB 6424** established the State of Washington Seal of Biliteracy to recognize public high school graduates who have achieved a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading and writing in one or more world languages in addition to English. The standardized high school transcript may note that the student has earned the Seal of Biliteracy. **SB 6424** is awaiting the Governor's signature.

Schools and Youth Suicide Prevention – Senate Bill 6431: In 2013, legislation passed requiring all school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses to complete a training program in youth suicide screening and referral as a condition of certification. The law also required school districts to adopt plans for recognition, initial screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in students. **SB 6431**, signed by the Governor, takes the work to prevent youth suicide a step further by requiring OSPI to work with state agencies and community partners to assist schools in the implementation of youth suicide prevention activities. These activities may include: training for school employees, parents, community members, and students in recognizing and responding to the signs of suicide, partnering with local coalitions of community members interested in preventing youth suicide, and responding to communities determined to be in crisis after a suicide or attempted suicide to prevent further instances of

suicide. OSPI must prioritize funding appropriated for implementing youth suicide prevention activities to communities identified as the highest risk.

Early Learning Bills

Early Education for Children in the Child Welfare System – House Bill 2519: In 2012, the Children’s Administration of DSHS was directed to implement a way to work with certain families referred to or who are at risk of being referred to child protective services. This response system, called Family Assessment Response (FAR), emphasizes family engagement, family assessment, and the well-being of the family unit. FAR has been implemented in three locations and the goal is to implement it statewide by July, 2016. **HB 2519** will expand access to early learning opportunities for children in the child welfare system. The bill requires FAR workers to assess for child safety and well-being. They must discuss child care and early learning services with families and refer them to programs with a quality rating of level 3 or above in the Department of Early Learning’s (DEL) Early Achievers program, as well as making the children eligible for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). HB 2519 was signed by the Governor on March 31st.

Inspections of Child Care Facilities - House Bill 2191: Child care facilities are family day care homes, school-age care facilities, and child day care centers. Concerns have been raised about the consistency of regulations for child care facilities. **HB 2191**, signed by the Governor, mandates DEL to consult with city or county officials and receive written verification before requiring any alterations of a child care facility due to inconsistencies with requirements in the state building code. The consultation is limited to licensed child care space. While waiting for the consultation and written verification, DEL may not modify, suspend, or revoke a license unless there is imminent danger to children or staff.

Portable Background Check Cards – Senate Bill 6093: The Department of Early Learning is required by law to conduct background checks on applicants for employment in any licensed child care facility. Cleared background checks are good for three years in Washington and are portable. Since 2012, DEL has had a background check clearance registry and issues Background Check Clearance Cards. School districts also require background checks before hiring an employee who will have regularly scheduled unsupervised access to children. These background checks are good for two years. Both DEL and school districts use Washington State Patrol and Federal Bureau of Investigation record checks. **SB 6093** extends the portability of DEL background checks to certain positions in the K-12 education system, allowing the background checks to meet the requirements established by OSPI. The bill was signed by the Governor.