

Alliance for High Quality Education Legislative/System Improvements Committee

Zoom Meeting Summary
Friday, June 6, 2025
8:00 a.m.

In attendance on video conference: Executive Director Tony Podojil and Legislative Consultant William Schwartz and member representatives from 72 school districts.

Tony convened the meeting at 8:00 a.m. The primary focus of the meeting was to update Alliance members regarding the most recent legislative activity listed below:

MAJOR BILLS UNDER CONSIDERATION

HB 96 – Main Operating Budget Bill Alliance Positions

After reviewing the information presented below regarding the Senate budget proposal, the executive committee agreed that the following positions should be advanced to membership for consideration:

Of the three budget proposals related to the funding model, the Senate version provides the approach for many Alliance members.

While the property rollback language in the Senate version is a better version than the one proposed by the House, the group indicated that they would prefer a higher percentage than the 50% offered in the Senate plan and while the carve out language was beneficial, clarification regarding what can be set aside and added is still needed in order to avoid disagreements at the budget review level.

The provision to restrict the use of retirement pick up in employee contracts serves no practical purpose and should be removed.

Fair Funding Formula

The Senate budget proposal related to the funding formula included the following:

The Senate's school funding proposal completes the phase-in of the "Fair School Funding Plan" at the full guarantee, ensuring no district receives less state aid than it received in FY 21. Provides \$633.9M more in funding for education over the biennium. A working formula that maintains the structure of the "Fair School Funding Plan" but includes new considerations for positive enrollment trends and academic performance and progress.

Creates an Education Demonstration Projects fund with \$15.0M GRF. Requires the fund to issue grants for primary education-related demonstration projects and requires DEW to solicit proposals from organizations with a demonstrated record of increased student achievement or improved test results.

Cash Balance/Property Tax Rollback Provisions

The Senate budget proposal related to property taxes included the following:

Increases from 30% to 50% the threshold of carry-over balance allowed before a county budget commission must reduce a school district's property tax collections. Further, permits a district to adopt a resolution reserving an amount of carry-over balance for current or future permanent improvement expenses to be used within the next 3 years that will not count towards the 50% threshold. If not used for this purpose within 3 years, the money will be used to reduce property taxes. Also

Restores county prosecutor as member of county budget commission

Allows a county budget commission to reduce millage on any voter-approved tax levy, aside from a debt levy, if the commission finds it reasonably necessary or prudent to avoid unnecessary, excessive, or unneeded property tax collections

Requires that current emergency and substitute tax levies be included in the calculation of a school district's 20-mill floor or a joint vocational school district's 2 mill floor for property tax purposes

Makes significant reforms to property tax laws to increase transparency for voters and taxing authorities, generally beginning with elections held on or after January 1, 2026. Eliminates the following types of levies: replacement property tax levy, fixed sum emergency levy, substitute levy, and combined school district income tax and fixed-sum property tax levy. Prohibits a school district from proposing a current expense levy if it has a general fund carry-over balance over 100%.

Requires current expense levy ballot language to include the % and \$ amount of any general fund carry-over balances. Prohibits a school district or other education-related taxing authority from combining renewal levy with an increase to an existing levy and making other changes.

Requires school boards to obtain a two-thirds vote of all members to put a tax levy on the ballot.

Other Provisions

Restores language requiring DEW to adopt a universal K-3 diagnostic assessment for math and reading and removes provisions that eliminate the kindergarten readiness assessment.

Restores funding for the KRA at \$2.76M each FY • Provides additional increases to the categorical amounts for the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship, increasing state support by \$3M each FY •

Requires school boards to submit appropriations, revenue and fund balance assumptions contained in the boards' budget for that fiscal year, in addition to three-year projections of operational revenues and expenditures.

Waives qualified immunity for a school district board of education or member if the board or member knowingly instructs the superintendent to violate any provision of the law.

Eliminates the requirement for DEW to publicly release state assessment test questions.

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Removes language that adds completion of 250 hours of work-based learning experience as a foundational option to demonstrate competency, restoring current law high school graduation requirements

Restores provision requiring DEW to collect school district employment and vacancy data, extends the requirement to community and STEM schools, and requires data to be collected at the state, district and school level to the extent possible.

Modifies a provision regarding religious instruction release time to require districts to permit students at least 33 periods per school year in release time. Further specifies that districts cannot prohibit students from bringing external educational materials into school

Removes provisions authorizing school boards to contract with a transportation network company (like Uber or Lyft) to transport unaccompanied students.

Modifies the provision requiring schools to adopt a policy banning cell phone use to require cell phone use for monitoring health concern with a written statement from a student's physician. Further requires school administrators to include a protocol that addresses cell phone use during active threats or emergencies as part of their comprehensive emergency management plan.

Generally, restores provisions that revise the involuntary disposition of unused school property law but clarifies when a building is determined to be an unused facility, exempts buildings less than ten years old and requires districts to annually report certain information to DEW.

Require all public-school districts to provide evidence-based academic intervention services, free of cost, to students who demonstrate a limited level of skill in state assessments in math or English language arts. Makes other changes related to Math improvement and monitoring plans, Math curricula, instructional materials, and intervention •

Requires public schools to provide annual, age-appropriate instruction to K-12 students on the harmful effects of short-term and chronic substance use, and to include bullying and hazing in health education curriculum threshold for construction projects under the expedited

Clarifies that a student may be enrolled in a math course that is two grade levels above the student's

current grade level for purposes of automatic enrollment in advanced math placements.

Modifies the provision related to the disposal or demolition of school property to make the public auction permissive, and eliminates the requirement for community or chartered nonpublic schools to pay the school district any profit they receive from a future sale of a property previously purchased from a school district.

Restores language requiring high school graduation plans to include post-graduation career goals but does not give DEW rulemaking authority regarding the content of graduation and career plans.

RECENTLY INTRODUCED BILLS

- a. HB 264 – Limit School Publications on Ballot Issues Before an Election
- b. HB 269 – Success Sequence and Character Education Curriculum
- c. SB 190 – Omnibus Tax Reform, School Meals, and Other Provisions
- d. SB 191 – DPIA Funding for Voucher Students
- e. SB 199 – Sports Gaming Tax, Stadium Funds, and Interscholastic Support
- f. SB 203 – Cybersecurity Program for Schools and Local Governments

DEW and STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

OTHER ISSUES

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is June 27, 2025, at 10am.
The meeting adjourned at 8:57 a.m.