

A Leg Up

The Weekly Legislative Update for the Clark County School District

March 2, 2013

Following the trend established early in the session, committees continued to hold hearings about major education issues this week. On Monday and Wednesday, the Assembly Education Committee and the Senate Education Committee met jointly to consider four major education policy bills - AB161, AB 162, AB 163, and SB182. On Friday, the Joint K-12 Subcommittee met for the first hearing on the DSA – the major budget for K-12 education. The hearing rooms in Carson City were packed, and many people took advantage of the videoconferencing capability of the Sawyer Building to provide input or to simply listen to the hearings. It was good to see so many people making their voice heard on these important topics.

This Week

The Joint-Session Meetings Of The Education Committees

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25:

SB 182: Expansion of Full-day Kindergarten, was presented to the joint committees on Education before a packed room. In addition to expanding full-day kindergarten to all students, the bill also would change the funding allocation for kindergarten students to a full 1.0 equivalent (instead of the 0.6 weight currently allocated), and require mandatory attendance at age five.

During the three-hour hearing, CCSD's Deputy Superintendent Pat Skorkowsky advocated for parents of students in the middle, those who have not access to Kindergarten programs because they don't attend lower socioeconomic schools where full-day kindergarten is funded through state grants, nor do they attend tuition-based programs (known as "Pay for K"). LeNora Bredsgaurd-Brown and Richard Bryan Elementary teacher Sharla Isle presented both data related to performance of students attending full-day kindergarten in a five-year study and personal testimony related to the 118 standards which student must learn, and emphasized the additional time needed to master those standards.

Many individuals spoke in support of full-day kindergarten, including some stellar teachers whose real-life experiences were compelling, and expressed concern for English Language Learners and the importance of language acquisition and the socialization which takes place during this developmental time.

AB 163: Early Childhood Education. After the enthusiastic three-hour hearing on Full-Day Kindergarten, Chairman Elliott Anderson expedited the hearing on Early Childhood Education. Marilyn Dondero Loop presented an introduction to the bill and testimony followed by Julie Kaspar, Director of Early Childhood Education, and Early Childhood teacher Naomi Podoorsek. Carson City Superintendent Richard Stokes, Nye County Superintendent Dale Norton, and

Trustee Deanna Wright spoke in support of AB 182. Four individuals spoke in opposition to the bill.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27:

AB 161: Literacy by Third Grade. When people refer to “social promotion,” they are referencing the practice sometimes employed of moving a student from one grade to the next, regardless of whether the child has mastered the expectations of the grade level. While there are legitimate reasons why this is done, educators agree that it is far better to ensure all students achieve at grade level, which is the aim of AB 161. Of particular importance is the importance of ensuring third grade students read at grade level before they are promoted to the next grade. An oft-repeated phrase is that by third grade students must “learn to read so they can so they can read to learn.” Pat Skorkowsy provided the committee with an overview of the “Three I’s,” Instruction, Identification and Intervention, and emphasize the importance of early identification of struggling students, paired with early intervention. He also stressed the need for support with resources and professional development for teachers.

AB 162: Class Size. Wednesday's Joint Committee Meeting brought out numerous people on the issue of class size. Assembly Speaker of the House Marilyn Kirkpatrick provided an impassioned overview of AB162 which would revise provisions on class size reduction. Senator Debbie Smith followed with comments and historical context about the untenable position districts face by placing mandates without adequate funding. CCSD provided information related to class sizes in Clark County schools, which have reached an all-time high.

The Joint K-12 Subcommittee

FRIDAY, MARCH 1

Wrapping up this busy week, a joint meeting of Ways and Means and Senate Finance started the hearings on the Distributive School Account (DSA), the per pupil allocation school districts receive from the State budget. CCSD Superintendent Dwight Jones discussed the district's budget cuts over the past five years and the need to restore teaching positions in order to reduce class size. He also stated the need for targeted funding to address the needs of our young students through early childhood education and the needs of our English language learners. Washoe County Superintendent Pedro Martinez and Carson City School District Superintendent Rich Stokes (representing the Nevada Association of School Superintendents) also spoke, emphasizing the need of adequate funding in order to provide an appropriate education for all students.

Coming Up

Next week, the education committees will meet jointly once again on Monday to hear from the Teachers and Leaders Council on their work in developing a new evaluation system for teachers and school-based administrators. The Regional Professional Development Programs will also make a presentation at this hearing regarding their work during the interim. Then on Wednesday, a work

session for SB58, CCSD's Digital Learning Act, is scheduled in Senate Education. Also that day, a presentation on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Finally, on Friday, the hearings on the DSA continue with presentations from the Department of Education.

Here's a Tidbit

If you'd like to watch a lively discussion about full-day kindergarten, check this out:
<http://ralstonreports.com/tv/22613-geoff-lawrence-joyce-haldeman>