

2019 Legislative Report



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2019 Legislative Wrap Up

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For the first time in a decade, the Washington Legislature adjourned a biennial budget session on-time! The \$54.2 Billion budget included about \$830 million in new taxes, nearly half going to higher education – including significant money for teacher candidate scholarships and support!

For many years, WACTE has been telling legislators that basic economics dictates that there are two ways to attract more people to the teaching profession: lower the cost of entry and/or raise the reward. They raised the reward with significantly higher salaries last legislative session. This year, they made progress toward lowering the cost of entry with scholarships and other support funding.

Mental health and school funding dominated the session. A group of mostly freshmen members made a successful last-minute push to pass I-1000, mostly undoing the effects of I-200 from 20 years ago that outlawed affirmative action. Security guards had to clear the Senate gallery as protestors started shouting at members who voted for I-1000, which passed on mostly party line votes. The originator of I-200 here in Washington and many similar efforts across the country, Ward Connerly from California, came back to Washington to campaign against its repeal, to no avail.

The clear wins for teacher preparation include:

- removal of the requirement to pass the demonstrably culturally biased WEST-B test to enroll in a teacher preparation program;
- more than \$2,000,000 in new scholarship money for



Governor Jay Inslee signs SHB 1621. with Rep. Alex Ybarra (R-Quincy) to his left looking on.

low income teacher candidates, plus a separate appropriation to CWU for grow your own and alternative route scholarships¹; and

- support for low income student teachers and money to cover testing and other costs unique to teacher prep.

As of July – in time for fall enrollments – the WEST-B test will no longer be a barrier keeping some candidates out of your teacher preparation programs. The Governor signed SHB 1621 April 23, removing the requirement to pass the test. Candidates will still have to take the test – once – but it will become only one piece of evidence for you to consider for admissions decisions. Elimination of the requirement to achieve a certain score on the demonstrably culturally biased WEST-B should enable preparation programs to admit more diverse candidates.



Legislation to address the “teacher shortage” makes some significant changes that should help support more candidates in teacher preparation programs, including scholarship programs and field placement requirements.

Part of the problem is that the “shortage” seems to be mostly geographic, is not very well quantified, and there are no workforce projections covering attrition and retirements for your programs to use to adjust enrollments.

That may be addressed in the Professional Educator Collaborative in HB 1139, where WACTE has a statutory seat at the table. The Collaborative is charged with addressing various issues of teacher recruitment and retention. (the future of the “Educator Workforce Development Workgroup at OSPI is not clear now that most if not all of its work is assigned to this statutory group.)

The bill also revises grants and scholarships for prospective teachers, consolidating the administration of these programs under the Washington Student Achievement Council. WSAC will be able to move funds between the Teacher Shortage, Alternative Routes, Educator Retooling, Pipeline for Paraeducators, and Career and Technical Education scholarships and the Federal student loan repayment program to address changes in demand.

As the governor signed HB 1139, he vetoed a section PESB lobbied to insert at the last minute which would have mandated WSAC “consult” with PESB to determine eligibility requirements for scholarships. The agency would also have retained the power to add or remove specific endorsements from those eligible for the scholarships under the section, and it seemed to prioritize alternative route scholarships for candidates who wanted to enroll in a program receiving a PESB alternative route grant.

¹ For a full picture of student financial aid, see:

<https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-04-30-Sine-Die-Budget-Comparison.pdf>

Inslee said the provision “provides conflicting direction to state agencies.”

WSAC says it will still consult with PESB as part of its stakeholder process in developing scholarship and grant criteria.

The Teacher Shortage Conditional Scholarships received a separate appropriation in HB 2158 of \$1,000,000 per year. The bill pays for these scholarships and other higher education programs with a small uptick in the business and occupation tax for most professions requiring a college degree, and larger graduated hikes for high-tech business making more than \$25 Billion and \$100 Billion. The scholarships were a creation of WACTE members working with Rep. Gerry Pollett several years ago. With a goal of diversifying the teaching corps, the one cohort financed several years ago was 95% multi-lingual, 98% candidates of color, 89% first-generation college students, and 32% male.

The overall goal of the legislation was to completely revamp the Basic Needs Grant into the Washington College Grant Program, the Washington Student Loan Refinancing Program. The grants will cover some or all of the costs of attendance at a community college or public university (with commensurate grants for attendance at a private institution of higher learning)². Also included are grants for apprenticeships and internship programs.



Governor Jay Inslee and his wife Trudi join Rep. Hansen and many of the advocates, legislators and staff supporting HB 2158 in the Capitol Rotunda after signing the legislation.

HB 1139 also makes permanent both the TEACH (Teacher Endorsement And Certification Help) grants to help eligible candidates cover the costs of basic skills and content tests as well as background check costs, and the student teaching stipends for low income candidates student teaching in title I schools – both WACTE ideas also out of the conversations with Rep. Pollett, now cemented in law.

As a part of the legislation, the Pipeline for Para-educators conditional scholarship no longer requires a promise to complete a teaching degree in an alternative route – the candidate will be free to complete their education at any preparation program.

Field placement for candidates “should be targeted” at high-needs subject areas under the law, and mentors will need to have achieved a 3 or above on “recognizing individual student learning needs and developing strategies to address those needs” and “using

² 100% of costs of attendance are covered for someone whose family is at or below 55% of median family income, with stepped reductions in grants down to 10% of costs for someone from a family at 100% MFI.

multiple student data elements to modify instruction and improve student learning” on their most-recent evaluation.

The bill also creates recruitment and retention programs for local school districts and ESD’s; modifies the Recruiting Washington Teachers program and adds reporting requirements; and loosens retire/rehire restrictions for teachers.



Employment prospects for teacher candidates graduating from WACTE schools may have gotten brighter as a deal on local school levies came together with about 90 minutes left in the legislative session.

Legislators lifted the “levy lid” that many school districts are blaming for possible layoffs this coming fall because they can’t raise enough local money. Local tax levies were limited under the McCleary solution – the case where the state was judged falling short, forcing local tax dollars to finance “basic education” and there was a wide disparity in how much various districts could raise locally.

Districts with less than 40,000 students will be allowed to raise either \$2,500 per student or levy \$2.50 per thousand dollars assessed property value, whichever is less. Districts with more than 40,000 students (which the Seattle Times reports is only Seattle) can levy either the \$2.50 per thousand or \$3,000 per student, again whichever is less. Additional “local effort assistance” will go to districts that can’t get to at least \$1,550 per student when levying \$1.50 per thousand.

Prior to legislative action, levies were limited to \$1.50 per thousand or \$2,500 per student, whichever was less.

Some districts have already received voter approval for levies in excess of what they could collect under the old standard, so they will be able to now collect at the higher level. Districts that only asked for a levy at the former standard will need to ask voters for additional funding.

Meanwhile, legislators added \$155 million for special education, an improvement, although short of the \$300 million requested by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.



The Professional Educator Standards Board received biennial appropriations for grants to alternative route programs (\$1,200,000); for grants to colleges to develop and share best practices (\$1,000,000); for the recruiting Washington teachers program (\$1,244,000); and for the bilingual educator pilot program (\$1,000,000).



A new law to focus on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) – SB 5082 – makes permanent a committee to promote and expand SEL, and incorporates SEL standards across the career continuum for teachers. WACTE member Debbie Tully serves on the committee.

A last-minute addition to the bill also directs the Professional Educator Standards Board to periodically review approved preparation programs to assess whether and to what extent the programs are meeting knowledge, skill, and performance standards, and publish on its web site the results of the review in a format that facilitates program comparison.

WACTE, and, reportedly, the PESB, asked the governor to veto this section, and while he considered it, the bill was left intact when he signed it May 13th. WACTE considers the idea of rating akin to comparing apples to grapefruits. PESB was not funded to do the work, so will have to shift funding from some other area of work.



SB 5023 makes available ethnic studies materials for grades 7 to 12; and HB 1893 mandates the Department of Social and Health Services work to allow all colleges to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called “food stamps), and creates “emergency grants” for community college students in unforeseen situations that would interfere with their education (a similar program already exists at public institutions of higher education). And a provision in the budget allocates \$126,000 for study of best practices in implementing adequate time – at least 20 minutes seated – for students to eat lunch, since properly fed kids learn and behave better in school.

SB 5800 will create a pilot program for homeless college and university students to provide short-term housing assistance, particularly during breaks, as well as locker rooms, laundry facilities and cheaper meal plans. Students who were in the foster care system when they graduated from high school would also be eligible for the help.



About \$244 million of the new revenue to pay for all of this and the rest of the state budget comes from a graduated real estate excise tax on the sale of real estate, raising the rate for properties selling for more than \$1.5 million. Another \$133 million comes from raising business taxes on the biggest banks doing business in Washington. Other new revenue comes from a new tax on vapor products, and changing the out of state sales tax exemption to a rebate program.

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