

Senate Ways and Means Committee briefed on K-12 funding

The Senate Ways and Means Committee listened to an overview of the school funding formula and how all the various pieces work together - local effort, state aid, weightings, etc. In questioning, most of the questions were focused on at-risk weighting. There are currently three ways districts receive at-risk weighting. The most common form is a weighting based on the number of free lunch students in the district. In addition to that, there is a high-density at-risk weighting intended to assist with issues of urban poverty and non-proficient at-risk weighting generated by students who are not eligible for free lunch but are less than proficient on state math and/or reading assessments.

House Education Committee hears financial literacy bill

There was a hearing today in the House Education Committee on HB 2475 which would require a one-semester class in financial literacy for high school graduation. Currently the state requires financial literacy instruction through standards in mathematics and social science courses although some districts have either a stand-alone course or use family and consumer science classes to teach financial literacy. Some districts do have a course requirement but for most it is an optional or elective class.

Proponents, including former State Board member Walt Chappell, argued that it was the schools' responsibility to ensure that every child graduates financially literate. Chappell suggested that most high school students had plenty of room in their schedules for this class. Many seniors, he argued, only take one or two classes the senior year. Chappell also said most kids would not need trigonometry later in life and could take financial literacy in its place.

KNEA and KASB both testified against the bill arguing that there was no need to force a one-size-fits-all program on schools. KNEA emphasized that legislators often want to add classes - from another mandatory year of math and science to four years of mandatory physical education - but there is only so much room in a student's schedule. Said KNEA lobbyist Mark Desetti, "Why should we ask a college-bound student with a rigorous schedule to give up their one art elective

or a semester of foreign language to fit this class in?" The decision about a class schedule should be left up to the student, his/her parents, and the counselor and tailored to that student's needs.