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Spring Session Recap: Key Wins, Budget Highlights, and Education Legislation

Hello and Happy Monday!

The Illinois General Assembly wrapped up its spring session in dramatic fashion this weekend, with lawmakers spending long hours on the House and Senate floors and in committee rooms as they worked through impactful legislation before adjournment. Negotiations on the state budget and several major omnibus packages continued late into Sunday night and well into the early morning hours today before final votes were cast. As is often the case during the final days of session, significant legislation moved quickly, amendments were filed and adopted with little notice, and several major education issues were resolved in the closing hours. Below is a summary of the most significant budget and education-related actions affecting school districts as the legislature concludes its work for the spring.

FY27 Budget Education Funding Highlights

The FY27 state budget, enacted through [Senate Amendment 3](#) to [HB 111](#), was approved in the early morning hours on June 1 and represents the largest spending plan in Illinois history. The budget appropriates approximately \$55.95 billion in expenditures against an estimated \$55.8 billion in revenues, leaving a very narrow margin for surplus. While lawmakers avoided significant cuts to education, reductions in several areas underscore the state's ongoing structural budget challenges. Below are highlights of General Revenue Fund (GRF) appropriations and other education-related provisions included in the budget for Fiscal Year 2027:

Highlights of Education Budget Increases

- \$350 million increase for Evidence-Based Funding
 - \$50 million for Property Tax Relief Grant
- \$67.9 million increase for Mandated Categorical Programs
 - \$20 million increase for Regular/Vocational Transportation
 - \$20 million increase for Special Education Transportation
 - \$10 million increase for Special Education Tuition Reimbursement
 - \$17 million increase for Free Breakfast/Lunch
 - \$921,000 increase for Special Education Orphanage Tuition
- \$10 million increase for After School Programs
- \$1 million increase for SEL Hubs and REACH Programs

Highlights of Education Budget Decreases

- \$15 million decrease in Teacher Vacancy Grants (\$15 million total appropriation)

FY27 Budget Implementation Bill Education Highlights

The budget implementation bill, commonly referred to as the BIMP, accompanies the annual state budget and contains the statutory changes necessary to implement budgeted programs and policy initiatives. This year's BIMP was enacted through [Senate Amendment 3](#) to [HB 2949](#) and includes a variety of provisions affecting state agencies and local governments. Of particular interest to school district leaders are changes

related to student transportation funding and the Property Tax Relief Grant program, both of which are summarized below.

The legislation extends the property tax levy abatement requirements for school districts that receive Property Tax Relief Grants. Under current law, districts receiving a grant between Fiscal Years 2020 and 2026 must adopt and submit an abatement resolution reducing their levy by the amount identified in their grant application for the year the grant is received and the following fiscal year. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2027, grant recipients will be required to maintain that levy reduction for an additional year, resulting in abatements during the year the grant is received and the two successive fiscal years that follow. This change lengthens the property tax relief commitment required of participating school districts.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2027, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) must conduct a study examining best practices for funding regular, vocational, and special education transportation. The study will evaluate current transportation funding mechanisms and specifically consider the potential impact of incorporating transportation reimbursements into Illinois' Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula. The findings could help inform future policy discussions regarding how student transportation costs are funded statewide.

Unemployment Package

[SB 807](#) (Holmes; Hoffman) received an [amendment](#) that resulted in the bill becoming the “unemployment omnibus” for this session. Importantly, the final bill **did not** include the provision that would require school districts to pay unemployment benefits to educational support personnel over the summer months. It does, however, include a provision that will require employers with 75 or more employees that conduct a mass layoff or separation affecting at least 50 employees at a single worksite to report specific employee information to the Illinois Department of Employment Security. Employers would need to submit the names, Social Security numbers, separation dates, and any anticipated return-to-work dates for affected employees as soon as practicable before the separation occurs.

Election Package

[HB 1832](#) (Cunningham; Smith) was [amended](#) Saturday evening with the session’s Election Omnibus bill. Importantly, the bill **did not** include language that would require the General Election Day in November 2026 to be a school holiday. Those of you who have been waiting to find out if your 2026-2027 calendar will need to be amended can consider that matter settled. Additionally, the language from [HB 4535](#) that will allow schools to use e-learning days on election days if their schools are serving as polling places was also included in the package.

Sunset Extension Package

[SB 3645](#) (Porfirio; Morgan) became the sunset extension omnibus, and included the language from [SB 2953](#) that will extend the allowance for retirees to return to work for 120 days (or 600 hours) through June 30, 2029.

Bills That Did Not Make It

There are always a few initiatives that do not quite get across the finish line before the clock runs out on the session calendar. There are three notable ones, described below.

[SB 2715](#) (Porfirio; Didech) FOIA/OMA Changes

This bill exempts confidential reports submitted through anonymous reporting systems, such as Safe2Help Illinois, from disclosure under FOIA. The bill also exempts communications between parents and teachers from FOIA requests, while preserving parents' and students' rights to access records and information as provided under the Illinois School Student Records Act (ISSRA) and the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). These changes are intended to strengthen privacy protections for school safety

reporting and school-home communications. The bill paused awaiting a concurrence vote so action could be finalized during veto session this fall.

[HB 4795](#) (Lightford; Ammons) World Language Graduation Mandate Repeal

The bill was amended with a complete repeal of the upcoming graduation mandate for two years of world language. All school management groups worked extremely hard to get flexibility for the upcoming mandate, and those conversations culminated in Leader Lightford recognizing a full repeal of the mandate was an appropriate solution. We will continue conversations in the House between now and the fall veto session.

[HB 958](#) (Cunningham; Buckner) Da Bears Stadium

In a Hail Mary late Sunday evening, a brand new version of the megaproject bill emerged as **[Senate Amendment 2](#)** on **[HB 958](#)**. Reports said negotiations had broken down Sunday morning and it was not clear if there was a pathway for passage before adjournment, but new language was filed last night. The new bill focused solely on the stadium project development and did not incorporate other economic growth projects. The measure passed the Senate but was not taken up in the House. It is still very possible for something to happen in the veto session.

Bills Passed Both Houses This Weekend

Most of the bills that needed final action before adjournment got over that hump by Sunday evening (or Monday morning depending how you look at it). Below please find legislative summaries of education-related bills that now await the Governor's signature.

[HB 2564](#) (Vella; Halpin) 6% Salary Cap Exemptions

In provisions requiring an additional employer contribution for certain salary increases greater than 6%, provides that the System shall exclude salary increases given on or after the effective date of the amendatory Act resulting from overload work, summer school, or stipend work when the school district has certified to the System, and the System has approved the certification, that the overload work, summer school, or the stipend work is for the sole purpose of classroom instruction in excess of the standard number of classes for a full-time teacher in a school district during a school year.

[HB 3275](#) (Davis, L; Johnson) CPR and AED Training

Provides that an association or other entity that has as one of its purposes promoting, sponsoring, regulating, or in any manner providing for interscholastic athletics or any form of athletic competition among schools and students within the State shall require all paid school head coaches or chief sponsors of an activity to obtain training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), first aid, and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED). Provides that training in CPR and AED use shall be consistent with national, evidence-based, emergency cardiovascular care guidelines and shall be completed every 2 years. Amends the School Safety Drill Act. Provides that a school district shall conduct an annual cardiac response drill to practice the steps established in its cardiac emergency response plan, in partnership with local emergency medical services, and a cardiac response drill may be conducted without student participation. Provides that a school district, school board and each member of the school board, governing body and each member of the governing body of a nonpublic school, administrator, principal, teacher, school employee, and member of a school district's safety or crisis response team, whether a student or an adult, are immune from any liability that might otherwise be incurred or caused by an act or omission related to the requirements under the Act, unless the act or omission was willful or wanton. Effective July 1, 2027.

[HB 3408](#) (Gill; Loughran Cappel) Color Deficiency Vision Screenings

Requires the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Department of Public Health as necessary, to publish on its Internet website resources to support school districts and teachers in teaching literacy to color-vision-deficient learners. Amends the Child Vision and Hearing Test Act. Provides that beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, color discrimination tests shall be performed as part of the vision screening

services provided under the Act for children in kindergarten, second grade, and eighth grade. Requires the Department of Public Health to adopt rules with the Secretary of State to implement the amendatory Act.

HB 3772 (Davis, W; Lightford) K-2 Suspension and Expulsion

Requires the superintendent of a school district, the director of an early childhood program, or the superintendent's or director's equivalent to provide verbal or written approval to suspend a student in preschool through 2nd grade for longer than 3 days and, if such approval is not received by the third day, the student shall return to school by the fourth day. Provides that for suspensions of longer than 3 days, the length of the suspension for any student in kindergarten through grade 2 shall (rather than may) not be for longer than the number of days required by the school district to review, amend, develop, or implement a behavior intervention plan or safety plan. Provides that any student in kindergarten through grade 2 placed in an out-of-district alternative learning opportunities program shall have the student's placement limited to 90 days beginning on the student's first date of attendance in the program.

HB 4339 (du Buclet; Peters) Voter Registration Opportunities

Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, requires a school district maintaining any of grades 9 through 12 to provide all eligible students graduating from high school with the opportunity to register to vote.

HB 4534 (Mussman; Collins) Employment History Verifications

Expands the definition of "abused child" to include a child whose parent or immediate family member, or any person responsible for the child's welfare, or any individual residing in the same home as the child, or a paramour of the child's parent engages in a pattern of conduct or communications directed toward such child, meaning two (2) or more instances of conduct or communication, that a reasonable person would understand as intended to groom, seduce, solicit, lure, or entice the child for the purpose of committing any sex offense or engaging in sexual misconduct against such child. Defines "sexual misconduct" to mean, but not be limited to, any verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic communication or physical activity, by a person responsible for the child's welfare to establish a romantic or sexual relationship with the child. Provides that such conduct or communications may include, but is not limited to: (1) a sexual or romantic invitation; (2) dating or soliciting a date; (3) engaging in sexualized or romantic dialog; or (4) making sexually suggestive comments that are directed toward or with the child. Amends the School Code. In provisions concerning sexual misconduct in schools, provides that guidelines established for certain situations and all available methods for how to report staff-student boundary violations within a school and to external agencies must be posted on the website, if any, of each school district, charter school, or nonpublic school and must be included in any staff, student, and parent handbook provided by the school district, charter school, or nonpublic school. provides that, for a licensed substitute teacher seeking employment in more than one school district, a school district's regional office of education or intermediate service center may (rather than shall) collect and, at the request of the licensed substitute teacher, share the information and records concerning that teacher's contact information and employment history.

HB 4535 (Hirschauer; Villivalam) E-Learning on Election Days

In provisions regarding e-learning days, provides that an e-learning day used by a school district due to a school being selected as a polling place does not count toward the school district's minimum number of emergency days in the approved school calendar.

HB 5196 (Morgan; Martwick) Accelerated Pension Benefit

Extends the option for a participant to receive an accelerated pension benefit payment in lieu of any pension benefit or for a reduction in the increases to his or her annual retirement annuity and survivor's annuity to June 30, 2028.

SB 2427 (Castro; Mussman) Cell Phone Ban

Provides that on or before the beginning of the 2027-2028 school year, each school board and charter school shall adopt and implement a wireless communication device policy. Requires the policy and administrative responses for violations of the policy to be published in a student handbook, if one exists. Establishes exceptions for the use of a wireless communication device during school time. Prohibits a school district or charter school from enforcing the wireless communication device policy through fees, fines, suspensions, expulsions, or the deployment of a school resource officer or local law enforcement officer. Sets forth how the policy shall be developed. Provides that a school board, the governing body of a charter school, and any school personnel are immune from any liability resulting from damage to a wireless communication device if the device is stored in good faith and in accordance with the wireless communication device policy. Provides that the wireless communication device policy shall be posted on the school district's or charter school's publicly accessible Internet website. Requires, by September 1, 2026, the State Board of Education to post on its website a template for a model wireless communication device policy. Provides that if a school district or charter school has an existing wireless communication device policy in place before the effective date of the amendatory Act that limits wireless communication devices during a majority of or the entirety of the school day, the district or charter school may keep its existing policy in place through the 2030-2031 school year, at which point the district or charter school must adopt a wireless communication device policy meeting the requirements the amendatory Act.

SB 3070 (Preston; Davis, W) World Language Alternative

Provides that, as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma, each pupil entering the 9th grade beginning with the 2028-2029 school year must successfully complete either two (2) years of foreign language courses or at least two (2) years of coursework that has been authorized by the State Board of Education as meeting the requirements for an approved career and technical education course. Provides that a pupil who satisfies either course requirement is deemed to have satisfied the requirement for one year of music, art, foreign language, career and technical education, or forensic speech. Effective immediately.

SB 3273 (Cunningham; Hoffman) Solar on Schools

Provides that, after an electric distribution company determines that an interconnection request from an applicant for a public school project has been completed, the electric distribution company must immediately begin all evaluations, reviews, and screenings of the interconnection request. Provides that if the electric distribution company determines that the public school project has a nameplate capacity that is less than 500 kilowatts (kW) with no colocated distribution resources and determines that no system modifications are required, the electric distribution company must complete all required interconnection-related evaluations, reviews, and screenings within 30 days after making such a determination and issue an interconnection agreement as soon as possible after the evaluations, reviews, and screenings are completed. Provides that, for all net metering credits earned on a monthly basis or other credits owed to a customer who has elected to install a distributed renewable generation project on public school land, all credits intended for the benefit of the consumer must be credited by the public utility or retail energy supplier within 90 days after the public utility or retail energy supplier determines that the criteria for the credit have been met. Provides that a municipal system or electric cooperative shall not charge an application fee to a public school for the interconnection of renewable generating facilities located on the public school's land to the local distribution system that exceeds more than 150% of the cost authorized by law or by rule to be recovered from customers by public utilities for the same or similarly sized facilities with the same or similar electric configurations to the local distribution system. Provides that the limit on an interconnection application fee does not apply to any required reimbursement by a public school of the cost of any reasonably required metering equipment, system impact studies, or system upgrades, which shall be limited to actual costs reasonably incurred.

The full list of bills that have passed both chambers can be found on the association's advocacy website behind the membership paywall.

Wrap-Up

As the General Assembly concludes its spring session, we want to thank our members across the state who engaged in our legislative efforts throughout the year. Your emails, phone calls, testimony, and conversations with legislators played a critical role in shaping the outcomes of this session. While not every priority crossed the finish line and a few proposals remain concerns for the future, this year produced a number of meaningful victories for public education and school districts. These successes demonstrate the impact that a united voice can have in the legislative process. As we celebrate those wins, we are also looking ahead. Work is already underway to identify opportunities for the 2027 session, build on this year's progress, and continue advancing policies that support students, educators, and local school districts. We look forward to partnering with you again in the months ahead as we prepare for the next chapter of our advocacy efforts.

Have a great summer!

Sincerely,

Emily Warnecke
Chief of Staff