
Education Committee

HB 1709

Brief Description: Changing educational assessments.

Sponsors: Representatives Shabro, Talcott, Curtis, DeBolt, Ahern and Tom.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires assessment vendors for the WASL to provide diagnostic assessments that will help teachers meet the learning needs of individual students.
- Requires SPI to provide teachers with diagnostic tools in mathematics by September 1, 2006, if funding is available.
- Makes the current norm-referenced assessments optional but requires SPI to norm-reference the WASL in reading and mathematics by the 2006-07 school year.

Hearing Date: 2/10/05

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

By law, Washington's student assessment system must be designed so teachers can use the assessment results to help students who have not mastered the state's essential academic learning requirements. The assessment design must also allow teachers to evaluate their instructional practices.

Washington's assessment system for students includes both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests or assessments. In norm-referenced assessments, the results for individual students and groups of students are compared to the students' peers across the country. The distribution of student scores occurs, by design, along a bell curve. In criterion-referenced assessments, a student's test results are measured against the state standard for that content area.

By law, public school students in the third, sixth, and ninth grades take nationally norm-referenced assessments. Also by law, public school students in the fourth, seventh, and tenth grades take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), a criterion-referenced assessment.

Last year, through the passage of 3ESHB 2195, the legislature directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction to create, for teachers, a collection of diagnostic tools that the teachers can use to evaluate the learning needs of individual students. The tools must be inexpensive, easily

administered, and quickly and easily scored. The results of the tools must be provided in a format that can be easily shared with students and their parents.

Summary of Bill:

Diagnostic Assessments

Assessment vendors who provide the Washington Assessment of Student Learning will also provide, as part of their contracts, diagnostic assessments or other instruments. The diagnostic instruments must be inexpensive, quickly administered, and easily scored by a teacher or through technology. The instruments must also be designed to give a teacher enough information to determine the specific areas in which individual students need assistance in order to meet the state standards measured by the WASL .

To the extent that funding is available, diagnostic tools designed to help students meet the state standards in mathematics will be available by September 1, 2006 for students in the fourth, seventh, and tenth grades.

Norm-referenced Assessments

Districts may choose whether to administer norm-referenced assessments to students in the third, sixth, and ninth grades.

Beginning with the 2006-07 school year, student results on the WASL will be norm-referenced for reading and mathematics in elementary, middle, and high school. The norm-referenced results will be reported to parents, the community, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the public annually. The report will occur at the same time and in the same manner as other reports on the WASL.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 3, 2005.

Effective Date: The act takes effect August 1, 2005.