
Education Committee

HB 2489

Brief Description: Assisting students to graduate from high school on time.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunter, Jarrett, P. Sullivan, Springer, Morrell, Tom, Simpson, Miloscia, O'Brien, Roberts and Green.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Based on a student's performance on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), requires school districts to identify a student's risk of not graduating on time as high, moderate, or low but needing assistance.
- Requires districts to make summer school available at no charge for all at-risk students, along with at least one other assistance strategy.
- Mandates summer school attendance for high risk students.

Hearing Date: 1/12/06

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, most students will be required to obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement (Certificate) in order to graduate from a public high school in the state. Students must attain the proficient level in reading, writing, and mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to earn a Certificate. Science is added in 2010.

Students in the class of 2008 will take the high school WASL in the spring of 2006. Starting in August of 2006, they will have four opportunities before 2008 to re-take all or parts of the assessment if they do not attain proficiency the first time.

WASL scores are categorized into four levels: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. Below basic and basic scores are below the expected standard of performance. Proficient meets the standard; advanced exceeds the standard.

In 2005, about 42 percent of high school students met or exceeded the expected standard on all three content areas of the WASL. Twenty-two percent met the standard in two of the three content areas; 14 percent in one area; and 22 percent in none. School districts must notify parents about a student's performance on state assessments.

With exceptions for students in private, home, or institutional schools, all children between the ages of 8 and 18 must attend public school under Washington's compulsory attendance law. There is also an exception for children over age 16 who are working and exempted by their parents. School districts can establish summer schools or other vacation period programs, but attendance at these programs is voluntary. Districts are also authorized to charge fees for these programs.

Summary of Bill:

For each high school student not successful on the high school WASL and before the end of the school year when the test was taken, a school district must identify the student's level of risk of not graduating on time. The levels of risk are as follows:

- High risk if the student scored at below basic in two or more content areas;
- Moderate risk if the student scored at basic in two or more content areas, or at below basic in one content area; or
- Low risk if the student scored at, but not below, basic in one content area.

School districts must make assistance strategies available to all at-risk students. Summer school must be made available at no charge to these students, but can be offered on-line or through contracts with private providers, community service organizations, or community colleges. In addition, districts must make one or more of the following programs available:

- After school or Saturday programs;
- Intensive programs offered during other vacation periods;
- Tutoring, which may include on-line tutorials and courses;
- Specialized courses offered during the school year;
- Remediation integrated into career and technical courses or offered through skills centers; or
- Other assistance, counseling, or programs designed to enable students to gain proficiency in the skill areas needing improvement.

High risk students must attend summer school under the state compulsory attendance law. High risk students also retain sophomore status until they attend summer school or score at basic or above in each content area.

If a student was not successful on the high school WASL, the notice sent by a school district to the student's parent must include the following information:

- A description of the specific skill areas where the student needs improvement;
- The student's level of risk of not graduating on time;
- The availability or mandate of summer school and other assistance strategies and how to access them;
- Information about the next WASL retest, possible alternative assessments, and other diploma completion options; and
- Contact information for an individual at the school who can assist and answer the parent's questions.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction must provide diagnostic tools to school districts, particularly for students who are not successful on the high school WASL.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 9, 2006.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.