

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6618

As Passed House - Amended:

March 2, 2006

Title: An act relating to the high school assessment system.

Brief Description: Requiring a study to explore options to augment the current educational assessment system.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe and Schmidt).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/16/06, 2/22/06 [DPA];

Appropriations: 2/23/06 [DPA(APP w/o ED)s].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 3/2/06, 71-27.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Requires the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to study options to augment the current system of assessments to demonstrate students have met the state learning standards.
- Limits the study to a statistical analysis of students not successful on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning; review and identification of additional alternative assessment options; and review and identification of additional methods, procedures, or performance measures to determine students have met the standards.
- Requires an interim report by December 1, 2006, and a final report by December 1, 2007.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Priest, Santos, Shabro, Tom and Wallace.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Appropriations and without amendment by Committee on Education. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunshee, Haigh, Hinkle, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, McDermott, McIntire, Miloscia, Pearson, Priest, Schual-Berke, P. Sullivan, Talcott and Walsh.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member and Clements.

Staff: Ben Rarick (786-7349).

Background:

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, most students will be required to obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) in order to graduate from a public high school in the state. Students must meet the state standards in reading, writing, and mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to earn a CAA. Science will be added in 2010. Starting in 2006, students will have four opportunities to retake the WASL in the content areas where they did not meet the state standard.

In 2004, the Legislature also authorized the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to develop one or more objective alternative assessments for high school students to demonstrate they meet the state academic standards instead of relying on the WASL for this purpose. To use an alternative, a student must take the WASL at least twice. The Legislature must formally approve implementation of any alternative assessment.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) must conduct a study to explore options to augment the current system of assessments and provide additional opportunities for students to demonstrate they have met state learning standards.

The study is limited to the following items:

- (1) a statistical analysis of the characteristics of students not successful on the WASL and identification of possible barriers or causes of the lack of success;
- (2) review of additional alternative assessment options to augment the current assessment system, including a review of alternative assessments used in other states and those used or proposed in Washington and a review of national tests and career skill certification exams. The review includes examination of costs for implementation, cultural appropriateness, reliability, equality in rigor to the WASL, and challenges to implementation; and

- (3) review and identification of additional methods, procedures, or performance measures to assess whether students have met the learning standards. In addition to examining the topics listed above, this review examines whether the procedures can be standardized across the state.

An interim report is due December 1, 2006, that includes preliminary statistics and recommendations on at least two options. The final report is due December 1, 2007, and includes suggestions for additional studies.

The Institute must consult with nationally recognized assessment experts including representatives from national centers for multicultural education, the SPI, educators, parents, the business community, and representatives of federally recognized Washington tribes, linguistic and racial minority groups, and the community of persons with disabilities. The SPI and school districts must provide access to necessary data to conduct the studies.

The act is named for former Governor Booth Gardner.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Education) The Institute is enthusiastic about doing this study and will ensure regular meetings and consultation with stakeholders and legislators so that there are no surprises. This study will identify the courses of action the Legislature can take in 2007. It is an important investment to get good information to perfect the student assessment system. This should be named the Booth Gardner Act. Former Governor Booth Gardner embraced the notion of high standards and has never waived from that belief. This bill will move forward in ensuring a range of assessments for students to demonstrate they meet the standards. We should stop referring to "alternatives;" all methods of assessment should be considered equally as long as they are equally rigorous.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) This is a very critical bill. Governor Gardner held a series of meetings trying to bring constituents together to talk about how children will meet standards for graduation and how the assessment system should be constructed. Concerns were expressed from the community about the WASL graduation requirement, as well as the WASL tests given in the earlier grades, and this study was in part designed to address some of their concerns. The study will help us identify the characteristics of children that will struggle to meet standards, and will recommend options to help these children meet standard.

Governor Gardner, who could not be here today, wants to let everyone know that he is appreciative of the hearing. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy has a good reputation for research and analysis, and this study should help us continue to perfect the assessment system and our approach to helping students meeting standards.

Testimony Against: (Education) None.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Persons Testifying: (Education) (In support) Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Amy Bell, on behalf of Former Governor Booth Gardner; Gary King, Washington Education Association; and Kathleen Lopp, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education.

Persons Testifying: (Appropriations) Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; and Amy Bell, Booth Gardner.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Education) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Appropriations) None.