

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## EHB 2579

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, February 24, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to educational assessments.

**Brief Description:** Requiring classroom-based civics assessments.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Upthegrove, Lantz, Dickerson, Appleton, Morrell, Hasegawa, Quall, Hunter, Haler, O'Brien, Murray, Hunt, Schual-Berke, Ormsby, Springer and Moeller.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/14/06, 83-15.

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/23/06, 2/24/06 [DPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Higher Education; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** The State Board of Education sets the minimum subject areas and credits required for high school graduation. The requirements include 2.5 credits in social studies, including one credit in United States history and government, which must include the study of the U.S. Constitution, and one-half credit in Washington State history and government, which must include the study of the State Constitution. Additionally, school districts are encouraged to consider including information on the culture, history, and government of the American Indian peoples. A credit in civics is not currently required; however, courses in civics, economics, sociology, political science, international relations, or related courses may be used to complete the required credits.

The Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), which represent the specific academic skills and knowledge which students should have, does include civics. By the end of the 2008-09 school year, school districts must have assessments or other strategies to assure that students have an opportunity to learn the EALRs in social studies. Beginning with the 2008-09 school year, school districts must annually submit an implementation verification report to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

In 2004, the Legislature directed the OSPI to provide classroom-based assessment models and other assessment options on the OSPI's website for voluntary use by school districts. The OSPI has developed classroom-based assessments at the fifth, eighth, and high school levels. Training is available through the OSPI on how to score the assessments.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** For the purposes of the assessments and other strategies that school districts must have for students in social studies, "social studies" includes "history, geography, civics, economics, and social studies skills."

Beginning with the 2008-09 school year, school districts must require students in fourth or fifth, seventh or eighth, and eleventh or twelfth grades to complete at least one classroom-based assessment in civics. The assessment may be selected from a list approved by the OSPI. School districts must annually submit a report to the OSPI documenting the use of the classroom-based assessment.

A pilot project for 2006 through 2008 is created with the OSPI working with selected county auditors' offices to develop an interactive high school civics curriculum. A maximum of fifteen counties may be selected to participate in the pilot. The civics curriculum used in the pilot must include instruction regarding:

- (1) local government organization;
- (2) ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda;
- (3) the role of precincts;
- (4) roles and responsibilities of tax jurisdictions in establishing ballot measures; and
- (5) the work of conducting elections.

The curriculum may include essential academic learning requirements relating to representative government and citizen participation, and analyzing the purposes and organization of government and laws. Other activities may include conducting mock elections and preparing advisories on issues on which the school would vote.

A curriculum guide will be developed by the OSPI that incorporates ideas from other Washington civics education programs (such as "We the People" & Project Citizen"). Funds will be made available to the OSPI to contract a staff position to develop the curriculum. The OSPI must adopt rules to implement the act and report to the Legislature in 2008 and 2009 detailing the results of the project and budget recommendations for expansion, if appropriate.

**Appropriation:** Twenty-five thousand dollars is appropriated to the Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide competitive grants to school districts for curriculum alignment, development of innovative civics projects, and other activities that support the civics assessments. Districts receiving a grant must make the products developed under the grant widely available as examples of best practices.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** Goal 2 subjects (social studies, arts, health & fitness) are assessed differently than Goal 1 subjects, which are tested by the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. We have wonderful civics EALRS and wonderful classroom-based civics assessments. Unlike the WASL, the classroom-based assessments are project based and scored by the classroom teacher, but they are still an effective measurement. This bill does not make it a civics WASL or tie it to graduation. Unfortunately, civics is not being taught in our schools. If you require the assessments then you will ensure that the subject is taught. In order for our

democracy to function we need to have informed and engaged citizenry. Our public school system is the appropriate place for our young people to learn about this.

**Testimony Against:** We do need to teach civics and social studies. We do not need a law to tell us what to do. I question whether the classroom-based assessments are going to help the students to learn historical concepts because the questions are too open ended and not fact-based. This supports a one-size fits all method of teaching.

**Testimony Other:** There is an important balance among the Goal 2 subjects that are all going to be assessed by classroom assessments or other strategies. If you require only civics then that balance no longer exists.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Dave Upthegrove, prime sponsor; Matt Peterson, 1st Legislative District Youth Council; Melissa Jensen, 1st Legislative District Youth Council; Paula Fraser, Washington State Council for the Social Studies Council for Public Legal Education; Patrick Palace, Washington State Bar Association; Rowland Thompson, Allied Daily Newspapers.

CON: Sharon Hanek, Research Mom.

OTHER: Gary King, WEA.