

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 6072

As Passed Senate, April 18, 1997

Title: An act relating to modifying the timelines for development and implementation of the student assessment system.

Brief Description: Changing the timelines for development and implementation of the student assessment system.

Sponsors: Senators West and Spanel; by request of Office of Financial Management.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 4/1/97, 4/3/97 [DPS-WM, DNP].
Passed Senate, 4/18/97, 44-5.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6072 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hochstatter, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair; Johnson and Zarelli.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Goings, McAuliffe and Rasmussen.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: The Commission on Student Learning (CSL) was created by the Legislature in 1992 to identify the knowledge and skills needed by all public school students, to develop student assessment and school accountability systems, and to take other steps necessary to improve student learning in the state.

Goal 1 and Mathematics: The elementary, middle and high school assessments developed by the CSL for Goal 1 (reading, writing, and communication), and mathematics are required to be available for voluntary use in the 1996-97 school year.

Goal 2 (except Mathematics): The elementary, middle, and high school assessments developed for Goal 2 (the sciences, history, geography, civics, health and fitness and the arts) are required to be available for voluntary use by the 1998-99 school year.

Goal 3 and 4: The assessments for Goals 3 (critical thinking) and 4 (understanding the importance of work) are required to be available for voluntary use by the 1998-99 school year. The assessments must integrate knowledge and skill areas to the maximum extent possible.

Initial Implementation, Transfer and Modification of Assessments: The State Board of Education (SBE) and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) initially implement the

assessments and may modify the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) and the assessment system in subsequent years.

Mandatory Use of the Assessments: All school districts are required to administer the assessments beginning in the 2000-01 school year.

Certificate of Mastery: CSL must develop a Certificate of Mastery (COM). The COM is to be evidence that the student has successfully mastered the essential academic learning requirements and successfully completed the high school assessment. It is anticipated that most students will obtain the COM at about the age of 16. Achievement of a COM is a high school graduation requirement, but not the only requirement.

Accountability System: By June 30, 1999, CSL must recommend a statewide accountability system, including a school assistance program, an intervention system for failing schools, and an awards program.

Summary of Bill: The timelines for the availability and mandated use of the student assessments and the availability of the school accountability systems are modified, and the developing and initial implementing entity is clarified.

Goal 1 and Mathematics: The timeline for the elementary school assessment is not changed from the 1996-97 school year.

The middle school assessment is delayed one year but must be available for the 1997-98 school year. The high school assessment is delayed two years but must be available for the 1998-99 school year.

Goal 2 (except Mathematics): The timeline for the availability of the middle and high school assessments for the sciences is not changed from the 1998-99 school year.

SPI is required to continue the development of Goal 2 assessments, so that history, geography, civics and the arts at the middle and high school levels are available by the 2000-01 school year, and the health/fitness assessments available at the middle and high school levels are available by the 2001-02 school year. Assessments in social studies, arts, and health/fitness at the elementary level are not addressed.

Goals 3 and 4: It is clarified that Goals 3 and 4 are integrated into the EALRs and the assessments for Goals 1 and 2.

Initial Implementation and Transfer of Assessments: The state entity responsible for initially implementing the assessments is changed from SBE and SPI to CSL. The completed assessments and assessments still in development must be transferred from CSL to SPI on June 30, 1999.

Legislative Review: CSL and SPI must provide opportunities for the education committees of the Legislature to review the assessments and proposed modifications to the EALRS before modifications are adopted.

Mandatory Use of the Assessments: Beginning in the 1997-98 school year, the elementary assessment for reading, writing, communications, and math is mandatory.

By December 15, 1998, CSL must recommend to the Legislature a revised timeline for implementing the student assessments and when districts shall be required to participate. The history, civic, geography, arts, health/fitness and elementary science assessments are mandatory three years after available.

Beginning in the 2000-01 school year, the middle and high school assessments for reading, writing, communications, math, and science are mandatory.

Accountability System: By November 1, 1997, CSL must recommend a statewide accountability system for K-4 reading. By June 30, 1999, the CSL must recommend a statewide accountability system for other subject areas and grade levels.

Joint Recommendations: By September 1997, CSL, SBE and SPI must present joint recommendations to the education committees of the Legislature on specified issues regarding the high school assessments, the certificate of mastery, and high school graduation requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 27, 1997.

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

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: When the Legislature passed education reform, it established a process and timelines to reach higher standards. We strongly support education reform and are concerned about the changes made in the bill. Some of the changes could be supported, such as the delay of the development of some of the assessments; the initial focus on reading, writing, communications and the sciences; and changing the link between the COM and graduation. But the lack of timelines for the development of many of the assessments cannot be supported. Without timelines, the assessments may not be developed. The deletion of the Certificate of Mastery (COM) cannot be supported. COM is a critical part of the accountability system. It ensures that a student has achieved certain academic knowledge. Eliminating COM is premature. There is currently an ad hoc committee working on developing COM and will have recommendations by June 1997.

Testified: CON: Marlene Holayter, CSL; Steve Mullin, Washington Business Roundtable.