

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

PSHB 1674

Title: An act relating to educational accountability for students and schools.

Brief Description: Providing educational accountability for students and schools.

Sponsors: Representatives Talcott, Veltoria, Carlson, DeBolt, Wensman, Rockefeller, Bush, Thomas, Clements and Romero.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Meeting Date: February 15, 1999.

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

CURRENT LAW:

By law, sometime in the future, students will be required to obtain a Certificate of Mastery in order to graduate from high school. The achievement of the certificate will be based on the successful completion of a series of subject matter assessments developed by the state. The State Board of Education (SBE) is required to determine whether the high school assessment system has been implemented and whether it is sufficiently reliable and valid. Once the board makes that determination, successful completion of the assessments will lead to a Certificate of Mastery.

The law that includes these requirements also directed three educational agencies to report on the implementation of the Certificate of Mastery to the House and Senate Education Committees. On September 30, 1997, the Washington Commission on Student Learning (CSL), State Board of Education (SBE), and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) presented the required report. Most of the recommendations in the report reflected the work of the CSL's Certificate of Mastery Ad Hoc Committee. The CSL and SBE added some recommendations to those of the ad hoc committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CERTIFICATE OF MASTERY AD HOC COMMITTEE:

- A comprehensive plan for continuous professional development for all educators should be implemented.

- The implementation plan for the Certificate of Mastery should include a number of components. The components cover: voluntary participation in the 10th grade assessment in 1999; a timeline for implementing the Certificate of Mastery in 1998, in order to give students adequate notice of the new graduation requirements; and a three step approach to implementation. The recommended steps are described:

In step one, students graduating in 2006 should be the first group required to earn a Certificate of Mastery as a requirement of high school graduation.

In step two, students should be given an opportunity to earn state-level endorsements in content areas that are not included in the initial assessments. These endorsements should be posted on students' official transcripts.

In step three, the content areas that comprise the Certificate of Mastery should be reviewed on a biennial cycle. The biennial review identified in step three should examine a number of content and assessment issues. Some of those issues are described in the report.

- Future advisory groups working on the Certificate of Mastery should build flexibility into the assessment system. The ad hoc committee recommended several areas of flexibility for students. Students should have multiple opportunities to pass the assessment. They should be permitted to retake subsections of the assessment without taking the entire test. However, once a student passes the assessment, the student should not be able to take it again. The ad hoc committee also described other areas in which flexibility should be considered.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON STUDENT LEARNING:

The CSL added three recommendations to those of the ad hoc committee. The commission recommended that science be phased in as an additional requirement with the class of 2008. The CSL also recommended that the biennial review process consider the feasibility of including classroom based assessments as part of the Certificate of Mastery. Finally, the commission reiterated its recommendation that private and home schooled students should not be required to earn a Certificate of Mastery.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION:

The SBE added five recommendations to those of the ad hoc committee. In one of the recommendations, the board suggested that it be given statutory responsibility for the biennial review process and for approving all aspects of the Certificate of Mastery. The SBE also recommended that more discussion and investigation occur

before final decisions are made distinguishing requirements for the Certificate of Mastery and a high school diploma.

Summary of Bill:

CERTIFICATE OF ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY

The Certificate of Mastery is renamed the Certificate of Academic Proficiency (CAP). Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, the achievement of a certificate will be one of the state's high school graduation requirements. Each student's official transcript will include information on whether the student met the requirements of the CAP and the highest proficiency level attained in each subject. If a student fails to meet the standard in any content area, the student may retake the assessment at no cost. If a student meets all content area standards but wishes to improve his or her proficiency level in a particular content area, the student may retake the assessment once at his or her own expense. At least once a year, school districts must provide students with an opportunity to retake the high school assessments.

ADDITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

The State Board of Education will adopt minimum state graduation requirements in addition to the achievement of a certificate of academic proficiency. Before the SBE adopts new graduation requirements, it will present them to the House and Senate Education Committees for the committees' review and comment. School districts may establish additional local graduation requirements. The requirements may include, but are not limited to community service, senior projects, Carnegie units, student portfolios, and classroom-based assessments.

HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS:

By the date that each high school subject matter assessment is required statewide, the SBE will determine whether the assessment has been implemented and whether it is reliable and valid. From the time the SBE makes that determination, until the achievement of a certificate of academic proficiency becomes a high school graduation requirement, school districts may offer a certificate to students who successfully complete the high school assessments.

Successful completion of the high school assessments in reading, writing, communications, mathematics, and science will lead to a certificate of academic proficiency. Successful completion of assessment in arts and health and fitness will lead to an endorsement on a student's transcript. Successful completion of the high school social studies assessment may lead to an endorsement, or may become one of the requirements for a certificate, as determined by law.

OPTIONS FOR HOME SCHOOLED AND PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENTS:

Home-schooled students and students enrolled in private schools are not required to achieve a Certificate of Academic Proficiency or meet the essential academic learning requirements. In addition, home-schooled students and students enrolled in private schools are not required to meet either requirement as a condition of entering a public college or university.

CAP ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

By September 1, 1999, OSPI will convene an advisory committee on the CAP. The advisory committee will include representatives of students, parents, educators, administrators, school directors, principals, community members, employers, employee organizations, and four other state agencies. Members of the committee may receive statutorily limited per diem and mileage allowances.

The advisory committee will examine a variety of issues that affect the Certificate of Academic Proficiency. These issues include:

- } By December 31, 1999, incentives to encourage students to obtain a CAP before it's achievement becomes a high school graduation requirement. The incentives may not apply to home-schooled students who participate in the Running Start Program.
- } Assessment and educational program options for students who achieve the CAP early in their high school careers.
- } Assistance and educational program options for students who need additional time and effort to achieve a CAP. The assistance will include individual student improvement plans.
- } Processes to identify students who will not achieve a CAP, and, by December 31, 2002, educational program options for them.
- } By December 31, 2004, a review and analysis of the requirement that students achieve a certificate in order to graduate from high school.

Beginning with January 5, 2000, the OSPI is required to report annually to the House and Senate Education Committees on the findings and recommendations of the advisory committee. Before any policy recommended by the advisory committee is implemented, the policy must be provided to the two Legislative education committees for their review and comment.

EXISTING STATUTORY LANGUAGE MOVED OR REMOVED:

Statutory language that required a report to the Legislature on high school assessments by September 30, 1997 is removed. Statutory language that exempted private school students from the essential academic learning requirements and the achievement of the

Certificate of Mastery is moved from one subsection of their statute to another subsection. The name of the certificate of mastery is changed. Several uncodified statutes that reference the expiration date for the Commission on Student Learning and that are ambiguous are repealed.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE AND ORIGINAL BILL:

References are removed to science assessments and assessments other than the high school assessments. Health assessments are reinstated. The Legislature will not determine state minimum high school graduation requirements beginning in 2006. The timeline for SBE approval of the high school assessments is refined. A student's proficiency level instead of score is inscribed on the student's transcript. Students who have achieved the proficiency level on a subject matter assessment may retake each assessment once to try to improve their proficiency levels. School districts must offer students an opportunity to retake assessments once a year. Social studies assessments are referred in place of history, civics, and geography. Achievement of a certificate will be required for the graduating class of 2006 instead of 2008. The duties and makeup of the CAP advisory committee are revised. The findings and recommendations of the CAP advisory committee and new graduation requirements proposed by the SBE will be presented to the House and Senate Education Committees for their review and comment prior to implementation of new policies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 10, 1999.

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