

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1891

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, April 1, 1999

Title: An act relating to student assessments.

Brief Description: Changing student assessments.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Quall, Talcott and Rockefeller; by request of Commission on Student Learning and Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 3/25/99, 3/31/99, 4/1/99 [DPA, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Goings, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Finkbeiner, Hochstatter, Swecker and Zarelli.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: The state currently requires the following statewide student assessments.

Reading accuracy and fluency test: School districts must assess reading accuracy and fluency in the second grade.

Basic skills assessments: School districts must assess basic skills in the third, eighth, and eleventh grades. The third grade test assesses reading and math skills. The eighth grade test assesses reading, math, language, reasoning and thinking skills, and inventories student interests. The eleventh grade test assesses skills in the broad content areas common to high school, and thinking and reasoning skills. Prior to the 1998-99 school year, the assessment used was the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). The current test is the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) at the elementary school level: The WASL is currently required in reading, writing, communication (listening), and math at the fourth grade. There are statutory timelines for implementing an elementary level WASL in science. There are no timelines for implementing the WASL in other content areas at the elementary school level.

WASL at the middle and high school levels: There are statutory timelines for implementing a middle and high school level WASL in reading, writing, communication (listening), math, science, history, civics, geography, arts, and health and fitness.

Summary of Amended Bill: Changes are made regarding the statewide student assessments.

Reading accuracy and fluency test: It is clarified that the second grade assessment measures oral reading skills. The Superintendent of Public Instruction may add additional reading passages to be used by school districts.

Basic skills assessments: The third grade test is retained. A new sixth grade basic skills assessment in math and reading/language arts is required. The eighth grade assessment is moved to the ninth grade. The eleventh grade assessment is repealed.

WASL at the elementary school level: Timelines are created for implementing the WASL in social studies, health, fitness, and the arts at the elementary level.

WASL at the middle and high school levels: The required date for implementing the reading, writing, communications, and math assessment at the middle school level is accelerated one year to begin in 1999-00. The implementation of the WASL in social studies, health, and fitness at the middle and high school levels is delayed for two years. The implementation of the WASL in the arts at the middle and high school levels is delayed for three years.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The requirement that all the basic skills tests must be consistent with the essential academic requirements is deleted. The required date for implementing the seventh grade reading, writing, communication, and math test is not moved up to 1999-2000 from 2000-2001. The student interest inventory with the ninth grade test is required instead of permitted. There is no null and void clause.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except Section 606, which takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: This bill creates a rational order of tests by rearranging, adding, and getting rid of tests so that there is a basic skills test one year followed by a test that requires a student to apply those basic skills. It is important to have state standards and assessments in all the content areas, including social studies and health and fitness. Without the assessments teachers do not have the tools they need to evaluate their teaching and evaluate the students' learning. If there is no commitment from the state to require a test at the elementary school level then districts will not give attention to the content area in the elementary grades and the student will not be adequately prepared for the test required in the middle and high school grades.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: No one.