

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5825

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 24, 1999
Ways & Means, March 3, 1999

Title: An act relating to student assessments.

Brief Description: Changing student assessments.

Sponsors: Senator McAuliffe; by request of Commission on Student Learning and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/11/99, 2/24/99 [DPS-WM, DNPS].
Ways & Means: 3/2/99, 3/3/99 [DP2S, DNPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5825 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Minority Report: Do not pass substitute.

Signed by Senators Benton, Finkbeiner, Hochstatter, Sellar, Swecker and Zarelli.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5825 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Loveland, Chair; Fairley, Fraser, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Thibaudeau, West, Winsley and Wojahn.

Minority Report: Do not pass substitute.

Signed by Senators Honeyford, Roach, Rossi and Zarelli.

Staff: Bill Freund (786-7441)

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 Second Substitute Bill: Changes are made regarding the statewide student assessments. If student scores indicate that a student needs help, then the school district must evaluate its instructional practices and make appropriate adjustments.

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. All the basic skill tests must be consistent with the essential academic learning requirements. 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 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.

Second Substitute Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: If students' scores on tests indicate they need help in identified areas, the district must make appropriate adjustments.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill deletes the requirement that schools participate if SPI accepts an invitation to participate in national sample assessments.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Education reform requires that there is a statewide system of student assessment. This bill creates a sensible system 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. As for the Goal II WASL timelines, there is strong agreement in the field that it is important to have assessments in social studies, arts, health and fitness to show that those subjects are valued at the state level. But it is also important to delay the requirement of the WASL assessments in those areas because it is too much too fast.

Testimony Against: None

Testified: PRO: Dr. Terry Bergeson, SPI; Michael Papritz, CSL; Jane Gutting, ESD 105; Gretchen Johnston, Washington State Arts Alliance; Linda Elman, Central Kitsap School District.