

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1240

As Reported by House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to the Washington assessment of student learning.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to the Washington assessment of student learning.

Sponsors: Representatives Schindler, Quall, Talcott, Pearson, Cox, Keiser, Campbell, D. Schmidt and Haigh.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/5/01, 2/21/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Beginning September 1, 2002, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will release the scored writing portion of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to the school of each participating student for use by the student and the student's parents and teacher.
- By September 1, 2001, the OSPI will report to the Governor and legislative committees on the cost of releasing additional test questions and answers for all the WASLs.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Anderson, Republican Vice Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Cox, Ericksen, Keiser, McDermott, Pearson, Rockefeller, Santos, Schindler, D. Schmidt and Schual-Berke.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

By law, most fourth, seventh, and 10th grade public school students in Washington are, or soon will be, required to take a WASL test for their grade level in reading, writing, listening, and mathematics. Additional WASLs in science and social studies are under development, and others may follow. The standards, also called essential academic learning requirements, were developed initially by the Commission on Student Learning. House Bill 1209, the legislation that created the system of standards and assessments, addressed some of the anticipated uses of the WASLs. One of the provisions of the legislation states: "The assessment system shall be designed so that the results under the assessment system are used by educators as tools to evaluate instructional practices, and to initiate appropriate educational support for students who have not learned the essential academic learning requirements at the appropriate periods in the student's educational development."

Once the WASLs are scored by the testing company that prepared them and the results are considered valid and reliable, parents and teachers have access to information on how each student performed on the assessments. However, the scored test booklets are not returned to parents or teachers. A number of parents and teachers have requested system changes to permit the return of those scored test booklets. The OSPI is reviewing a number of issues associated that policy change. Her budget request for the 2001-03 biennium included funding to double score the writing assessments and to return to the state and school districts a CD ROM with the scored tests.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Beginning September 1, 2002, once the Washington assessments of student learning are scored and the data are complete and accurate, the OSPI will provide the scored writing portion of the test to the schools of those who took it. The schools will make available the writing test and the scoring criteria used to evaluate it to students and the teachers and parents or guardians of those students. The students' teachers will not be required to correct the tests.

By September 1, 2001, the OSPI will report to the Governor and the fiscal and education committees of the Legislature on the costs of releasing additional test questions and answers for all portions of the WASL to schools, teachers, and parents.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Instead of making the scored writing assessment available, the OSPI and schools will make the writing portion of the WASL, along with the scoring criteria used to evaluate it, available to students, teachers, and parents. Teachers will not be required to correct the test. The OSPI will report on the cost of releasing to students, parents, and teachers additional test questions rather than releasing scored portions of the entire WASL.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 22, 2001.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Sections 1 and 4 take effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. Sections 2 and 3 take effect September 1, 2002.

Testimony For: Many parents and teachers have grave concerns about the WASL. They don't understand how it is scored or how to use it as a tool to improve student achievement. If some or all of the assessment could be returned to schools, it could more easily be used for curricular alignment and instructional improvement. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills, another standardized test, has an item analysis that helps teachers align their instruction to the skill gaps that their students show on the test. The same type of information should be made available on the WASL. This legislation is a good first step in beginning to demystify the WASL and make it a more useful tool for student instruction.

Testimony Against:

Testified: (In support) Representative Schindler, prime sponsor; Denny Eygabroad, Tumwater School District; Karen Davis, Washington Education Association; Charles Haase, Highline School District; Lloyd Gardner, Auburn Citizen; and Marta Kirkwood, Citizens United for Responsible Education.

(With concerns) Robert Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Greg Hall, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.