

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2210

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to student achievement.

Brief Description: Relating to student achievement.

Sponsors: Representatives Talcott (co-prime sponsor), Santos (co-prime sponsor), D. Schmidt, Armstrong, G. Chandler, Anderson, Rockefeller, Keiser, Haigh and Quall.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/26/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Revises the statutory timelines for the voluntary and required administration of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and asks the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to recommend a set of timelines for different ways that students can show they have met the state standards in the arts, fitness and health.
- Requires the Joint Select Committee on Education Restructuring (JSCER) to study a variety of issues on high school, including alternative ways that high school students can show that they have met the state's learning goals.
- Requires public school students in the class of 2008 to pass the reading, writing, and science WASLs in order to graduate from high school and creates multiple opportunities for them to retake the assessments.
- Clarifies the roles of the State Board of Education (SBE) and local school boards in setting high school graduation requirements.

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:

WASL - Timelines

By law, Washington's public school students must take standardized tests in a number of different subjects at various points in the students' educational careers. During elementary, middle school, and high school, the students are tested to determine whether they are meeting the state's learning standards for students at those grade levels. Tests in reading, writing, mathematics, and listening have already been developed and administered on either a voluntary or required basis for students in the fourth, seventh and 10th grades. By this spring, most students in those three grades must be tested in those subjects. In the future, students in elementary, middle school, and high school will also be tested in science, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness.

The timelines for the voluntary and required administration of all the tests are determined by law. The grade level at which a student will be tested is determined by rule. The tests will be used to ascertain whether the schools that the students attend are helping the students to meet the state's learning standards, also called the essential academic learning requirements. The tests will also be used to determine whether students are allowed to graduate from a public high school.

Last spring, schools pilot tested the science assessments. During the summer, staff from the SPI reviewed the results of the pilot tests and found a number of problems with the assessments. The analysis revealed that many of the questions were too difficult, that too much of the tests were comprised of science facts, and that too little of the tests assessed scientific inquiry and basic science concepts. In addition, some of scenarios included in assessments didn't work well. As a result, the SPI discussed the results of the tests and the office's subsequent analysis with its national technical advisory committee. The superintendent and the technical review committee concluded that the state needed more time to develop appropriate test items. Subsequently, the SPI first convened a group of national experts, followed by state science content committees, to revise the testing specifications and to work with contractors to prepare a bank of questions that will cover the next five years of science assessments. In addition, the superintendent announced her intention to ask the Legislature to delay the statutory timelines for the administration of the science assessments.

WASL - High School Graduation Requirements

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 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.

On January 12, 2000, the SBE adopted a rule that requires students in the graduating class of 2008 to successfully complete the WASL in reading, writing, communications, and mathematics in order to receive a high school diploma. Passage of the science assessment will be required for the graduating class of 2010. The decisions on the social studies, arts, and health and fitness assessments will be made at a later time. The board has indicated that passage of the social studies assessment may be required for graduation or may lead to an endorsement on the student's transcript. The board has also indicated that passage of the arts and the health and fitness assessments may lead to an endorsement on the student's transcript. The board will continue to monitor the implementation of the assessment system in order to determine its reliability and validity. It may delay its requirements if it finds that the system does not meet the board's interpretation of legal, policy, or technical definitions of validity and reliability.

High School Graduation Requirements - SBE

By law, the SBE is responsible for determining the state's minimum high school graduation requirements. The board began to review current requirements in the fall of 1997. Following 18 months of work that included 11 public forums conducted around the state and three public hearings, the board adopted new graduation requirements in October 2000. The requirements will be take effect for the graduating class of 2008.

Under the new requirements each student must obtain at least 19 academic credits. Any subject for which essential academic learning requirements have been adopted must include material on those requirements plus any additional material beyond the standards that has been developed by the district. In addition to the credit requirements, two new non-credit requirements are established. Each student will complete a culminating project that allows the student to demonstrate competency in goals three and four. In addition, students must have an education plan for high school and the year following graduation

Summary of Substitute Bill:

WASL - Timelines

The statutory timelines are revised for the voluntary and required administration of the science, social studies, arts, and health and fitness assessments of student learning.

The timelines for administration of the science assessments in middle and high school are

delayed for two years. The assessment must be available for voluntary use in the 2001-02 school year and for first required use in the 2003-04 school year. The timeline for the voluntary use of the elementary school science assessment is delayed by one year, to the 2003-03 school year. The first required administration of the science assessment remains unchanged.

The timelines for the administration of the social studies assessments in elementary, middle and high school are delayed for two years. The assessments must be available for voluntary use in the 2004-05 school year and for first required use in the 2007-08 school.

The timelines for the voluntary administration of the arts and fitness assessments are delayed for two years in elementary school, one year in middle school and remain unchanged for high school. The assessments must be available for voluntary use in the 2005-06 school year for elementary school, 2004-05 for middle school and 2003-04 for high school. The first required use of each will be determined by law at a later date. The timelines for the health assessment are separated from those for the fitness assessment. The timelines for the health assessments will be determined at a later date.

The SPI, in consultation with a representative of the Governor and the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative education committee, is directed to study and report recommendations on appropriate timelines for the following assessment system. The study would consider:

- A statewide, juried, performance-based high school assessment system leading to endorsements in the arts;
- A statewide, performance-based high school assessment system leading to endorsements in fitness;
- A locally-based assessment system in fitness and the arts for elementary and middle and junior high school students;
- A locally-based assessment system in health. The report on the health assessment system will also include the appropriate grades in which a health assessment should be available and required.

WASL - High School Graduation Requirements

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, public school students must successfully complete the high school WASL in reading, writing and mathematics in order to receive a high school diploma. The current name for that accomplishment, certificate of mastery, is removed. The Legislature must determine the date that successful completion of other assessments first become required for graduation. School districts may adopt

additional graduation requirements. The requirements may include, but are not limited to community service, senior projects, Carnegie units, student portfolios, and classroom-based assessments.

Each student's official transcript will include information on the student's performance on the WASL, including the highest score 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.

Home-schooled students and students enrolled in private schools are not required to take or pass the WASLs 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.

High School Graduation Requirements - SBE

The SBE will limit its minimum high school graduation requirements to either the subject matter competencies that students must demonstrate or to the subject matter Carnegie units that students may complete. Local school boards have the sole authority to determine how to organize a student's learning opportunities. The boards also have the sole authority to determine the means by which each student will demonstrate subject matter competence and the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the state's learning goals.

JSCER Study

The JSCER will examine a variety of issues that affect high school students. These issues include:

- Assessment and educational program options for students who pass the high school assessments during the 10th grade.
- Assistance, student improvement plans and educational program options for students who need additional time and effort to pass the assessments.
- One or more alternative assessment methods that permit high school students to demonstrate that they have met the state's academic standards and the essential academic learning requirements by a method other than the WASL.

By October 31, 2005, a review and analysis of the requirement that students pass certain assessments in order to graduate from a public high school.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill was title only.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: Under the state's current accountability system, students are the only individuals who are held accountable for academic achievement. Beginning in 2008 they must pass the WASL in order to graduate. This legislation puts the state's elected representatives out in front, protecting the students by making sure that all the components of the educational system are in place before that point is reached. In addition, it protects the ability of local school directors to decide how to arrange the high school curriculum to make sure that students meet the state's high academic standards.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Talcott, prime sponsor; and Dick Muri, Steilacoom School District.