

HOUSE BILL REPORT

3ESHB 2195

As Passed House:

January 23, 2004

Title: An act relating to state academic standards.

Brief Description: Regarding state assessment standards.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives McDermott, Talcott, Quall, Tom and Haigh).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/5/03 [DPS];
Appropriations: 3/8/03 [DPS(ED)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/17/03, 97-0.
Senate Amended.
Passed Senate: 4/17/03, 40-7.
House refused to Concur. Asks Senate to Recede.

First Special Session

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 6/5/03, 91-6.

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 1/23/04, 95-2.

Brief Summary of Third Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Clarifies the content areas of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) that high school students must pass in order to graduate and the dates that those content areas become required for graduation.
- Describes the system that must be in place before the high school WASL is required for graduation and requires agencies to report on some of the issues related to the requirement.
- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to review and prioritize the essential academic learning requirements and identify, for teachers and parents, the grade level content expectations that will be included on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

- Directs SPI to report the results on the reading and mathematics WASLs in a format that will allow parents and teachers to determine the academic gain a student has acquired in those subjects from one school year to the next.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Cox, McMahan, Rockefeller and Santos.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Haigh and Hunter.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Education be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 22 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Pearson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Boldt, Buck, Clements, Cody, Cox, DeBolt, Grant, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, McDonald, Miloscia, Pflug, Ruderman, Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Conway, Dunshee, Linville, McIntire and Schual-Berke.

Staff: Denise Graham (786-7137).

Background:

Washington Assessment of Student Learning - 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 the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). The WASL, when fully implemented, will include a number of content areas: reading, writing, communications (listening), mathematics, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness. 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 SBE makes that determination,

successful completion of the high school WASL 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 WASL will be required for the graduating class of 2010.

The SBE delayed any decisions on requiring successful completion of the social studies, arts, and health and fitness assessments for graduation. The SBE has indicated that passage of the social studies WASL may be required for graduation or may lead to an endorsement on the student's transcript. The SBE has also indicated that passage of the arts and the health and fitness WASLs may lead to an endorsement on the student's transcript.

The SBE will continue to monitor the implementation of the WASL in order to determine its reliability and validity. It may delay its requirements if it finds that the system does not meet the SBE's interpretation of the legal, policy, or technical definitions of validity and reliability.

State Board of Education - High School Graduation Requirements

By law, the SBE is responsible for determining the state's minimum high school graduation requirements. The SBE adopted new graduation requirements in October 2000. The requirements will take effect for the graduating class of 2008.

Under the new requirements, each student must earn at least 19 academic credits. Any subject for which essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) 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 of education reform. In addition, students must have an education plan for high school and the year following graduation.

Washington Assessment of Student Learning - Implementation Responsibilities

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is responsible for creating, updating, and reporting on the EALRs and the WASL. The Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission (A+ Commission) is responsible for determining the score that students must achieve to successfully complete the assessment.

Summary of Third Engrossed Substitute Bill:

Certificate of Academic Achievement

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, public school students who pass the high school WASL in reading, writing and mathematics will receive a Certificate of Academic Achievement, formerly called the Certificate of Mastery. Science is added to the certificate in 2010. Students may achieve a Certificate of Academic Achievement through success on the tenth grade WASL, or through success on a retake of the content areas in which a student was initially unsuccessful, or through an approved alternative means.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, the Certificate of Academic Achievement will be required for graduation from a public high school. The requirement does not apply to some special education students, students enrolled in private schools or students who are home-schooled.

Special education students for whom the high school WASL is inappropriate, even with accommodations, may complete other measures included in the students' individualized instruction plans and earn a Certificate of Completion.

Students who are in the state's Transitional Bilingual Instruction program will have learning plans, opportunities to retake the high school assessments, and opportunities to participate in alternative means to demonstrate achievement. In addition, the SPI and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) will develop a plan to provide these students with continuing education options.

Each fifth grade and eighth through twelfth grade student who fails to successfully complete the WASL in one or more of the content areas included in the certificate will have a plan that includes the steps the student needs to take to stay on track for graduation. The plan will be shared with parents. The year when the plan must be available is staggered over the next two school years for students in the fifth, eighth and ninth grades.

Students who are subject to the requirement will have at least two opportunities a year to retake the WASL in the content areas in which they were unsuccessful. Students in high school completion programs will also have access to retakes. In addition to retakes, students who have been unsuccessful in a required area may use an alternative means to demonstrate achievement of the state standards. The alternative means must be comparable in rigor to the WASL and must be approved by the Legislature prior to implementation.

Students may retain and use the highest result they get for each content area of the high school WASL. Students who are successful but who wish to retake the WASL to improve their results must pay for the test, using a uniform cost developed by SPI. Students who are unsuccessful may retake the WASL in that content area without charge.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2005, the highest level and score that a student achieves in each content area will be displayed on the student's transcript. In addition, a student will receive a scholar's recognition on the transcript if the student exceeds the state standards at level four. The award of a Certificate of Academic Achievement or Certificate of Completion will be acknowledged on the student's diploma as well as in the student's transcript.

A series of actions and reports on various aspects of the high school assessment system are required of three state education agencies during 2004.

By July 1, 2004, SPI will report its recommendations for alternative means, including an appeals process, to the Governor, the state board, and the legislative education committees.

Before September 2004, the A+ Commission will review and adjust the passing scores for the tenth grade WASL. The A+ Commission may use a range of scores (standard error of measurement) or a compensatory model instead of one set number to determine the passing scores. Any decision will be shared with the legislative education committees in time for the Legislature to take action before the decision is implemented.

By November 30, 2004, SPI and the state board will report to the House and Senate Education Committees with all pertinent information, studies and analyses on the validity and reliability of the high school assessment system and its use for individual student decisions.

By December 1, 2004, SPI and the SBCTC will report to the legislative education and fiscal committees with recommendations for any actions and resources necessary to provide a continuing education option for students in the Transitional Bilingual Instruction program who would be more age-appropriately suited for post-secondary education than high school.

By October 1, 2010, SPI will report to the Legislature and the A+ Commission on the effect of the certificate requirements on dropout rates.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements and Assessments

By September 1, 2004, SPI will report to the legislative education committees with assessment options and other strategies to ensure continued support and attention to the essential academic learning requirements in social studies, the arts, and health and fitness.

By the end of the 2008-09 school year, school districts will have in place, assessments or other strategies to ensure that students have an opportunity to learn the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) in social studies, the arts, and health and fitness in elementary, middle, and high school. The districts will annually submit implementation verification reports to SPI on the use of those assessments or strategies.

The SPI will review and prioritize the EALRs and identify which EALRs and grade level content expectations will be included on the WASL and used for accountability purposes.

The review will result in more focus, with an emphasis of depth over breadth. The content expectations will be sequenced, logical, build with increasing depth and reflect the sequential nature of the discipline.

By September 2006, WASL results for reading and math will be reported in a way that allows parents and teachers to see the academic gain a student has made from one year to the next.

In order to help parents and teachers provide support to students, SPI will provide as much individual student information as possible within the constraints of the assessment system's item bank. The SPI will also make available to teachers a collection of diagnostic tools that may be used to evaluate the academic status of individual students.

The SPI will post on its website, model assessments and lists of resources in social studies, the arts, and health and fitness.

Subject to available funding, SPI will report to the Governor, the state board, and the legislative education committees with the results of an independent study of the alignment of the state standards and assessments in reading, writing and science. The agency will also report on its review and revision of the state standards in each content area. A timeline for the reports is included.

RCW 28A.655.060 is repealed and most of the currently operative language is included in this legislation. Timelines for mandatory assessments in reading, writing, mathematics and science are included. Timelines for mandatory state level assessments in social studies, the arts, and health and fitness are not included, but a date is adopted by which assessments or other strategies must be in place for those subjects.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on June 30, 2003. However, the bill is null and void if not funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Education) This legislation creates a set of principles to underpin the state's academic standards. It will provide students, parents, and educators with a better understanding of the state's assessment system. It will allow parents and teachers to see how much a student has learned in reading and math over the course of a year. It will also give educators more of the tools they need to raise children to state standards by making sure they know which EALRs and grade level content expectations will be assessed on the WASL. It will also make sure that teachers and parents are given more information on the areas where students performed well or poorly on the assessments. It promotes academic focus, emphasizes depth over breadth, requires an examination of the

cut score for state assessments, and aligns state and federal reporting requirements. The legislation is a work in progress.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) This is a big policy bill. It makes it very clear in less than three pages what is expected of our students and teachers. The provisions of the bill will help teachers help their students by providing clear, targeted goals that are articulated logically and sequentially. Teachers will know what is tested on the WASL and how to help students who fail.

Testimony Against: (Education) Passage of this legislation may well lead to confusion among educators. It will cost money and may well send the wrong signal to educators about whether the state plans to "stay the course" on education reform. The OSPI promises to implement many of the elements of the legislation, but does not wish to see the elements included in law. Including some of the principles in law may have unintended consequences in future years. The state is making progress toward reform without this legislation, so it is unnecessary.

(With concerns) An existing law is included in the legislation that describes the timelines for state assessments; the inclusion of that section may raise concerns among teachers in subjects that are not yet assessed. Any change to state academic standards should be carefully considered using a deliberate pace and this bill was introduced very recently. The legislature needs to be very careful about the messages it sends on academic standards so that teachers are not confused about the legislature's commitment to education reform.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Education) (In support) Representative McDermott, prime sponsor; and Joanne McCann, Citizens United for Responsible Education; and Ann Randall, Washington Education Association.

(With concerns) Steve Mullin, Washington Roundtable; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

(Opposed) Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals; Bob Butts, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Judy Hartmann, Governor's Office.

Testified: (Appropriations) Rich Ham, Washington Education Association; Bob Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Representative Talcott, prime sponsor; and Ann Randall, Washington Education Association