
Education Committee

HB 2124

Brief Description: Regarding high school graduation requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Talcott, McDermott, Tom, Haigh, Cox, Rockefeller, Hunter, Santos, Edwards and Anderson.

Brief Summary of 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 the progress of addressing some of the issues related to the requirement.
- Renames the Certificate of Mastery as the Certificate of Academic Proficiency.

Hearing Date: 2/27/03

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

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). 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 decisions on how to include the social studies, arts, and health and fitness assessments into high school graduation requirements will be made at a later time. The board 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 board has also indicated that passage of the arts and the health and fitness WASL 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 board's interpretation of 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 board began to review current requirements in the fall of 1997. Following 18 months of work that included eleven 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 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 Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) 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 Bill:

1. Public school students who pass the high school assessment system the content areas of reading, writing, mathematics and science will receive a Certificate of Academic Proficiency (CAP). Students may achieve a CAP through success in those content areas 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 alternative means that demonstrates that the student has met state standards in that content area, including an appeals process.

2. The CAP will be required for graduation from a public high school subject to a series of conditions that include:
 - (a) The SPI must first find that the testing system for those content areas is sufficiently valid and reliable to be used for decisions about individual students;
 - (b) Retakes and alternative ways of assessing students, including an appeals process; must be in place; and
 - (c) Each eighth through twelfth grade student who fails to successfully complete the WASL in one or more of the content areas included in the CAP will have a high school graduation plan.
3. Beginning with the class of 2008, in order to graduate from a public high school, students must successfully complete the high school WASL in the content areas of reading and mathematics. The graduating class of 2010 must also pass the WASL in writing and the class of 2012 must pass it in science.
4. Beginning with the class of 2008, students will have at least two opportunities each 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 developed and approved by the SPI to demonstrate achievement of the state standards.
5. The CAP graduation requirement does not apply to students enrolled in private schools or students who are home-schooled.
6. Students may retain and use their highest score for each content area of the WASL.
7. A number of these requirements must be completed by certain dates.
 - (a) By June 1, 2004, the SPI must report to the Governor and the House and Senate Education Committees on whether the high school WASL in the content areas of reading, writing, and mathematics is sufficiently valid and reliable to be used for individual student decisions. The same report for science is due by December 15, 2005.
 - (b) By the spring of 2004, opportunities to retake the high school WASL will begin. By 2006, students will also have an opportunity to retake the WASL in the fall.
 - (c) By 2006, the results of the high school WASL will be returned to students, parents and schools by June 1st of each year.
8. In determining whether the high school assessment system for the CAP is valid and reliable, the SPI must consider a number of factors described in the legislation, including

whether students have had an opportunity to learn the information covered by the CAP.

9. The A+ Commission will review and adjust, if necessary, the cut scores that students must achieve on the high school WASL. The A+ Commission must consider using the standard error of measurement for decisions related to the certificate of academic proficiency. The A+ Commission must complete its work before the results of the 2004 high school WASL are returned to school districts. In addition, the Commission will report the results of these efforts to the Governor, the SPI and the House and Senate Education Committees.
10. With the assistance of an advisory committee, the SPI will develop alternative assessment options, procedures and criteria, including an appeals process, for students to use to demonstrate achievement of the state standards required for a CAP. By July 1, 2004, the SPI will report to the Governor and the House and Senate Education Committees with recommendations for alternative assessments and appeals. By July 1, 2005, alternative assessment options will be available for voluntary use, subject to funding.
11. The SPI will convene three task forces to provide advice on various aspects of the CAP. By September 1, 2003, each task force will provide a progress report to the SPI. By November 30, 2003, each of the task forces will provide its recommendations to the Governor, the SPI, and the House and Senate Education Committees.
 - (a) One task force will provide advice on the appropriate application of the CAP requirement to special education students. The task force will recommend one or more ways to acknowledge the accomplishments of students who completed their individual education plans but did not achieve a CAP.
 - (b) One task force will provide advice on the appropriate application of the CAP requirement to students with limited English proficiency. The task force will recommend one or more ways to acknowledge the accomplishments of limited English proficient students who meet every state and local graduation requirement except that of the CAP.
 - (c) One task force will recommend best practices that schools may use with middle and high school students who need additional assistance to meet the requirements of the CAP. The task force will examine ways that current programs and student counseling efforts can be adjusted to meet those needs. It will also identify additional tools needed to provide that help to students. Finally, it will consider the elements that should be included in the high school graduation plans prepared for students who do not succeed in passing the WASL in subjects covered by the CAP.
12. In order to help teachers, the SPI will provide them with as much individual student performance information as possible within the constraints of the assessment system's item bank. In addition, the SPI will provide school districts with information on classroom-based and other assessments that may provide additional achievement information for individual students.

13. The SBE may not require that students have a plan in order to graduate from high school.

Differences Between HB 1988 and HB 2124

1. The bill title is revised.
2. The name of the certificate is revised to Certificate of Academic Proficiency.
3. The dates that writing and science will be required for the Certificate are each delayed for two years, to 2010 for writing and 2012 for science.
4. The SBE may not require that students have a plan in order to graduate from high school.
5. Some detail is added to the high school graduation plan that districts must prepare for middle and high school students who do not pass the WASL in one or more content areas required for high school graduation.

Differences Between Current Law and HB 2124

1. The Certificate of Mastery is renamed the Certificate of Academic Proficiency (CAP).
2. The content areas required for the certificate are limited to reading, writing, mathematics and science. It does not include communications, social studies, the arts, or health and fitness.
3. The subjects included in the certificate are phased in on certain dates rather than required once the SBE decides that the WASL system is sufficiently valid and reliable to use for the purpose of high school graduation.
4. The determination on the validity and reliability of the WASL is moved from the SBE to the SPI and the factors to be considered are described.
5. The WASL is defined to include the high school assessments, retakes of the assessment in unsuccessful content areas, and an alternative means of assessment that includes an appeals process.
6. The A+ Commission is required to reexamine cut scores and consider the inclusion of a standard error of measurement into decisions on the CAP.
7. The SPI is given new guidance on the assessment system. The SPI will provide teachers with as much individual student performance information as possible within the constraints of the assessment system's item bank. In addition, the SPI will provide school districts with information on classroom-based and other assessments that may provide additional achievement information for individual students.

8. The SPI is given direction to create task forces and report back within the year on the appropriate way to consider the needs of special education students and limited English proficient students in this system. It will also report on the way to provide assistance to struggling students.
9. The SBE may not require a plan of students as a condition for high school graduation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 2/27/03.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.