

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2ESHB 2195

As Passed House
June 5, 2003

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.

Brief Summary of Second 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 the progress of addressing some of the issues related to assessments, the essential academic learning requirements, and the certificate.
 - Renames the Certificate of Mastery the Certificate of Academic Achievement.
-
- 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:

Essential Academic Learning Requirements and Assessments

Under current law, Washington has or is in the process of developing or refining essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) in reading, writing, communications (listening), mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness. The state has developed assessments to see whether students have learned the EALRs in reading, writing, listening, mathematics and science. It is in the process of developing state assessments in social studies, the arts, and health and fitness. Together, these assessments comprise the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). The WASL is administered to public school students in the fourth, seventh, and tenth grades. It is used as a measure to determine whether schools are teaching children the knowledge and skills required to meet the state's academic standards in the assessed subjects. Currently, students are not held accountable for the results of these assessments.

Beginning in 1998 the Legislature set improvement goals into law for student performance on the fourth grade reading WASL. In 1999 the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission (A+ Commission) was created and given the authority to adopt or revise academic improvement goals for fourth and seventh grade and high school in reading, writing, mathematics and science, as measured by the WASL. In 2002, the law was revised to give the A+ Commission additional authority to adopt goals that eliminate the achievement gap and improve high school graduation rates. Although there are no consequences attached to the goals, school and school district progress toward the goals is reported to parents, the community and the state.

In late 2001 Congress passed the "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001." The act requires every state to assess students in reading/language arts and mathematics in grades three through eight, and once in high school. It also requires schools and districts to get every child to state standards in those subjects by 2013-2014. The legislation describes a formula for getting children to the standards. The formula is called "adequate yearly progress" (AYP). The federal law describes consequences for schools that use federal Title I funds but fail over several years to meet AYP.

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 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 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 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 SBEs 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 11 public forums conducted around the state and three public hearings, 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 Second Engrossed Substitute Bill:

Essential Academic Learning Requirements and Assessments

By September 1, 2004, SPI will report to the legislative education committees assessment options and other strategies to assure 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 assure that students have an opportunity to learn the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) in social studies, the arts, and health and fitness.

SPI will review and prioritize the EALR's 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. In addition, SPI will post on its website all learning requirements that have been provided to assessment vendors to use in constructing the WASL.

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.

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

RCW 28A.655.060 is repealed and most of the operative language is included in this legislation. The listening assessment is eliminated. Timelines for mandatory 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.

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. 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 students enrolled in private schools or to home-schooled students.

Beginning no later than 2006, each 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.

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 in 2008, the highest level 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.

By November 30, 2003, SPI will report to the House and Senate Education Committees with recommendations on the application of the certificate to special education students and students with limited English proficiency. In addition, before September 2004, the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission will review and adjust the passing scores for the tenth grade WASL. The Commission may use a range of scores (standard error of measurement) instead of one set number to determine the passing scores. Any revised scores will be shared with the legislative education committees before implementation.

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