

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 2124

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, April 4, 2003

Title: An act relating to high school graduation requirements.

Brief Description: Regarding high school graduation requirements.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Quall, Talcott, McDermott, Tom, Haigh, Cox, Rockefeller, Hunter, Santos, Edwards and Anderson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 3/25/03, 4/4/03 [DPA, DNPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Johnson, Chair; Carlson, Finkbeiner, Rasmussen and Schmidt.

Minority Report: Do not pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Eide and McAuliffe.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Current law requires a statewide academic assessment system that includes a variety of assessment methods including criterion-referenced and performance-based measures, to determine if elementary, middle and high school students have learned the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), which are what students should know and be able to do. The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) has been developed to assess the EALRs. Successful completion of the 10th grade WASL leads to a Certificate of Mastery (COM). There is currently no provision for retakes or alternative assessments for students who do not successfully complete the 10th grade WASL. The COM will become a high school graduation requirement, but not the only requirement, when the State Board of Education (SBE) determines that the 10th grade WASL is reliable and valid enough to be used in this manner. The SBE anticipates that the COM will become a graduation requirement in 2008. Other state graduation requirements developed by the SBE include minimum subject areas and credits, a culminating student project, and an education plan for the student's high school experience and the year following graduation.

Summary of Amended Bill: High School Assessment System: The high school assessment system includes the WASL, an opportunity for one retake in content areas where students are not successful, and one or more alternative means of demonstrating achievement of the state standards, including an appeals process. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must develop classroom-based assessments that may be used by school districts.

Certificate of Academic Proficiency: The COM is renamed the Scholar's Certificate or Certificate of Achievement. A Scholar's Certificate is received by students who pass the WASL on the first attempt or who pass a retake on the first attempt in the content area where the student was unsuccessful. If a student fails the retake, then the student may receive a Certificate of Achievement if the student can demonstrate that he or she meets the state standards on an alternate means of assessment. Spring retakes begin in 2007. The certificate requirements do not apply to students in home-based instruction or students enrolled in private schools. By November 30, 2004, the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission must review the student performance scores needed to obtain a certificate and must report any adjustment made to the legislative education committees by January 31 so that the Legislature may take statutory action, if deemed necessary. The commission must consider incorporating the standard error of measurement into the decision regarding the award of the certificates. Beginning in 2008, certificates will be awarded to public school students who successfully complete the high school WASL in reading, writing, and mathematics. In 2010, the science WASL is added to the certificate requirements. Beginning in 2008, a certificate is required for graduation from a public high school but is not the only requirement for graduation. The SPI must report recommendations addressing the certificate requirements and special education students and limited English students, and the best practices to use with students who need additional assistance.

Graduation Plan: Beginning September 1, 2006, each school district must prepare a high school graduation plan for every student in grades eight through 12 who is not successful in one or more content areas of the WASL. The plan must include steps needed by the student to meet the state academic standards and stay on track for graduation. Progress on the plan must be reported to the student and the student's parents at least once a year.

Retakes and Alternative Assessments: Subject to available funding, the opportunity to retake the high school assessment will be available no later than the spring of 2007. A student may retain the use of the highest result from each successfully completed content area of the high school assessment. Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, if a student is not successful on the WASL in one or more of the content areas required for the certificates, then the student may choose one or more of the following options: retake the content area assessment once, at no cost to the student, if the student is enrolled in a public school or enrolled in a high school completion program (the SPI and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges must jointly identify the means by which students in a high school completion program can be assessed); or use an alternative means, developed and approved by the SPI, if the student has retaken the assessment in the content area at least once.

By July 1, 2004, the SPI must report recommendations for alternative means for students not successful on the WASL to demonstrate that they meet the state standards. By July 1, 2005, if funds are available, alternative options must be available for voluntary use by school districts. No later than September 1, 2006, if funds are available, each school district must have alternative means options.

Assessment Information: If funding is available, then the results of the spring 2006 administration of the math assessment must be available to students, parents, and schools before June 1. The SPI must report on the feasibility of returning the WASL results in the same school year in which the WASL is given. The SPI must provide as much individual

student performance information as possible to assist teachers in providing support to students, including classroom-based and other student assessment information.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: Instead of requiring all WASL results to be returned before June 1, only math results must be returned by June 1. SPI must report on the feasibility of returning the WASL results in the same school year in which the WASL is given. COM is renamed the Scholar's Certificate or the Certificate of Achievement. A Scholar's Certificate is received by students who pass the WASL on the first attempt or who pass a retake in the content area where the student was unsuccessful on the first attempt. If a student fails the retake, then the student may receive a Certificate of Achievement if the student can demonstrate that the student meets the state standards on an alternative means of assessment. Spring retakes begin in 2007 instead of 2004. Fall retakes are deleted. The requirement for an appeals process is deleted. The requirements for SBE to make specified validity/reliability recommendations are deleted. The language prohibiting the SBE from requiring a student plan as a condition for graduation is deleted. The term "cut score" is changed to "student performance scores." The commission must present any changes to the student performance scores to the legislative education committees by Jan. 31 so that the Legislature may take statutory action if deemed necessary. Employers are added to the types of people that the SPI must consult when developing alternative assessment options and the A+ Commission must consult when reviewing and adjusting the student performance scores. The task forces are deleted, but SPI must report recommendations addressing the same topics of the certificate requirements and special education students and limited-English proficiency students, and the best practices for students who need additional assistance to meet standards. SPI must develop model classroom-based assessments that may be used by school districts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: When education reform was passed ten years ago, the COM was not defined, although it is a critical part of the reform. This bill defines the certificate so that it will focus on the basics. The bill makes the diploma meaningful but fair to all students, not just those who are college-bound. Retakes are provided because other states have been successful in getting students to standards by providing narrowed retake opportunities, and other assessments, including the SAT and the bar exam, permit retakes. It is important to return the test results by June 1 otherwise a 10th grade student who fails the test won't know that they should retake it in the fall or maybe even the summer. It is also important that the student retake the test before being permitted to take an alternative assessment, which should have the same rigor. Alternate assessments are necessary because using only one method to assess students is not fair and cannot meet the needs of all students. The appeals process is also very important. If students are unsuccessful on the 7th grade test, then a plan needs to be developed to help the student meet the goals and graduate. This plan should be a community option and not required at the state level, as it will be beginning in 2004 under current State Board rules. The plan is also the only way goal 4 is really addressed.

PRO W/CONCERNS: Please don't prohibit the State Board from requiring the student plan for graduation and beyond. The classes that students take in high school determine what they

will be doing the first year after high school. The plan helps make school relevant and connects the student with the world after high school and with the community. If they don't plan ahead, then it may mean that the student has to take remedial classes to enable them to do what they want, and they may miss opportunities. SPI would prefer that there be a study of the feasibility of returning the test results by June instead of requiring the results to be returned by June 1. Returning scores by then may require major changes in the test administration window or other changes which would be very costly. Finally, while some believe that changing the name of the certificate provides a better descriptor of the certificate, there is concern that it will cause confusion in the field and create a cost to clarify that confusion.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Carolyn Tolas, SBE (pro w/concerns); Lacey Androsko, WASL Board, SBE (pro w/concerns); Tim Stensager, Franklin Pierce School District (pro w/concerns); Megan Williams, Franklin Pierce School District (pro w/concerns); Lera Wevkhoven, NW Gear, Learning and Achievement (pro w/concerns); Kelly Munn, PTA parent (pro); Ann Randall, WEA (pro); Bruce Kelly, teacher (pro); Joe Gotchy, teacher (pro); Carol Stromberg, parent (pro); Barbara Mertens, WASA (pro); Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (pro w/concerns); Steve Mullin, WA Roundtable (pro); Lynn Nixon, Agilent Technologies (pro); Rainier Houser, AWSP (pro); Paula Quinn, North Thurston Public Schools (pro); Patrice Martin, NTPS (pro); Doug Hosteffler, Kentwood HS (pro); Cecile Lindquist, WA State Special Ed Coalition (pro); Terry Bergeson, OSPI (pro); Dan Steele, WA State School Director's Assn. (pro); Judy Hartmann, Governor's Office (pro).