

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## EHB 1068

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Eliminating mandatory norm-referenced student assessments.

**Sponsors:** By Representatives Quall, McDermott and Haigh; by request of Governor Locke and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**House Committee on Education**

**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education**

### **Background:**

#### Norm-referenced Tests

By law, public school students in the third, sixth, and ninth grades must take norm-referenced achievement tests that assess the students' basic skills in reading, language arts, and mathematics. The two assessments used are the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Iowa Test of Education Development (ITED). The scores are reported as percentile points, meaning students perform as well as or better than a certain percentage of other students in the nation. The national average score is 50, and is based upon a national sample selected from 1995.

The ITBS is a norm-referenced test given to third and sixth grade students in our state. Students demonstrate their grasp of foundational skills (reading, mathematics, and language arts) by responding to a series of multiple-choice questions. During the 2003-04 school year, on average, the state's third grade students scored in the 58th percentile in reading and the 67th percentile in math. Sixth grade students scored in the 55th percentile in reading and language arts and the 58th percentile in math on the ITBS.

The ITED has been given to Washington ninth-graders each spring since 2000. Through a series of multiple choice questions, the assessment measures a student's understanding of fundamental skills in reading, quantitative reasoning (mathematics), and expression (language arts). During the 2003-04 school year, on average, the state's ninth grade students scored in the 53rd percentile in reading, the 54th percentile in expression, and the 59th percentile in quantitative reasoning. The ninth grade scores have not increased over the five year period in which the ITED was administered in the state.

The ninth grade assessment also includes an inventory of a student's interests that can be used for counseling and high school planning. Schools may use the interest inventory with eighth grade students as well.

#### Other Required Assessments

By state and federal law, Washington assesses students in elementary, middle, and high school in reading, writing, math, and science. The assessments are "criterion-referenced" or designed to determine the extent to which students have met the state's standards in those content areas. Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, by the end of the 2005-06 school year, the state must add additional criterion-referenced tests in reading and math in the third, fifth, sixth, and eighth grades.

### Executive Request Legislation

Former Governor Locke and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) have proposed the elimination of these required assessments. Former Governor Locke's budget proposal for the 2005-07 biennium assumed that no school district would continue offering these norm-referenced assessments. His budget assumed a savings of \$645,000 for each year of the biennium. The SPI's budget request made a different assumption, that one-fourth of the state's school districts would continue to offer the assessments. The SPI's budget assumed a savings of \$484,000 for each year of the biennium.

### **Summary:**

The requirement that each public school student in the third, sixth, and ninth grades take a norm-referenced achievement test is repealed. However, school districts may offer norm-referenced assessments at the districts' own expense.

Subject to available funds, by September 1, 2005, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will post on its website a guide of diagnostic assessments for voluntary use by school districts. Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the OSPI will make diagnostic assessments available to school districts by September 1, 2006.

The OSPI is encouraged to offer training in the interpretation of diagnostic assessments and in ways to use the information from those assessments to help improve student learning. The OSPI is encouraged to offer the training during its state and regional meetings on staff development.

### **Votes on Final Passage:**

House	78	19	
Senate	27	22	(Senate amended)
House	95	3	(House concurred)

**Effective:** July 24, 2005