

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2485

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to college placement tests for high school students.

Brief Description: Making a college placement test available for high school students.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunter, Jarrett, Talcott and Tom.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/16/06, 2/1/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction, from funds appropriated for this purpose, to reimburse school districts for college placement tests administered to students in grades 10 or 11.
- Expects districts to encourage, but not require, students to take the test.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Priest, Santos, Shabro, Tom and Wallace.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Colleges and universities use a number of different tests to help determine whether students are prepared for college-level work. To place new students in the appropriate level of English or mathematics courses, community and technical colleges in Washington generally use the ASSET or COMPASS test available from American College Test, Inc. (ACT), or the ACCUPLACER test available from the College Board. Four-year universities consider Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or ACT scores in their decisions for admission, but rely on a different set of tests developed by the University of Washington to assist them in determining the appropriate math course for incoming students. Most students take these tests in grades 11

or 12. The College Board and ACT also market tests geared to tenth grade students, such as the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) from the College Board or PLAN from ACT.

Some high schools in Washington are working with local community or technical colleges to administer college placement tests to students in grades 10 or 11 as a way to provide early information about college readiness. They also use the results as a planning and guidance tool with students. In its interim report to the Legislature, the Washington Learns steering committee recommended use of college placement tests for students in grades 10 or 11 for this purpose.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must reimburse school districts, from funds appropriated for this purpose, for college placement tests offered to students in grades 10 or 11. Districts encourage, but not require, students to take the test. A district intending to offer a college placement test must consult with local colleges or universities before selecting a test.

Home-school students can participate in the college placement tests at a public school. If the school receives reimbursement, the home-school students are not charged for participating.

The test is intended to assist students, parents, and teachers in the selection of high school courses and to gauge student readiness for college study, including dual enrollment programs.

A college placement test is defined as a test designed to provide diagnostic information in a particular content area and used to place students in appropriate postsecondary courses.

The SPI compiles data from the tests so that results can be analyzed. Aggregate results are made available to the public and the Legislature.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Rather than directing the SPI to make a college placement test available to all school districts, the SPI will reimburse districts that offer the tests from funds appropriated for this purpose. School districts, rather than the SPI, select a test, but must consult with local colleges or universities before the selection. Home school students may participate in the tests at no charge if the district is reimbursed. A college placement test is defined as a test designed to provide diagnostic information in a particular content area and used to place students in appropriate postsecondary courses.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support of original bill) This recommendation comes from the Washington Learns steering committee. A number of school districts are already offering college placement tests. What is needed is funding and an incentive for school districts to make sure students are aware at an early date what it takes to be successful in college or work and how they are measuring up to that standard. This provides another valuable tool for students and parents to receive feedback about students' academic progress and understand what they need to get ready for college.

(With concerns on original bill) The concern is about funding and where it is going to come from. The payment mechanism is not clear. High schools should have the opportunity to choose their own test, particularly in conjunction with local colleges and universities.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support of original bill) Representative Hunter, prime sponsor; Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Don Rash, Association of Washington School Principals; Mary Kenfield, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Mark Alford, student.

(With concerns on original bill) Don Carlson, Public School Employees; Sally Zeiger Hanson, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.