

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6532

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, February 1, 2006

Title: An act relating to local control of student assessments in grades three, five, six, and eight to meet federal requirements for Washington's academic assessment system.

Brief Description: Regarding Washington's academic assessment system.

Sponsors: Senators Delvin, Schoesler, Morton and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/25/06, 2/1/06 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6532 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Higher Education; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Schoesler and Shin.

Staff: Ingrid Mungia (786-7423)

Background: Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, in order to receive federal funds under Title I, each state must annually submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) that details the state's system of academic standards, assessments, and accountability. By the 2005-06 school year, the state's assessment system must include yearly assessments of students in each of grades three through eight in reading and mathematics, plus at least one assessment of these subjects for high school students. By 2007-08, assessments in science must be administered in at least one elementary, middle, and high school grade.

Under state law, Washington's assessment system includes the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in reading, writing, and mathematics at grades four, seven, and ten, as well as a science assessment in grades five, eight, and ten. Therefore, the additional testing requirement to comply with NCLB will be reading and mathematics assessments administered in grades three, five, six, and eight.

The NCLB also requires a state assessment system to have certain characteristics, including:

- Assessments must be aligned with state academic content and achievement standards;
- The system must include measures that assess higher-order thinking skills and understanding of challenging content;
- Assessments must be valid and reliable to use in measuring annual improvement in student achievement (adequate yearly progress); and

- The system must be of adequate technical quality, supported by evidence from test publishers and other sources.

Under DOE rules, a state's system can be based on a uniform set of statewide assessments or a combination of state and local assessments. However, if local assessments are included, the state must assure they meet the same characteristics as a state assessment and the results can be aggregated and compared across the state. The state must also demonstrate that its overall system has a rational and coherent design.

Under Washington's NCLB plan, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has proposed and is implementing a uniform set of statewide assessments, using the WASL in reading and mathematics at each grade level required to be assessed under NCLB.

Summary of Substitute Bill: OSPI must revise the state NCLB plan so that assessments in grades three, five, six, and eight assess student learning in reading, math, and science without subjective, open-ended responses. In addition, the assessment system must incorporate a combination of statewide and locally selected assessments in order to provide options other than the WASL for school districts to use in grades three, five, six, and eight. OSPI must develop the revised plan using an open and participatory process.

Under the revised plan, OSPI will submit options for locally selected assessments to the State Board of Education (SBE). The SBE approves at least three options to be made available to school districts. School districts may use an approved option in grades three, five, six, and eight, but must use the same assessment for each cohort of students to ensure comparability of scores and measurement of learning gains.

OSPI must submit the proposed revised plan to the education committees of the Legislature no later than the 2007 legislative session. After the Legislature formally approves the plan, OSPI will submit the revised plan to the appropriate federal authorities to ensure locally selected assessments for use during the 2007-08 school year.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill requires OSPI to request the U.S. Department of Education provide flexibility to local school districts in selecting the assessments administered in grades three, five, six, and eight in reading and mathematics under the No Child Left Behind Act. In developing the proposal, OSPI must work with local school districts, staff, and parents. After receiving approval from the U.S. Department of Education, OSPI must revise the state accountability plan to incorporate the flexibility. OSPI must submit the revised plan to the education committees of the Legislature for review no later than the 2007 Legislative Session.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 2006.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: We need to approach the federal government and ask for a waiver to use diagnostic tests. We should be able to have a faster turnaround time on the data. We should be able to use what is currently working in Washington State. Having students take the WASL

takes them out of the classroom for an academic quarter. Richland School District supports the WASL in the fourth, seventh and tenth grades, but in the off years, we want to be able to use a diagnostic test. Diagnostic tests give immediate feedback to students and teachers. We want to use the tools that are more helpful for students. This bill is about moving back to local control. This bill will provide alternatives and allow districts to decide what test is best for their students. With diagnostic testing, teachers get the results back immediately. It serves both the state and students. Nine Mill Falls supports the WASL. The additional assessments are used for teaching and learning and to immediately see if students are making progress. The two assessments are good together. Multiple measures seek better knowledge. This bill provides additional data points. The WASL data is not diagnostic and will not provide valuable data to teachers, parents, and students. The law needs to meet our needs.

Testimony Against: The state has to have a uniform system according to the Federal regulations. OSPI needs to check with the federal department of education before more work can be done on changing the assessments. The biggest issue for teachers is the turnaround time for student results.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Delvin, prime sponsor; Richard Jansons, Richland School Board; Richard Semler, Richland School District; Michael Green, Nine Mill Falls School District; Gary King, WEA.

CON: Terry Bergeson, OSPI.