

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1772

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to the voluntary participation in the Washington assessment of student learning by students enrolled in private schools.

Brief Description: Regarding voluntary participation in the WASL by students enrolled in private schools.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Priest, P. Sullivan, McDermott, Kenney, Simpson, Kagi and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/16/07, 2/23/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to pay for the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) for private schools who choose to administer the test, offer it to all enrolled students at the grade level of the test, and make the results public.
- Pays only for the reading, writing, and mathematics WASL in grades 4 through 7 and the science WASL in grades 5 through 8.
- Allows individual private school students to take the WASL through the local school district at district expense.

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; Barlow, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, McDermott, Roach, Santos and P. Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

Students in approved private schools are not required to take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). However, private schools can voluntarily choose to have their students take the WASL. To do so, the private school must contact the state's assessment contractor directly and make arrangements to have the test booklets delivered and scored. The school must sign an agreement to follow certain testing protocols in administering the test and maintain the security of the test documents.

The private school pays a per-student fee based on the number of test booklets scored and the content areas in the booklet. The 2007 fee schedule is:

Grades 3, 5, 6 and 8	Math/Reading	\$18 per student
Grades 4 and 7	Math/Reading/Writing	\$29 per student
Grades 5 and 8	Science	\$14 per student
High School	Math	\$10 per student
	Reading	\$10 per student
	Writing	\$15 per student
	Science	\$14 per student

Parents of individual students whose private school does not administer the WASL can also request that their student take the WASL through their neighborhood school. The public school can charge the parent the same fees from the fee schedule for this service.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

If an approved private school wishes to administer the WASL, the assessment contractor is authorized to provide the assessment at the school and have the private school administer it. The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must pay the assessment contractor for the cost of the test, including scoring, if the school offers it to all enrolled students at the grade level of the test and makes the aggregate results public and available to the SPI. Payments are only made for the reading, writing, and mathematics WASL in grades 4 and 7 and the science WASL in grades 5 and 8. Nothing requires a private school student to take the WASL. The SPI is not required to pay any costs for the private school to administer the test.

Individual private school students may take the WASL through the local school district at the district expense.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The SPI is required to pay for the WASL for a private school only if the school wishes to administer the assessment, offers it to all enrolled students at the grade level of the test, and makes the aggregate results public and available to the SPI. Payments are only made for the reading, writing, and mathematics WASL in grades 4 and 7 and the science WASL in grades 5 and 8. It is reiterated that nothing requires a private school student to take the WASL.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: (In support) Many private school students transfer to secondary public schools. The WASL provides important academic information that would be good for parents and the schools to know. It would be good for students to be assessed in private schools, but to be fair, the test must be offered to all students and the results should be made public. Over 70 percent of private schools use the Essential Academic Learning Requirements, but only about 19 percent use the WASL, probably due to the cost. Many private schools are K-8 only and the students are shared between the private and public school systems. This gives students a better chance at succeeding when they take the test in high school. If the WASL is a good thing for teaching and learning, then it's a good thing for private school students also. Students should not be disadvantaged when they enter middle or high school because their parents chose a private school for them in their early years.

(Concerns) Driving taxpayer dollars to private schools is of concern, even though the intent of providing students access to the test is understandable.

(Opposed) There is objection to state funding going to private schools, particularly with all the funding problems and shortfalls that already exist in public schools. Public schools that are required to administer the WASL do not have their costs covered, and yet this proposes to pay for private schools to offer the test. There is no compelling reason for this proposal.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Jim Chenower, Three Rivers Christian School; Kay Purcell, St. Rose Catholic School; Judy Jennings, Washington Federation of Independent Schools; and Donna Christensen, Catholic Conference.

(Concerns) Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.

(Opposed) Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.