

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 3166

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 28, 2008

Title: An act relating to the design of the state assessment system and the Washington assessment of student learning.

Brief Description: Concerning the design of the state assessment system and the WASL.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Sullivan, Priest, Haler, Santos and Ormsby).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/15/08, 94-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/27/08, 2/28/08 [DPA, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; Eide, Hobbs, Kauffman, Oemig, Rasmussen and Weinstein.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Holmquist and McDermott.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: End-of-Course Assessments. In 2007 the Legislature enacted a policy allowing students through the class of 2012 to graduate from high school without meeting the state standard in mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) under certain conditions. Students in the graduating class of 2013 and thereafter will be required to meet the mathematics standard on the WASL or an approved alternative assessment.

The 2007 legislation also directed the State Board of Education (SBE) to examine potential changes to the high school WASL in science and mathematics, focusing primarily on moving to an end-of-course assessment (EOC) in these subjects rather than a comprehensive assessment. The Governor vetoed these particular provisions, but asked the SBE to study EOCs generally. The SBE engaged a national consultant who issued a report in January 2008. The report found that EOCs and comprehensive assessments have much in common, can serve similar purposes, and each have strengths and weaknesses.

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.

Assessment Contractor Request for Proposal (RFP). In the spring of 2007, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) issued an RFP for a new contractor to assist with development and administration of the WASL and other components of the state assessment system. The current contract expires at the end of October 2008.

The responses to the RFP indicate a significant increase in costs compared to the current contract. The OSPI has suggested it would be possible, without negatively affecting the reliability or validity of the assessment, to generate some cost savings by reducing the number of open-ended questions on the elementary and middle school reading, mathematics, and science WASL. This should also reduce the number of testing days. Because it is used as a graduation requirement, the OSPI does not recommend changing the high school WASL.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): Effective with the 2009 administration of the WASL, the OSPI must redesign the elementary and middle school assessment in reading, mathematics, and science by shortening test administration and reducing the number of open-ended questions.

When entering the new contract for the statewide assessment system, the OSPI must do the following: 1) take steps to ensure that the assessments are culturally responsive and competent for a diverse population; and 2) ensure that the contract is flexible enough for the Legislature to implement state-wide end-of-course assessments for high school without liability or penalty and preserving legislative authority to change direction, design, or scope without adverse impact to the state. The language addressing the new contract expires June 1, 2014.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): The requirement for the development and implementation of end-of-course exams for high school mathematics is removed. When entering the new contract for the statewide assessment system, the superintendent must do the following: (1) take steps to ensure that the assessments are culturally responsive and competent for a diverse population; and (2) ensure that the contract is flexible enough for the Legislature to implement state-wide end-of-course assessments for high school without liability or penalty and preserving legislative authority to change direction, design, or scope without adverse impact to the state. This language addressing the new contract expires June 1, 2014. The intent language is amended to address the other changes in the bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Engrossed Substitute Bill: PRO: Valid assessment information is helpful for students, parents, and teachers. The study by the SBE reflects very positively on end-of-course exams. The redesign of the WASL required in this bill is consistent with the current plans of OSPI. We support the EOCs for Algebra I and Geometry to replace the current high school math WASL. EOCs can cover more course content and in greater depth than a comprehensive test. The use of EOCs makes sense since

the new math standards are organized around math courses. Integrated math courses do not provide the content and rigor necessary for students' future opportunities

OTHER: It is too early to set a date for the implementation of EOCs for use for graduation purposes because there should be greater discussion of this idea. The timelines currently in the bill would permit the Legislature to hold those discussions and pass legislation next year and still meet the same timelines. We do appreciate that the Legislature is looking at other types of assessments but this bill just replaces one high-stakes test format with another high-stakes test format. An EOC is a more genuine assessment of the teaching and learning that place in the classroom, but because the test will be standardized it will not provide the needed flexibility for students who do not do well on such tests. We do advocate for an assessment that is a system check, but it should not be used for determinations about individual students. Parents are concerned about how their students are assessed. By reducing the length of K-8 tests and developing the phase-in of Algebra I and Geometry end-of-course assessments to replace the 10th grade WASL, this bill begins to address concerns that parents have identified with the existing process. The WASL does not work for all students but we urge you to move forward with caution so that the state does not adopt a test that is culturally biased and you can determine that Algebra I and Geometry are really the skills and knowledge that all students need.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Sullivan, prime sponsor; Julie Wright, Where's the Math.

OTHER: Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; Joe Willhoft, OSPI; Scott Allen, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Suzi Wright, Tulalip Tribes.