

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6023

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 26, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to alternative assessments.

**Brief Description:** Regarding alternative assessments.

**Sponsors:** Senators McAuliffe and Rasmussen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/15/07, 2/26/07 [DPS, DNP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6023 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

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

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, students must meet the state standard on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), or a legislatively approved alternative assessment, to achieve a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA), which is required to graduate from high school. Students must retake the WASL at least once prior to taking an approved alternative assessment. Three alternative assessments have received legislative approval: the Grade Point Average/WASL cohort comparison, the Collection of Evidence (COE), and the PSAT/SAT/ACT Mathematics Equivalent. Alternative assessments are required to be comparable in rigor to the skills and knowledge that the student must demonstrate on the WASL for each content area.

Students who do not meet the state standard on the WASL, beginning in fifth grade, must have a student learning plan created and updated annually. The plan must include the actions the school intends to take to improve the student's skills in the relevant content area(s), and for eight through twelfth grade students, it must include other steps needed to be taken by the student to meet state standards and stay on track for graduation.

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Students who are not appropriately assessed by the WASL, even with accommodations, may earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA), instead of a CAA, to graduate from high school. To earn the CIA, the student must demonstrate skills and abilities commensurate with the student's individual education program.

The state high school graduation requirements also include the requirement for each student to have an education plan for their high school experience, including what they expect to do the year following graduation.

**Summary of Bill:** The bill as referred to committee not considered.

**Summary of Proposed Substitute As Heard in Committee (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** An alternative assessment option to earn a CAA is created. Students in the 2008, 2009, and 2010 graduating classes, who do not meet the state standard on the WASL in reading, writing, or mathematics, may earn a CAA by completing at least two semesters of additional coursework in the relevant content area and retaking the WASL once after the tenth grade. Students in the 2010, 2011, and 2012 graduating classes, who do not meet the state standard in science on the WASL, may also earn two CAAs by completing at least two semesters of additional coursework in science and retaking the WASL once after the tenth grade. If the student meets the standard on the retake, the student does not have to complete the additional coursework.

The student, the parents or guardians, a classroom instructor in the relevant content area, and a guidance counselor, advisor, or mentor will determine which coursework and the amount of coursework that a student must take to attain the CAA. This group will also develop the student's learning plan and the student's high school and beyond plan. In order for the coursework to count towards attaining the CAA, the coursework must contribute to the student achieving the competencies necessary to pursue the goals established in the student's high school and beyond plan. Additionally, a student must obtain a C+ grade in the courses and the totality of the coursework must include instruction in the competencies in which the student did not meet the standard. Also, the student must have at least a 75 percent attendance rate in each of the courses. However, the instructor may waive the attendance requirement for illness.

Beginning in 2006-07, school districts must establish a three-year goal to increase the number of students who obtain a CAA or CIA and graduate in the 2009-10 school year and yearly benchmarks to determine progress being made. Additionally, each high school must establish a three-year goal and yearly benchmarks.

The State Board of Education (SBE) will develop an accountability plan and accountability measures for schools and school districts that do not meet the yearly benchmarks or three-year goals. The SBE must include a range of intervention strategies for schools, including mandatory participation in the school improvement focused assistance program.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy will review the effectiveness of the alternative assessment created by this act and must report to the Legislature in December 2010 and 2012.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** The reading and writing WASL

remain a graduation requirement, beginning with the class of 2008. The science WASL is delayed as a graduation requirement until 2011. A conditional delay of the WASL as a graduation requirement in mathematics is created for the graduating classes of 2008 and 2009, to graduate without a CAA. The students are required to continue to take mathematics courses that increase the student's math proficiency toward meeting or exceeding the math standards assessed on the high school WASL. The students must earn at least a C grade in the course. Additionally, the students must continue to take the WASL or an appropriate mathematics alternative annually until graduation.

Additional alternative assessments to the WASL to earn a CAA are authorized. Authorization to use specified PSAT/SAT/ACT assessments as an alternative is expanded to apply to reading and writing. Specified Advance Placement and the International Baccalaureate Diploma examinations are authorized as alternatives for reading, writing, and mathematics. By September 1, 2007, the SBE must choose three tenth grade level standardized student assessments to be used as alternatives. SPI will develop end-of-course (EOC) examinations for all content areas assessed on the WASL, beginning with mathematics, including algebra I, II, and geometry, to be implemented in the 2008-09 school year. SPI must notify the Legislature of any contemplated or finalized changes. Once the EOC examinations are developed for math and science then the EOC examinations will be the primary way that students demonstrate standards in math and science.

An appeals panel of educators is created at each ESD for students to demonstrate that the student has a level of understanding of a content area sufficient to meet the standard but did not meet standard on the WASL. An English language learner (ELL) who scores at level two or below on the state English proficiency test does not have to take the WASL, except for federal purposes. Such ELL students must have a student success plan.

Student learning plans are renamed "student success plans." Eighth grade students and older who do not meet standard on the WASL must have a plan that includes semi-annual benchmarks. The plan must require the student to take a class or academy in the content area in which the student did not meet the standard. The plan may require a test preparation class, before- or after-school sessions, Saturday school, and/or summer school. More intense plans must be developed for students who do not meet the semiannual benchmarks in consecutive periods. SPI will develop a tiered intervention plan that provides a graduated series of increasingly intensive intervention strategies for any district where 10 percent of the students with a plan are not meeting benchmarks.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Original requested on February 13, 2007; substitute requested on February 27, 2007.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill creates an temporary alternative pathway for students to increase their skills and be prepared to be successful after high school. There are thousands of students who have not passed reading and writing. The system has not prepared these students. Other alternatives are not really in place yet. Technically we

cannot implement the GPA cohort alternative and we need to train teachers to assist with the collection of evidence alternative. Other states are doing this differently and we need to try some different approaches too. The WASL is failing our students and being used inappropriately. It is not a diagnostic test but it is the basis of student plans. We appreciate the system measures of progress. We like that students can access this alternative sooner and are not required to fail the WASL twice before they can do this. The focus of this bill is the student's future aspirations and that is the correct focus. This process appropriately recognizes professional judgement of guidance counselors. High expectations for students should not mean that we have to fail them.

CON: We do not support a delay for reading and writing. We need to ensure we graduate students with skills. This delay will move us away from that. These are fundamental skills for our students' future. If you do this, then the expectation that is communicated to our children will not accurately reflect the economic world that they will be entering when they leave school. This fails to set a standard of achievement across the board for all students and will be varied from student to student, and it does not meet the alternative assessment test of rigor and reliability.

OTHER: Most students are successful or very close to meeting standard except in math so we understand the delay in mathematics but not the other subjects. This kind of pathway should be permanent and not temporary. You should recognize career and technical education in the bill because all the remediation being required for the WASL will keep kids out of our classes.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Juanita Doyon, Rachel DeBellis, Parent Empowerment Network.

CON: Nancy Atwood, American Electronics Association; Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association.

OTHER: Wend Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; Mary Lindquist; Jessica Upton, former teacher in Federal Way school district; Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.