

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5498

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As Passed Senate, March 9, 2009

**Title:** An act relating to graduation without a certificate of academic achievement or a certificate of individual achievement.

**Brief Description:** Changing the requirements for graduating without a certificate of academic achievement or a certificate of individual achievement.

**Sponsors:** Senators Jarrett, King and McAuliffe; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/04/09, 2/09/09 [DP].  
Passed Senate: 3/09/09, 43-4.

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

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Kauffman, Vice Chair, Early Learning; Oemig, Vice Chair, K-12; King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Hobbs, Holmquist, Jarrett, McDermott and Roach.

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

**Background:** Starting with the class of 2008, students must meet the state standard on the 10th grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) or an approved alternative assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics to obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) and graduate from high school. Students in special education who are not appropriately assessed using the WASL can earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA).

The 2007 Legislature enacted a temporary exception for students who do not meet the state standard in mathematics enabling students to graduate from high school without a CAA or CIA if they:

1. have not met the state standard in mathematics on the WASL, an approved alternative assessment, or an alternative for eligible special education students;
2. have met the state standard in the other required content areas;
3. have met all other state and local graduation requirements;

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4. continue to take the appropriate mathematics assessment annually; and
5. successfully earn two additional high school mathematics credits or a career and technical course equivalent after their sophomore year, designed to increase their proficiency on the WASL. This requirement was one additional credit after their junior year for students in the class of 2008.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2013, students must obtain a CAA or CIA to graduate from high school.

**Summary of Bill:** High school graduation requirements without a CAA or CIA are revised. Until the graduating class of 2013, students are no longer required to continue to take the appropriate mathematics assessment annually until graduation. Students are still required to take two mathematics credits after their sophomore year (one credit after their junior year for the class of 2008), but these credits are no longer required to be "additional" credits.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 28, 2009.

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

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Students are required to continue to take math classes if the student does not pass the math WASL the first time but the student must then continue to take a math test just to generate a score. It doesn't have to be a passing score so the test has no meaning to the student. Many schools and students did not understand these rules and for a variety of reasons the students did not continue to take a math test. Now these students who did not continue to take a math assessment must pass the math WASL or a math alternative test to graduate. This is unfair because other students in their graduating class cohort only had to take the test but were not required to pass. Continuing to require the math assessment sends the message that the classes are not important. You need to move quickly on this bill and remove this impediment so that students in the graduating class of 2009 who did not take the test will know that they can graduate. The budget shortfall gives us an opportunity to look at where the state is spending money and focus the spending on teachers and students and not on an assessment.

OTHER: Under this bill students still must take a high stakes test in reading and writing to graduate and we do not support high stakes tests. Clearly the EALRs are culturally biased, which makes the assessment used to assess the EALRS also culturally biased. Therefore, the requirement to pass the assessment to graduate from high school needs to be eliminated because it is unfair to our students of color. For our students to be successful it is important to have language and culture included so that they can really fully understand. The tribes are using their own funds to provide additional help so our kids pass the WASL but we still have too many who will not pass.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Jarrett, prime sponsor; Allan Burke, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI); Wendy Rader-Konafalski, Washington

Education Association (WEA); Bob Silverman, Superintendent of Puyallup School District; Scott Brittain, Principal of Rogers High School; Carl Spencer, Rogers High School ASB President; Kim Armstrong, Rogers High School On Time Graduation Specialist; Juanita Doyon, Parent Empowerment Network; Dennis Milliken, North Shore School District; Lisa Macfarlane, League of Education Voters; Nancy Katims, Edmonds School District; Bill Williams, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Nancy Steers, Seattle Public Schools; Gretchen Wilkinson, Garfield High School Seattle Public Schools; Regina Carr, Seattle Public Schools; Christy Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

OTHER: Suzi Wright, Valda Gobin, Tulalip Tribe; Ben Kodama, Equitable Opportunity Caucus.