

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6314

As of January 31, 2012

Title: An act relating to the statewide high school assessment in science.

Brief Description: Regarding the statewide high school assessment in science.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Rolfes, Chase, Pridemore and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/30/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative was a state-led effort by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to establish a shared set of educational standards for grades K-12 in English/language arts and mathematics that states can voluntarily adopt. The standards were developed with feedback from teachers, school administrators, experts, and the general public. Forty-five states have formally adopted CCSS, including Washington.

Currently, the National Research Council, the National Science Teachers Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Achieve are working together to develop the next generation of science standards. The framework for the science standards was released in July 2011. The science standards are expected to be available for states to review by fall of 2012. The Legislature has authorized the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to participate in the development of the common science standards and assessments and to modify the essential academic learning requirements, and the statewide student assessments in science accordingly, as long as the legislative education committees have an opportunity to review any proposed modifications before they are adopted.

Beginning with the class of 2015 and beyond, students must pass the statewide science High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) to graduate from high school. The science HSPE will be an end-of-course (EOC) test in biology beginning in 2012. However, last session the Legislature declared that it does not intend to narrow the high school science curriculum to

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.

only biology and at the appropriate time intends to direct OSPI to develop one or more EOCs additional science subjects.

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

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): The legislative intent to not narrow the high school science curriculum and assessment to only biology is reiterated; the Legislature is aware that the CCSS for science will be available in the fall, which could require revisiting the assessment process for science.

The requirement to pass the statewide science assessment for high school graduation beginning in 2015 is eliminated. The alternative assessments for science for the purposes of high school graduation are eliminated. The designation of the biology EOC as the high school assessment for the purpose of measuring the state standards is maintained.

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: PRO: We strongly support this proposed substitute. It is an urgent and important issue. Because our current state graduation requirements are limited to only biology it creates a one-size fits all requirement, which is unfair to our students and teachers. We are losing the richness of integrated science classes and forcing students to focus their science courses to only biology. We recognize that our state does not have the money to develop additional science assessments. There is a national effort developing science standards and they will probably also develop assessments so Washington should delay the implementation of the science assessment until we know how broad those standards and assessments will be.

CON: We do not support an indefinite delay of the science assessment as a graduation requirement. This lowers the expectations for our students. We know from the results of the state reading assessment that students and our teachers are up to meeting the challenge of a state assessment as a graduation requirement. The assessments are one way of ensuring that students are learning. We share the concerns of narrowing the curriculum and support the development of additional assessments. But the development of more science assessments should not delay the implementation of the biology assessment. Students are currently required to earn two credits in science to graduate so they will still have exposure to a science curriculum that is broader than just biology. The next generation science standards are not the same as the common core state standards and assessments – it is different organizations doing the development and there currently is no federal funding for the science assessments like there was for the common core English/language arts and math assessments.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Meren Johnson, Christyna Paris, WA Education Assn.; Dan Steele, WA Assn. of School Administrators.

CON: Heather Cope, League of Education Voters; Alan Burke, OSPI; Jerry Bender, Assn. of WA School Principals; Lew McMurrin, WA Technology Industry Assn.; Bill Williams, WA State PTA; Anne Luce, Partnership for Learning; Dave Powell, Stand for Children; Jared Costanzo, Matt Spencer, student representatives of the State Board of Education.