

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1450

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As of Second Reading

**Title:** An act relating to assessments in public schools.

**Brief Description:** Regarding assessments in public schools.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hunt and Pollet; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 2/8/13.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Changes the statewide assessment system from measuring student performance in reading and writing to measuring performance in English Language Arts (ELA).
- Ends the Geometry end-of-course test (EOC) after the 2012-13 school year.
- Provides that, beginning with the graduating class of 2015, students may meet the high school graduation standard using an ELA exit exam or a College and Career Readiness (CCR) assessment in the ELA.
- Provides that students beginning with the class of 2015 may use results from the Algebra I EOC or a CCR assessment in mathematics for graduation purposes.
- Directs the Washington Student Achievement Council to convene a workgroup to examine how a CCR assessment might be used for higher education decisions.
- Changes the Collection of Evidence alternative assessment from being scored by a state-level panel to being scored at the district level.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Staff:** Barbara McLain (786-7383).

**Background:**

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*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.*

### *Statewide Student Assessment System.*

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), in consultation with the State Board of Education (SBE), is authorized to maintain and revise a statewide academic assessment system to measure student knowledge and skills on state learning standards, and to use for purposes of state and federal accountability. The assessment system must cover the content areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and science for elementary, middle, and high school years.

In 2008 legislation was enacted requiring high school mathematics to be assessed using end-of-course tests (EOCs) in Algebra I and Geometry. In 2011 legislation directed that high school science be assessed using a Biology EOC.

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to assess students based on state learning standards in reading and mathematics in each of grades 3 through 8 and one high school grade, as well as in at least one grade each in elementary, middle, and high school in science.

### *High School Graduation.*

Since the graduating class of 2008, Washington students have been required to meet the state standard on the assessment in reading and writing for high school graduation. Students in the graduating classes of 2013 and 2014 will also have to meet the standard in at least one of the mathematics EOCs. Beginning with the graduating class of 2015, students will have to meet the standard on the state assessment in reading, writing, two mathematics EOCs, and the Biology EOC for high school graduation.

### *Common Core State Standards and Assessments.*

In 2011 the SPI adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as the state learning standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Washington is participating in a multistate consortium to develop new student assessments for the CCSS. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) will have assessments ready for states to use in 2014-15 for federal accountability purposes. The SBAC high school assessments in ELA and mathematics will be set at a College and Career Readiness level (CCR), to be administered in 11th grade. States who are part of the SBAC will be able to use questions from the test item bank if they choose to continue offering their own high school assessments in addition to the CCR assessment.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges have convened a work group of high school and higher education faculty to examine the CCSS and consider how the results of the new CCR assessment might be used for higher education decisions such as placement or admission.

### *Collection of Evidence.*

Students who attempt the state high school assessment at least once may use an alternative assessment approved by the Legislature to demonstrate that they meet the state standard in a particular subject for purposes of the graduation requirement. One of the alternative assessments is a Collection of Evidence (COE), which is a portfolio of student work that meets guidelines developed by the SPI and is scored by a state-level panel of educators trained by the SPI and using uniform scoring criteria.

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**Summary of Bill:**

*Statewide Student Assessment System.*

References to reading and writing as they pertain to the statewide student assessment system are replaced with references to the ELA. The Geometry EOC is not administered after the 2012-13 school year.

*High School Graduation.*

Beginning with the graduating class of 2015, students must meet the state standard in the following subjects for high school graduation:

1. the ELA, which can be met using reading and writing assessments offered through 2013-14, an ELA exit exam offered in 2014-15 and thereafter, or a CCR assessment offered in 2014-15 and thereafter;
2. mathematics, which can be met using the Algebra I EOC, the Geometry EOC through 2012-13, or a CCR assessment offered in 2014-15 and thereafter; and
3. science, which continues to be met using the Biology EOC.

*Common Core State Standards and Assessments.*

The WSAC must convene a workgroup with representatives of high schools, public institutions of higher education, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the SBE. The workgroup must determine how the results of the CCR assessment could be incorporated into college and university admissions, scholarship, and placement decisions. The WSAC must report its findings to the institutions of higher education by March 1, 2014.

The public institutions of higher education must report to the Governor, the Legislature, and the WSAC by January 15, 2015, regarding how they plan to incorporate the CCR assessment results.

*Collection of Evidence.*

The COEs are scored at the district level by trained educators, rather than by a state-level panel. The OSPI must develop a process for periodically auditing school districts to ensure fair and reliable scoring.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Even for those who are not a fan of these high stakes tests, this represents a step in the right direction. The end result is to consolidate and reduce the number of tests and bring them in line with what schools are really teaching. This is something that everyone has an opinion about. The original intent was to test students for basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics as a condition of granting a high school diploma. The assessments have gone beyond that. Washington is one of 24 states that require tests for graduation, and on the current trajectory, it would be the one requiring the most tests. The purpose of the bill is to reduce the number and reduce testing time. There have been previous recommendations not to include science as a graduation requirement because Biology is too limiting as a single subject, and if students fail it takes additional course time and teacher time that restricts space for higher level science. The real question is whether having five tests improves student learning or improves graduation rates. Assessments are not the only indicator that students are ready for graduation.

The SBE passed a resolution endorsing the SPI's proposal. Critical to that is the consideration that this is a time of transition, including bringing on the consortium-developed assessments. The SBE is not comfortable with making an 11th grade test a graduation requirement, and it makes sense to reduce the overall testing requirements when that new test is brought on. This is a test case for aligning K-12 and higher education.

In a recent survey of high school principals, 85 percent were in favor of this proposal. Tumwater High School is recognized as a school of distinction for steadily improving its scores. However, there is a population of students who will lose upper-level mathematics and science if all of the course time must go to remediation of Algebra, Geometry, and Biology. Remedial classes will be geared to retaking the assessments or doing the Collection of Evidence, and the school will have to drop electives. More testing will severely hinder the ability to benefit all students. The state must be prepared to fund remediation. This has a huge impact on the course schedule in high schools.

(Opposed) The work of Superintendent Dorn to start the discussion is appreciated, but it does not go far enough. This bill is opposed in its current form, but it might be a work in progress. Policymakers should look closely at the costs of testing. The current system costs over \$100 million per year. It is also complex and confusing. All over the state, parents and teachers are opting out of the testing. Instead, there should be a moratorium on using tests as a graduation requirement. Washington should use only the federally-required tests. This would eliminate the need for a Collection of Evidence and all of the associated costs. The state should focus its investments on reforms that work, not on testing.

The addition of an 11th grade test is opposed, as well as scoring of the Collection of Evidence at the local level. Adoption of additional assessments without additional resources is not the right way to go. English language learner students are harmed by the current system, and they deserve better. There are some things to like in this bill, such as reducing the number of high stakes tests and maintaining the end-of-course assessments for math and Biology, but it is opposed as currently written. The continued use of tests as a graduation requirement is opposed. Some students are not good test takers, and this puts them at a disadvantage. It is not clear how scoring the Collection of Evidence at the local level would work. Currently that responsibility is split between the state and local districts, who receive

\$400 for each Collection of Evidence. If all responsibility is shifted to the district, some may wonder why there would be a cost savings.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Hunt, prime sponsor; Randy Dorn, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Ben Rarick, State Board of Education; and Scott Seaman, Scott Killough, and Sidney Reid, Tumwater High School.

(Opposed) Wendy Rader Konofalski and Katie Carper, Washington Education Association; and Marie Sullivan, Washington State School Directors' Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.