

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 1450

As Passed Legislature

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.

Second Special Session

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 6/27/13, 81-8.

Passed Senate: 6/28/13, 36-12.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to implement student assessments developed with a multistate consortium in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics in the 2014-15 school year.
- Requires results from the high school consortium assessments to be used for purposes of high school graduation beginning with the graduating class of 2019.
- Directs the State Board of Education to establish performance scores for the new assessments, which may include a different score for graduation than for college and career readiness.
- Specifies the high school assessments in ELA and mathematics to be used for the graduating classes of 2015 through 2018, which include results from one, but not both, mathematics end-of-course assessments.
- States legislative intent to transition to a comprehensive high school science assessment.
- Requires a report on the process used to prevent bias and assure fairness in assessments.

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.

- Requires school districts to notify parents of students in grades 8 through 12 at the beginning of each school year about state-required assessments and graduation requirements.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

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.

The SBE is responsible for establishing the performance scores students must meet on state assessments. The Legislature must be advised of any initial scores and any proposed changes. Changes to scores on high school assessments must be presented to the Education Committees by November 30 of the school year in which they will take place to permit legislative action, if necessary.

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.

Students may use equivalent scores on the SAT or ACT or scores on specified Advanced Placement tests as alternatives to the state assessment for purposes of meeting the graduation requirements.

Multistate Standards and Consortium Assessments.

In 2011 the SPI adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as the state learning standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. The CCSS were developed by a multistate consortium in which Washington took part. 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, to be administered in 11th grade.

Washington has also participated in a multistate consortium to develop new science learning standards. The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) were released in April 2013 but have not yet been adopted by the SPI. There is no timeline or plan for development of an assessment for the NGSS.

The GET Ready for Math and Science Scholarship Program provides a scholarship to students who receive the top score on the mathematics or science portions of the high school assessment. The current law refers to the "10th grade" assessment, which is no longer accurate.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

Statewide Student Assessment System.

The SPI is directed to implement student assessments developed with a multistate consortium in the ELA and mathematics, beginning in the 2014-15 school year. References to reading and writing as they pertain to the statewide student assessment system are replaced with references to the ELA. The SPI must also use test items from the consortium assessments to develop a 10th grade ELA assessments and modify the Algebra I and Geometry EOCs for use through a transition period.

The SBE must establish performance scores for the new assessments by the end of the 2014-15 school year. In setting scores for the high school consortium assessments, the SBE must review the experience during the transition period, and examine scores used in other states for the consortium assessments and states that require passage of an 11th grade assessment for graduation. The scores established for purposes of graduation may be different from the scores used for the purpose of determining career and college readiness.

High School Graduation.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2019, the high school assessments in the ELA and mathematics from the multistate consortium are used to demonstrate that students meet the state standard in those subjects.

During the period of transition to the new assessments:

- Students in the graduating class of 2015 through 2018 must meet the state standard on either the Algebra or the Geometry EOC, rather than on both EOCs.
- Students in the graduating class of 2016 have the additional option to use results from the consortium ELA and mathematics assessments administered in 2014-15 instead of the state reading, writing, and mathematics EOC assessments.

- Students in the graduating classes of 2017 and 2018 must meet the standard on a new 10th grade ELA assessment instead of the state reading and writing assessments. These students also have the option of using results from the consortium assessments in ELA and mathematics.

No change is made to the requirement for students starting with the class of 2015 to meet the state standard on a Biology EOC. The Legislature intends to transition from a Biology EOC to a comprehensive science assessment in a similar fashion as the transition from to ELA assessments and a comprehensive mathematics assessment, including using at least two years of results from the assessment. The SPI must develop or adopt a science assessment that is not biased. After the Legislature directs the SPI to develop or adopt a new science assessment, the SPI must review the alternative assessments for science and make recommendations for additional alternatives, if any.

A score of four or higher on specified International Baccalaureate exams may be used as an alternative to the state assessment for graduation purposes.

Other Topics.

By December 1, 2013, the SPI must submit a report to the Education Committees regarding the process used by the SPI, the multistate consortium, and other states to prevent bias and assure fairness in assessments.

At the beginning of each school year, districts must notify parents of enrolled students in grades 8 through 12 about each student assessment required by the state, the minimum state graduation requirements, and any additional local graduation requirements. Information to be provided about the assessments is specified, and the OSPI must provide the information to school districts so that they may in turn provide it to parents.

References to the high school assessments in mathematics and science are corrected as they pertain to the GET Ready for Mathematics and Science Scholarship Program.

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 (kindergarten through grade 12 (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.