

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1046

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As of March 21, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to certificates of academic and individual achievement.

**Brief Description:** Concerning certificates of academic and individual achievement.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representative MacEwen).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/06/17, 92-6.

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/20/17.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the high school graduation requirement for students to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) by meeting the state standard on the state assessments.
- Applies to the high school graduating Class of 2017 and subsequent graduating classes.

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

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

**Background:** Federal High School Assessment Requirements. Under federal law, states must assess student achievement on the English language arts, mathematics, and science state learning standards at least once in the high school grades.

Washington State High School Assessment Requirements. Since 2008, Washington's minimum high school graduation requirements have included a requirement that students must meet the state standard on the statewide assessments in reading and writing for English language arts, and mathematics to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA). Students receiving special education who are not appropriately assessed by the statewide assessments may instead earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) to graduate from high school. A student's individual education program team makes the determination of whether the state assessment is appropriate for a student receiving special education.

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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.*

Meeting the state standard on the state science assessment was scheduled to become a graduation requirement for the graduating Class of 2015; however, the Legislature acted in 2015 to delay adding the science assessment as a graduation requirement. Current law requires the graduating Class of 2017 to meet the state standard on the state science assessment. The state science assessment is an end-of-course (EOC) biology assessment. The biology EOC assessment is based on Washington's 2009 science learning standards, also known as the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs). Washington adopted new science EALRs in 2013. A new comprehensive science assessment of the 2013 science learning standards will be administered for the first time in spring 2018.

The Ninth Circuit federal court found that when a state requires students to meet the state standard on a state assessment as a high school graduation requirement then the state must also provide alternative ways for students to demonstrate they have met the state standard if the student fails to meet the state standard on the state assessment. In Washington, high school students must take the state assessment at least once before accessing an alternative. School districts must provide retake opportunities of the state assessment and legislatively-approved alternative assessments for high school students to use in place of the statewide assessments to show they have met the state standard and earn the CAA. Alternative assessments include the following:

- Collection of Evidence (COE)—a state evaluation of academic work samples prepared by the student with instructional support from a teacher;
- Grade Point Average (GPA) comparison—the grades of a student in their 12th-grade year who has an overall GPA of 3.2 but did not meet the state standard on the state assessment are compared with the grades of students who took the same courses and met the state standard on the state assessment; and
- College Admission/AP/IB Tests—students may use their English language arts and mathematics scores on the SAT; their English language arts, mathematics, and science scores on the ACT; scores on specified Advanced Placement (AP) exams; and scores on the International Baccalaureate (IB) exams.

Other States' High School Assessment Requirements. The Education Commission of the States reports that 15 states require students in the graduating Class of 2017 to pass a state assessment to graduate: Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

Student Learning Plans. Current law requires each school district to prepare student learning plans for eighth grade students who are not successful on one or more of the state assessments or are not on track to graduate due to credit deficiencies or absences. The plan must address specified information and be shared with the student's parents.

**Summary of Bill:** The requirement for students in the graduating Class of 2017, and subsequent graduating classes, to meet the state standard on the English language arts, mathematics, and science state assessments and earn a CAA or CIA to graduate from high school is eliminated. All references to the CAA, CIA, and legislatively-approved alternative assessments for high school students are removed from law.

The current law addressing student learning plans is maintained but provided in a separate statute.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The bill maintains our state standards and maintains the state assessments but uses the state assessments more appropriately. These tests are not designed to be a high school graduation requirement but the Legislature has chosen to use the tests as a graduation requirement. If we trust the teachers and the curriculum, then we should trust that the credits and the diploma that students earn is a quality diploma. Delinking the assessments from the graduation requirements will have a positive impact on students, teachers, and schools.

High stakes testing is pushing students out of the educational system and failing our students. It hurts our career and technical education (CTE) pathways because schools focus on the areas in which there are state assessments instead of exploring and preparing students for careers. Students who fail to meet the standards on the state assessment have limited ability to participate in elective courses, including CTE credits, when they fail to meet the state standard on the state assessments. This is because the students must study to retake the test, take an alternative, or take a collection of evidence class.

If we delink the state assessments from the high school graduation requirement, then it will let our teachers focus on student growth not just student achievement. It will help schools to create greater pathways for students. Some students are taking all five state assessments in their senior year just to meet the state assessment requirements. Some students just are not good test takers. Alternative high schools are assisting students with life issues they are struggling to overcome while helping the students to graduate from high school. There are students who have earned good grades and the necessary course credits to graduate and the state assessments are the only thing keeping them from graduating, even though they have worked very hard. These students are retaking the assessments when they could be taking classes that would support their learning in areas in which they have an interest.

Everyone's goals are for students to have a meaningful diploma and be college and career ready. But meeting the state standards on the state assessments does not make students career and college ready. Testing is not what colleges are looking at; they want rich student transcripts. Students in states with high school exams do not take less remediation at colleges and students are not more prepared for careers.

CON: Test-based high school graduation requirements are preferred because there needs to be an objective way to measure the achievement of students and to hold schools accountable for providing students a basic education. The educational system should not routinely shuffle students through the system without teaching students the basic skills necessary for a successful life. Before the test-based graduation requirements, the system was quietly failing our students and too often it was our students in poverty and students of color. Please, do not go back to the days when there was no standard at all.

The assessments ensure the proper rigor in the system and that students are academically ready for the next step. Since the assessment requirement was implemented, there has been an increase not a decrease in high school graduation and career and technical education participating is up. The state has provided non-test alternatives, like the collection of evidence, for those students that who are not good test takers.

Assessments are a useful tool for students to demonstrate content mastery and readiness for college and career. There is no meaning to being in school for twelve years but not being ready at the end of those twelve years for the next step in life. Linking assessments to graduation requirements aligns teacher and student behavior to the outcome of readiness and better ensures that students take the assessments seriously. Separating the assessment from the high school graduation requirements means we will no longer be able to reliably identify opportunity and achievement gaps. The system will again be able to fail students who have been historically invisible.

The state is currently in transition to new tests so there are some implementation problems being felt now but that should be the focus of efforts for improvement not to throw out the assessments.

OTHER: Principals are divided on whether the state assessments should be delinked from the high school graduation requirements. Students loose instructional time because teachers spend hours teaching students how to take the tests and the tests take time to administer. We would rather focus on the SAT and ACT, which are alternative assessments, rather than the state assessments.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Drew MacEwen, Prime Sponsor; Laura Conklin, Washington School Counselors Association; Nita Hill, Washington School Counselors Association; Kyle Rydell, Liberty SD; Mick Miller, Northeast Washington ESD 101/ Assistant Superintendent; Jose Rios-Fuentes, citizen; Maile Valu, citizen; Rupika Madhavan, citizen; William Johnson, Tukwila School District/Special Education Teacher; Holly Koon, Mt Baker High Sschool - teacher (CTE Agriculture, Biology, Credit Retrieval); Dwight Lundstrom, Oak Harbor School District/Oak Harbor HS Principal; Cynthia Allen, Oak Harbor Public Schools/Science Teacher; Anna Chargualaf, Oak Public Schools counselor; Lance Gibbon, Oak Harbor Public Schools; Glenn Malone, Puyallup School District; Thomas Pablo, student; Sandy Hayes, Northshore School District; Raul Sital, Pasco School District; Loren Davis, Clover Park Technical College/Principal Northwest Career & Technical High School; John Lofgren, student/ Rainier High School; Meg Van Wyk, citizen; Rita Green, NAACP; Becky Hitchman, New Horizons High School, Pasco teachers; Veronica Sotello, Pasco High School, student; Keicha Talavera, Pasco High School, student; Paul Randall, Kennewick; Devin Gebeke, West Valley School District, student; Zach Davis, West Valley School District, student; Carolyn Bordwell, West Valley School District, student; Rebecca Fitzgerald, West Valley School District, student; Lauren House, Dishman Hills High School, West Valley School District, Principal; Molly Coulter, West Valley School District.

CON: Dave Powell, Stand for Children; Neil Strege, WA Roundtable; Daniel Zavala, League of Education Voters.

OTHER: Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principal; Alex Otoupal, AWSP/  
Columbia River High School.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** PRO: Alex Hur, Equity in Education  
Coalition.

CON: Kristin Wiggins, State Director, ReadyNation and Mission: Readiness.

OTHER: Kaaren Heikes, State Board of Education/Director of Policy & Partnerships.