

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5202

---

---

As of January 31, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to authorizing nationally recognized college assessments for high school assessment purposes.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing nationally recognized college assessments for high school assessment purposes.

**Sponsors:** Senators Baumgartner, Billig, Hunt, Liias, Sheldon, Rossi, Ericksen and Honeyford.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/30/17.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to take the necessary steps to get federal approval for school districts to use the SAT or ACT to meet the federal assessment requirements and the state high school graduation requirement beginning with the 2019 administration of the statewide assessments.
- Requires the SPI to establish a process for school districts to request SPI approval to use the SAT or ACT beginning in the 2018-19 school year, if federally approved.
- Requires the State Board of Education to establish the scores that students must achieve on the SAT or ACT, if federally approved.

---

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

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

**Background:** Federal Law. The recently enacted federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaces the No Child Left Behind Act, continues the federal requirement for each state to assess student academic skills, including in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science at least once each at the high school grade level. ESSA also maintains the requirement that the state must use the same state assessment for all public school students at the same grade level. However, ESSA provides an exception to the same

---

*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.*

assessment requirement. ESSA permits local school districts to select a "nationally recognized high school academic assessment" to use in place of the state's assessments, if the nationally recognized assessment has been approved SPI. Federal guidance provides that the SAT and ACT are nationally recognized high school academic assessments.

State Law. High school students must meet the state proficiency standard on the state's high school assessments or an approved alternative assessment in ELA, mathematics, and science to graduate from high school. Approved alternatives assessments currently include a student's scores on the ELA and mathematics sections of the ACT and SAT, and the science section of the ACT—the SAT does not have a science section. Before accessing an approved alternative assessment a student must take the state assessment at least once.

The Legislature has delegated to the State Board of Education (SBE) the responsibility to establish the scores that students must achieve in order to meet the state standard on the statewide assessment and for high school students to obtain a certificate of academic achievement and graduate from high school.

**Summary of Bill:** SPI must take the necessary steps to get federal approval for school districts to use a nationally recognized high school academic assessment to meet the federal assessment requirements and the state high school graduation requirement beginning with the 2019 administration of the statewide assessments. The steps to get federal approval include submitting evidence to demonstrate how the nationally recognized high school academic assessment:

- is aligned to and addresses the depth and breadth of state standards;
- is equivalent in its content coverage, difficulty, and quality to the statewide assessments developed by the multistate consortium;
- provides comparable, valid, and reliable academic achievement data for all high school students and for each subgroup, as compared to the statewide assessments developed by the multistate consortium;
- expresses achievement results in terms consistent with the state's achievement standards;
- meets the federal requirements for assessments, including technical criteria, except the requirement that all students in the state take the same assessment; and
- provides unbiased, rational, and consistent differentiation between and among schools in the state.

SPI must establish a process for school districts to request approval from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to use nationally recognized high school academic assessment beginning in the 2018-19 school year, if federally approved.

The SBE must establish and report to the Legislature the assessment scores that students must achieve in order to meet the state standard on the nationally recognized high school academic assessment.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Using the SAT or ACT as the statewide assessment will be more efficient because these tests can be used for multiple purposes and they only take one-half day to administer instead of the multiple days to administer the current statewide assessments. Less time spent on testing permits more time for students to spend on learning. Students are bombarded with the number of assessments that they must take. Using a college entrance exam will remove a barrier that some students have when it comes to college admission. There are free preparatory courses available for the SAT and ACT, which will help facilitate college admission for low-income students. There are some school districts that are already providing students the opportunity to take the SAT or ACT at no cost so this would provide a smooth transition from the current state assessments. The SAT and ACT are aligned with the common core state standards, which are Washington's state learning standards. The SAT and ACT are currently an alternative but students must first fail the state assessment.

CON: Washington has chosen to be a part of the Smarter Balanced assessment consortium of multiple states. High school diplomas have not been comparable across the state. However, there is comparability provided by using the Smarter Balanced assessment in every school district in the state. The institutions of higher education in the state, both 2-year and 4-year, have agreed to use the Smarter Balanced assessments for college placement. For those students who meet the state standard on the Smarter Balanced assessment, they do not have to take another assessment or take any remediation. We don't want to lose that. This bill will probably pull the higher achieving students who are heading to four year universities out of the state testing pool and it will make it more difficult to compare and determine how school districts are doing in terms of school quality. This may compromise the state achievement index. The state Legislature would have less control over SAT or ACT than the Smarter Balanced assessments and that is a concern. The Smarter Balanced consortium is more than just a test. The consortium provides lesson plans and formative and summative assessments. The SAT and ACT are designed to assess certain things and shouldn't be used for multiple purposes.

OTHER: Maintaining a valid, reliable, and fair assessment system is essential and having assessment options is important. However, at this time, using the nationally recognized high school tests raises some concerns. Challenges include alignment to state learning standards—The SAT and ACT are designed to measure college aptitude not Washington State standards for what students should know and be able to do. Another challenge is accommodations—the nationally recognized high school tests do not have the extensive suite of accommodations that enable all students to demonstrate what they know that the current assessments offers, including accommodations to overcome visual, auditory, and physical access barriers.

Comparability is also a concern because it will not be appropriate to draw comparisons across districts if all districts are not using the same assessment. This idea is premature.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Baumgartner, Prime Sponsor - Statement read into the record by the Chair; Austin Freeman, Public High School Students; Media Sina, Legislative Youth Advisory Council, High school student; Melissa Gombosky, Spokane Public Schools; Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.

CON: Keya Roy, Legislative Youth Advisory Council, citizen; Janis Avery, State Board of Education; Kaaren Heikes, State Board of Education.

OTHER: Deb Came, Ass't Superintendent of Assessment and Student Information, OSPI; Dave Powell, Stand for Children.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.