

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5891

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Ways & Means, March 22, 2017

Title: An act relating to eliminating the use of the high school science assessment as a graduation prerequisite.

Brief Description: Eliminating the use of the high school science assessment as a graduation prerequisite.

Sponsors: Senators Zeiger and Conway.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 3/20/17, 3/22/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the high school graduation requirement for students to meet the state standard on the state science assessment.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Braun, Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Rossi, Vice Chair; Honeyford, Vice Chair, Capital Budget ; Ranker, Ranking Minority Member; Rolfes, Assistant Ranking Minority Member, Operating Budget; Frockt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member, Capital Budget; Bailey, Becker, Billig, Carlyle, Conway, Darneille, Fain, Hasegawa, Keiser, Miloscia, Padden, Pedersen, Rivers, Schoesler, Warnick and Zeiger.

Staff: Jeffrey Mitchell (786-7438)

Background: Federal High School Assessment Requirements. Under federal law, states must assess student achievement in English language arts, mathematics, and science 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 English language arts, and

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mathematics. 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 passing 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 Fifth 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. Alternative assessments include the following:

- Collection of Evidence (COE)—a state evaluation of academic work samples in the relevant subject 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. Of those 15 states, 7 states including Washington, require students to pass a science assessment to graduate; and 3 states require students to pass 1 or 2 assessments on a list of assessments that includes science.

Summary of Bill: The requirement for students to meet the state standard on the state science assessment to graduate from high school is eliminated. All references to the legislatively-approved alternative assessments for the state high school science assessment are removed from law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 18, 2018.

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 on Proposed Substitute: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This bill is a priority of the State Board of Education. Students should demonstrate broader science mastery than just biology. The biology test is more of a barrier to graduation than the English language arts and math tests combined. There is a timing issue because students who retook the test in December will not get results back until May, which could be problematic. Some students who are eligible to graduate might not be able to because the results are not back. The elimination of the collection of evidence is where the state will save money.

OTHER: This bill does not go far enough in saving time, money, and eliminating barriers to graduation. Other assessments should be delinked as well. We recognize that the state is looking to save money this year for education and the science system is in transition. It is recommended that a science assessment becomes a high school graduation requirement once the new comprehensive science system is in place. Having a link encourages people to take the exam seriously, which helps spotlight gaps.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals; Kaaren Heikes, State Board of Education / Director of Policy & Partnerships; Dave Mastin, OSPI.

OTHER: Holly Koon, Mt Baker High School, teacher (CTE Agriculture, Biology, Credit Retrieval); Daniel Zavala, League of Education Voters; Dave Powell, Stand for Children.

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