
Education Committee

HB 2634

Brief Description: Regarding graduation requirements for certain English language learner students.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Hasegawa, Ormsby, Kenney, Hudgins and Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits English language learner students in the classes of 2008 through 2012 to graduate without earning a Certificate of Academic Achievement or Certificate of Individual Achievement if they: a) have not passed a language proficiency test or met the state standard on the reading or writing Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL); b) meet other graduation requirements; c) retake the WASL annually until graduation; and d) earn additional credits in English Language Arts.

Hearing Date: 1/22/08

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Graduation Requirements. Beginning with the class of 2008, most students will be required to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) for high school graduation. Students earn a CAA by meeting the state standard on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) or an approved alternative assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students in special education who are not appropriately assessed using the WASL can earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA), which is also required for graduation in 2008. Students have the opportunity to retake the WASL four times between tenth grade and their expected graduation date, and there are a variety of approved alternative assessment options.

In 2007, the Legislature approved a policy that permits students in the classes of 2008 through at least 2012 who have not met the state standard in mathematics to graduate without a CAA or CIA if they:

1. Have met the state standard in reading and writing;

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2. Have met all other state and local graduation requirements;
3. Continue taking the mathematics WASL or an alternative at least once annually until graduation; and
4. Earn additional course credits in mathematics or a career and technical course equivalent. Students in the class of 2008 must earn one additional credit after 11th grade and students in the other classes must earn two additional credits after 10th grade.

The State Board of Education may re-impose the mathematics graduation requirement before the class of 2013 if it adopts such a policy by September 1, 2008, for the class of 2012.

Transitional Bilingual Program (TBP). English language learner (ELL) students are served through the TBP until they reach a specified level of English language competency on the Washington Language Proficiency Test (WLPT). The WLPT is administered annually.

Those ELL students who have been in U.S. schools for less than one year are not required to take the WASL under the No Child Left Behind Act. However, all ELL students are required to meet state graduation requirements to earn a high school diploma. According to data from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction on students in the class of 2008 who were reported as juniors in 2007, 65 percent of ELL students in the TBP (1,288 individuals) had not yet passed the reading and writing WASL as of the August 2007 retake. Some of these students may not currently be enrolled as seniors, or may have exited the TBP program.

Summary of Bill:

For the classes of 2008 through 2012, the ELL students may graduate from high school without a CAA or CIA if they:

1. Have not achieved a sufficient score on the WLPT to exit the TBP;
2. Have not met the state standard on the reading or writing WASL or alternative assessment;
3. Have met all other state and local high school graduation requirements, including either meeting the state standard on the mathematics WASL or earning additional mathematics credits as allowed under current law;
4. Continue taking the appropriate WASL annually until graduation; and
5. Earn additional English Language Arts (ELA) credits or a career and technical course equivalent. Students in the class of 2009 must earn one additional ELA credit after 11th grade, and students in the classes of 2010 through 2012 must earn two additional ELA credits after 10th grade.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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