

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5414

As Passed House - Amended:

April 14, 2009

Title: An act relating to statewide assessments and curricula.

Brief Description: Regarding statewide assessments and curricula.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, King, Oemig and McDermott).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/17/09, 3/27/09 [DPA];

Education Appropriations: 4/1/09 [DPA(ED)].

Floor Activity

Passed House - Amended: 4/14/09, 95-2.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Articulates legislative intent about the principles, components, and design of the statewide student assessment system, and directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and the State Board of Education (SBE) to begin redesigning the system accordingly.
- Directs the SPI to revisit other aspects of the assessment system and report back by December 1, 2009, and requires the SPI, in consultation with the SBE, to develop an implementation plan and examine various issues regarding mathematics and science and report back by December 1, 2009.
- Amends the statutory timelines for implementation of the new end-of-course assessments for the high school mathematics assessment and revises the timelines for review and recommendations regarding science curricula.
- Replaces two series of end-of-course assessments in mathematics with one series: a first-year mathematics assessment covering Algebra I and Integrated Mathematics I and a second-year mathematics assessment covering Geometry and Integrated Mathematics II.

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.

- Directs the SPI also to develop subtests for mathematics that measure standards unique to the four courses, whose results are reported but which are not required for graduation purposes.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Probst, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cox, Dammeier, Hunt, Johnson, Liias, Maxwell, Orwall, Santos and Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Education. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Sullivan, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Carlyle, Cox, Haler, Hunter, Kagi, Probst, Quall and Wallace.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Rolfes.

Staff: Ben Rarick (786-7349)

Background:

Assessment System.

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is the statewide academic assessment used to measure student knowledge and skills on the state learning standards or Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). The WASL also serves as the state's assessment instrument for purposes of school and school district accountability under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The WASL in reading and mathematics is administered in each of grades 3 through 8 and 10. The writing WASL is in grades 4, 7, and 10, and the science WASL is in grades 5, 8, and 10. The 2008 Legislature directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to reduce the number of open-ended questions on the reading and mathematics WASL in all grades except high school.

There are different types of assessments for different purposes. Summative assessments collect performance information at the end of a unit, course, or program of study in order to sum up achievement and are often used to meet accountability requirements. Formative assessments use a variety of strategies to provide ongoing monitoring of student progress and give feedback to students and teachers that can be used to inform and improve student learning. Diagnostic assessments are a subset of formative assessments that provide a detailed analysis of an individual student's performance in a particular area to identify the reason for that performance. The WASL is a summative assessment.

Mathematics and Science.

In 2007 the State Board of Education (SBE) and the SPI were directed to undertake a comprehensive review and revision of the state learning standards in mathematics and science. For mathematics, the 2008 Legislature determined that additional work was necessary and directed the SBE and the SPI to continue the revisions. The final mathematics standards for high school were approved for adoption in July 2008. The 2008 Legislature also directed that the high school mathematics WASL be redesigned as a series of end-of-course assessments (EOCs) in particular subject areas rather than a comprehensive assessment. The EOCs are required to be developed for Algebra I, Geometry, Integrated Mathematics I, and Integrated Mathematics II. Timelines for implementing the EOCs and for using them in place of the current mathematics WASL for purposes of graduation are outlined in statute. Due to the delay in adopting the final mathematics standards, some of the timelines can no longer be met.

The review and revision of the mathematics and science standards also includes recommendations for no more than three basic curricula for elementary, middle, and high school grade spans to be aligned with the new standards. The new science standards have been completed, but can be adopted only after the 2009 Legislature has had an opportunity for review. The current timelines require the SPI to present recommendations to the SBE on the science curricula by May 15, 2009, and the SBE to provide comments back to the SPI by June 30, 2009.

WASL Workgroup.

In 2008 the Legislature created a WASL Workgroup (Workgroup) composed of seven legislative members to review and evaluate the current assessment system by January 1, 2009, and potentially make recommendations to improve it. The Workgroup developed both long-term and short-term recommendations for the assessment system. The long-term recommendations include a list of principles that should be established as legislative intent for the design of a new assessment system and a description of recommended components within that system. The short-term recommendations include certain activities to be conducted by the SPI and the SBE, as well as a re-examination of the date for the graduation requirement in mathematics and science.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Assessment System.

The Legislature finds that the statewide student assessment system should improve and inform instruction, support accountability, and provide useful information to all levels of the educational system. The Legislature intends to redesign the current assessment system to include multiple assessment formats, including formative and summative assessments; enable statewide and nationwide comparisons of student achievement; and be balanced so that information used to make significant decisions includes many data points.

Components of the assessment system include instructionally-supportive formative assessments, a state-administered summative assessment, and classroom-based assessments. Key design elements and characteristics of each type of assessment are described. Pre-service and ongoing training for teachers and administrators on the effective use of different types of assessments should be provided, and as the statewide data system is developed, data should be collected for all required statewide assessments. The SPI, in consultation with the

SBE, is directed to begin design and development of an overall system meeting these principles and characteristics, and report annually beginning December 1, 2009, on progress and costs.

The SPI is also required to:

- revise the number of open-ended questions on the current statewide assessment at all grades while retaining the validity and reliability of the test and continuing to measure critical thinking skills, and report to the Legislature by December 1, 2009, with a cost analysis of the changes; and
- revisit the alternative assessments, the appeals process, and the portfolio assessment for students with disabilities and recommend improvements by December 1, 2009.

Mathematics and Science.

The two series of four mathematics EOCs (Algebra I plus Geometry and Integrated Mathematics I plus Integrated Mathematics II) is replaced with a single series of two EOCs. One of the EOCs will be for the first year of high school mathematics and cover standards common to Algebra I and Integrated Mathematics I, and the other will be for a second year of high school mathematics and cover standards common to Geometry and Integrated Mathematics II. These two EOCs are used to demonstrate that a student meets the mathematics standard for graduation purposes. In addition, the SPI develops subtests that measure standards unique to Algebra I, Geometry, and Integrated Mathematics I and II. The results of these subtests are reported at the student, teacher, school, and district level.

Timelines for implementing the mathematics EOCs are adjusted so that the EOCs are implemented statewide beginning in 2011. Students in the graduating classes of 2013 and 2014, rather than only the class of 2013, are allowed to use either the EOCs or the comprehensive math assessment for graduation purposes. Use of only the EOCs begins with the graduating class of 2015 rather than 2014.

The timeline for recommendations for science curricula are adjusted so that the SPI must complete the review of curricula and make recommendations by June 30, 2009, rather than by May 15. The SBE must provide comments within two months of receiving the SPI recommendations, rather than by June 30, 2009. Recommendations for no more than three high school science curricula can be made in each of three major domains of science: earth and space, physical, and life science.

The SPI, in consultation with the SBE and the Professional Educator Standards Board, must identify strategies and develop an implementation plan to assure that all students have the opportunity to learn the new science standards. Included in the plan is an assessment of the feasibility of the current timelines for students to demonstrate that they have met state standards on the high school assessments in mathematics and science. The SPI must also recommend whether to use an end-of-course assessment for high school science and identify potential costs. A report is due to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2009.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 27, 2009.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except section 5, dealing with the timelines for recommending science curricula, which has an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Education):

(In support) This is a very important bill that implements the interim work of the Workgroup. The Workgroup started a journey to come up with an assessment system that improves instruction, allows demonstration of student growth in achievement, and helps students participate in their own learning. The SPI and the SBE are directed to pursue the goals articulated in the bill and report back with implementation status. The bill contains a duplicative requirement regarding the reliability and validity of the WASL. This is something that will be occurring as the new tests are developed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's testing contractor. If this provision were removed, it would eliminate the fiscal impact from the bill. The bill is consistent with the direction that the SPI is heading regarding student assessment. The assessment should be shorter, online, and valid and reliable. The role of the SBE in making a determination of reliability and validity should be clarified. The SBE should be making the determination only after the new assessments have been developed, but the timeline in the bill will not permit that. On further examination, there is an approximately 80 percent overlap in the core competencies between the traditional mathematics series and the integrated series. It would be more efficient, both for the state and school districts, to consolidate the EOCs into two rather than four tests. Having an integrated mathematics series is not supported by the National Mathematics Advisory Panel's findings.

(With concerns) The Workgroup made thoughtful recommendations about a balanced assessment system and supporting the use of formative assessments. The changes being proposed by the SPI are supported. However, this bill perpetuates the complex, time-consuming, and expensive statewide assessment system. Other uses of the assessment are supported, but not as a barrier to graduation. Formative assessments are very supported, and so is better information about student progress. These should not be mandated at the state level, but should be locally available. High stakes testing is not supported. There is a concern about system readiness, not only about the reliability and validity of the exams, but also curriculum and instruction. It would be preferred to have the SBE determine when the system is ready. Work on the Washington Alternate Assessment System portfolio has already begun and is moving forward. There is a huge concern around students' opportunity to learn. Money currently spent on the assessment would be better used to support programs to help students.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Education Appropriations):

(In support with amendments) There is support for shortening and revising the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), as well as recommendations from the WASL Workgroup for balanced assessment and increased emphasis on both formative and summative assessments. However, the recently released budget proposals eliminate all

funding for diagnostic assessments, so we will be starting from a deficit in terms of providing instructionally-supportive assessments. There is concern about requiring data collection for formative assessments. Data should only be collected for state summative assessments. Also, the examination of the use of the WASL for graduation should be expanded to include all subjects, not just math and science. The budgets make significant reductions in the ability of school districts to support students. The Legislature cannot pull the plug on these support programs and expect it to have no impact. The graduation requirements should be suspended for at least two years.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Education): (In support) Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Bob Butts and Alan Burke, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Edie Harding, State Board of Education; and Julie Wright, Where's the Math?.

(With concerns) Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; Kim Howard, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; and Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

Persons Testifying (Education Appropriations): Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Education): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Education Appropriations): None.