

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1410

As Passed House:
May 25, 2011

Title: An act relating to science end-of-course assessments.

Brief Description: Regarding science end-of-course assessments.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Santos, Dammeier, Probst and Liias; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/1/11, 5/9/11 [DPS].

First Special Session

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 5/25/11, 86-10.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Requires that students beginning with the graduating class of 2015, rather than 2013, must meet the state standard in science to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA), which is required for graduation.
- Provides that the high school science assessment beginning in 2011-12 is a Biology end-of-course (EOC) assessment and authorizes the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to develop additional science EOCs for graduation when directed by the Legislature.
- Authorizes the SPI to participate in the development of multi-state science standards and assessments and to adapt the high school science assessment accordingly, subject to review by the legislative education committees.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Lytton, Vice Chair; Billig, Finn, Haigh, Hunt, Ladenburg, Liias, Maxwell, McCoy and Probst.

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.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Dammeier, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Angel, Dahlquist, Fagan, Hargrove, Klippert, Kretz and Wilcox.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Since the graduating class of 2008, students have been required to meet the state standard on the statewide high school assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA). Students in special education who are not appropriately tested by the regular assessment may earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA). Earning the CAA or CIA in reading and writing is a requirement for graduation. There has been a temporary exemption through the class of 2012 where students may graduate without a CAA or CIA as a result of not meeting the state standard in mathematics by taking additional mathematics courses. Beginning with the graduating class of 2013, students will be required to meet the state standard on the high school assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, and science both to earn a CAA and for graduation.

For purposes of graduation, the Legislature has authorized alternative assessments for students who do not meet the standard on state assessments. For example, students may substitute a score of three on specified Advanced Placement (AP) exams covering English, language arts, and mathematics. None of the AP exams currently authorized are in science.

The current high school science assessment is a comprehensive assessment. A budget proviso in the 2010 supplemental operating budget directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to develop an end-of-course assessment (EOC) for high school science in Biology, to be implemented in the 2011-12 school year. The proviso also required the SPI to recommend whether additional science EOCs should be developed and to recommend an implementation schedule. Washington's science learning standards were revised in 2009 and include content in life, physical, and earth and space sciences. The standards also include the study of systems, inquiry, and application that cuts across content areas.

In a report submitted in December 2010, the SPI recommends development of two additional EOCs in Physical Science and Integrated Science. The SPI recommends that, for purposes of high school graduation, students be required to meet the state standard on one of the science EOCs. The report also recommends delaying the implementation of the graduation requirement in science to the class of 2017.

A number of science education groups, led by Achieve, Incorporated, are working to develop a set of common science learning standards that multiple states could adopt. The framework for the standards is being prepared by the National Academy of Sciences and is scheduled to be released in the late spring of 2011. Standards are expected to be available for states to review by spring of 2012. If the SPI proposes changes to state learning standards or assessments, the education committees of the Legislature must, on request, be provided an opportunity to review the proposed changes before they are adopted.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

Beginning with the graduating class of 2015, rather than the class of 2013, students must meet the state standard in science on the state assessment, or on an alternate assessment for students in special education, to earn a CAA or CIA for graduation.

Beginning in the 2011-12 school year, the state high school science assessment is a Biology EOC. The SPI may develop additional science EOCs for purposes of graduation when directed by the Legislature. The SPI is also authorized to participate with consortia of multiple states as common science standards and assessments are developed, and may adapt the state high school science assessment accordingly, as long as the legislative education committees have an opportunity to review any proposed modifications to the standards and assessments before they are adopted.

Various AP science tests are added to the list of approved alternatives for students who take the regular assessment at least once. Scores on the ACT in science and on SAT science subtests may also be used as an alternative once the State Board of Education has sufficient data to identify equivalent scores.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

February 1, 2011 Hearing (Original Bill):

(In support) There is a problem with alignment. Students in the class of 2013 will be taking a comprehensive assessment this spring, but if they fail, they will have to take an EOC a year after taking their Biology course. The state should still assess students in science, and EOCs are the right way to go, but if Biology is the only test then the system will focus exclusively on that subject. There is a strong likelihood that there will be common state science standards by the end of 2012. One reason to adjust the graduation timelines is to take advantage of multi-state efforts. We have too many variables in the system: old standards, new standards, old assessment, new assessment. There are real liability issues.

Students' first exposure to science on a daily basis is in high school. This is not the level of attention that should be paid to science, particularly if it is going to be a graduation requirement. Delay is more fair for students to assure they have been adequately prepared for success. School boards support delay in the graduation requirement to achieve better alignment with possible multi-state science standards.

In the current budget situation, funding will be reduced for supplemental instruction for the students who need the most assistance. Extended learning opportunities will not be available. It is not worth it to cut programs and take away students' opportunity to graduate at the same time. Limited resources must be preserved for the things that matter, such as class size, aligned curriculum, and assistance from paraprofessionals, not on testing. State assessments should not be expanded at the expense of classroom staff.

(Neutral) The state's standards and expectations have been delayed before. Research shows that students do not fail at school, but that schools fail students. Everyone needs to do their job better and stop these rationalizations.

(Opposed) Students and parents are being sent the wrong message. The message is: you are doing poorly on the test, so you will not be required to do well in school. High school students think that high school is a joke. Standards must be established and there must be an insistence that they are met. Delaying is not helping students in any way. It only serves to help them fall further behind their peers and the rest of the world. Policymakers need to stay strong on assessments and requirements for mathematics and science. The requirement needs to be continued in order to fix the system; delay does not fix the system. Delaying is giving up on students. There should be a comprehensive plan from the SPI to address the importance of science in the state's economy and the lack of a corresponding importance in the school system. Delay is not such a plan.

The graduation requirements make it clear what students need to learn and know to be prepared for today's economy. The assessment results identify where students are not doing well and what changes need to be made to improve performance. The science EOC is under development and will be ready next spring. Other states are outperforming Washington. It is sad that another generation could grow up less well educated than their parents. Washington needs to step up on investments in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This is not the time to retreat. What is really needed is for schools to get students ready to pass the tests.

May 9, 2011 Hearing (Proposed Substitute Bill):

(In support) The real issue at question is which year the science assessment will be fully required for graduation. Having the rubber hit the road for the class of 2017 is appropriate. The fiscal note illustrates the level of savings possible in these difficult budget times. There is support for developing additional science EOCs if funding is available. It is a question of dates, but some date earlier than 2017 would be preferred. The money saved from reducing a testing requirement is better spent on preserving class size and other items that improve student learning. There is a sense of urgency. It is right not to require the class of 2013 to take an additional science class. It is too late in the school year for teachers and principals to add another science course to the schedule for next fall for students who do not pass the test. More flexibility for students would be preferred. The idea of continuing indefinitely the ability of students to graduate by taking an additional science class is appealing. The wording of the requirement for an additional science course should be examined. It may lead to schools pushing students to enroll in Biology as freshmen. School directors support EOCs for science. The strain of testing on students and parents is very real.

(In support with concerns) Moving to an EOC in science is definitely the way to go. Development of additional tests should be encouraged, even though at the present time the budget cannot support it.

(Neutral) It is appropriate to have a transition period where students can graduate by taking an additional class. This is something the state has learned from the experience with

mathematics. The Governor has proposed a two-year period for this transition, for the classes of 2013 and 2014, and that is what is recommended.

(Opposed) This issue needs a lot more work. There are so many questions and concerns. Waiting until 2017 to impose the science graduation requirement is too long; 2014 or 2015 would be a better choice. The option that students could avoid the graduation requirement by taking an additional science class should be rejected. The Biology EOC will be ready next year; there is no reason to delay. An additional science class should be required of all students, but it should not replace the expectation that students meet the standard on the state science assessment. Washington and Massachusetts started education reform at approximately the same time. The test scores of Massachusetts students are top in the country. Meanwhile, Washington continues to delay.

Persons Testifying: February 1, 2011 Hearing (Original Bill):

(In support) Representative Santos, prime sponsor; Randy Dorn, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Alan Burke, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Marie Sullivan, Washington State School Directors Association; Scott Seaman, Association of Washington School Principals and Tumwater High School; Dan Steele, Washington Association of School Administrators; and Shannon Rasmussen, Washington Education Association.

(Neutral) Liv Finne, Washington Policy Center.

(Opposed) Charles Hoff; Jim Grossnickle; Anne Moore; Brad Burnham, Washington State Board of Education; Heather Cope, League of Education Voters; Anne Luce, Partnership for Learning; Chad Magendanz, Issaquah School Board; Lew McMurrin, Washington Technology Industry Association; and Ramona Hattendorf, Washington State Parent Teacher Association.

May 9, 2011 Hearing (Proposed Substitute Bill):

(In support) Alan Burke, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Aaron Wyatt, Washington State Board of Education; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals; Marie Sullivan, Washington State School Directors Association; and Tim Knue, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education.

(In support with concerns) Ramona Hattendorf, Washington State Parent Teacher Association.

(Neutral) Judy Hartmann, Governor's Policy Office.

(Opposed) Jim Kainber, Stand for Children; Hannah Lidman, League of Education Voters; and Anne Luce, Partnership for Learning.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.