

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6516

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to modifying the timelines for the development and implementation of the student assessment system.

Brief Description: Changing the timelines for development and implementation of the student assessment system.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Rinehart, Drew and Winsley; by request of Joint Select Committee on Education Restructuring, Board of Education and Commission on Student Learning.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/16/96, 2/22/96 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Brumsickle, Chairman; Elliot, Vice Chairman; Johnson, Vice Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Clements; Fuhrman; Hatfield; Linville; McMahan; Pelesky; Quall; Radcliff; Smith; Talcott; B. Thomas; Thompson and Veloria.

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

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: The Commission on Student Learning was created by the Legislature in 1992 to identify the knowledge and skills all public school students need to know and be able to do, to develop student assessment and school accountability systems, and to take other steps necessary to improve student learning in the state.

Current law requires that the assessments being developed by the commission for all grade levels be available for reading, writing, communication, and mathematics for voluntary use by school districts in the 1996-97 school year unless the Legislature takes action to prevent or delay implementation of the assessments. The assessments

being developed for all grade levels for the social, physical and life sciences; civics; history; geography; arts; health; and fitness are required to be available for voluntary use by the 1998-99 school year. Beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, all school districts will be required to administer the assessments.

Current law also provides that once the state Board of Education finds that the high school assessments are valid and reliable, successful completion of the high school assessments shall lead to a "Certificate of Mastery," which will be required to graduate from high school.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Reading, writing, communications and mathematics. The timeline for the voluntary implementation of the assessments being developed by the Commission on Student Learning for reading, writing, communication, and mathematics is modified.

The initial voluntary implementation of these assessments in the elementary grades is not changed from the 1996-97 school year. The assessments for the middle grades are postponed one school year, from the 1996-97 school year until the 1997-98 school year. The assessments for the high school grades are postponed two years, from the 1996-97 school year until the 1998-99 school year.

Assessments in elementary grades. The elementary grade assessments in history, civics, geography, health, fitness, and the arts are made voluntary in the elementary grades. The voluntary assessments are to be classroom-based. The state Board of Education is to make recommendations to the Legislature in 2001 as to whether state-level assessments in these content areas should be required.

Goal 2 (except math) timeline. The Commission on Student Learning is directed to recommend to the Legislature a revised timeline for assessments in science, history, civics, geography, health, fitness, and the arts by December 15, 1996.

Certificate of Mastery. A provision is removed that requires a student to achieve a "Certificate of Mastery" to graduate from high school. However, the state Board of Education and Commission on Student Learning are directed to make recommendations regarding the implementation timeline for the certificate, and whether it should be reinstated as a graduation requirement or be used in other ways to raise standards in schools and for students. The initial recommendations to the Legislature from the board and the commission are due by December 15, 1996.

Approval of "Essential academic learning requirements." The Commission on Student Learning is authorized to modify the "Essential academic learning requirements," as needed, after the learning requirements are initially adopted.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Provisions were added pertaining to the timeline and implementation of the assessments in the elementary grades; removing the Certificate of Mastery as a graduation requirement; requiring the Commission on Student Learning and state board to make recommendations regarding the timing and implementation of the Certificate of Mastery; and requiring the commission to make recommendations for a revised timeline for the "goal 2, except math" assessments.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 9, 1996.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) In doing the "Request for Proposals" for an assessment contractor, it became clear that the assessments for reading, writing, communications, and math should be phased in. With a phase-in, we will be able to learn from our early mistakes. These assessments are complicated and are too important to rush. However, we must not back away from the education reform goals. We need to make sure that the curriculum in schools is relevant to the world of work. This bill will save money.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Terry Bergesen, Commission on Student Learning; Roberta May, state Board of Education; Kyra Kester, Workforce Training Board; and Mic Dinsmore, Workforce Training Commission.