

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1891

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to student assessments.

Brief Description: Changing student assessments.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Talcott and Rockefeller; by request of Commission on Student Learning and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/17/99, 2/25/99 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- The laws are revised that govern certain standardized tests that all public school students are required to take over the course of their school years.
- The eighth grade norm-referenced basic skills test is moved to the ninth grade, and a new norm-referenced test for sixth grade students replaces the test currently required for eleventh grade students.
- The WASL for civics, geography, and history will be combined into a social studies assessment. Timelines for the social studies, health and fitness, and arts assessments are revised.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Carlson; Cox; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; D. Schmidt; Schual-Berke; Stensen; Sump and Wensman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

The state currently requires the following statewide student assessments.

Reading accuracy and fluency test: School districts must assess reading accuracy and fluency in the second grade.

Basic skills assessments: School districts must assess basic skills in the third, eighth, and 11th grades. The third grade test assesses reading and math skills. The eighth grade test assesses reading, math, language, reasoning and thinking skills, and inventories student interests. The 11th grade test assesses skills in the broad content areas common to high school, and thinking and reasoning skills. Prior to the 1998-99 school year, the assessment used was the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. The current test is the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) at the elementary school level: The WASL is currently required in reading, writing, communication (listening), and math at the fourth grade. There are statutory timelines for implementing an elementary level WASL in science. There are no timelines for implementing the WASL in other content areas at the elementary school level.

WASL at the middle and high school levels: There are statutory timelines for implementing a middle and high school level WASL in reading, writing, communication (listening), math, science, history, civics, geography, arts, and health and fitness.

CSL Recommendations: At its February 3, 1999, meeting, the Commission on Student Learning (CSL) finalized a proposal that combines the assessments in history, civics, and geography into one social studies assessment. The new social studies assessment would also include economics. The proposal also would delay implementation of the middle and high school social studies and health and fitness assessments for two years. The middle and high school art assessments would be delayed by three years. Before adopting the assessment recommendations, the commission surveyed 1,000 teachers, parents, employers, and community representatives to determine the feasibility of adopting the proposed assessment timelines.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Laws are revised that govern the norm-referenced and criterion-referenced standardized tests required of public school students. In addition, the Superintendent of Public Instruction's (SPI) responsibilities are clarified regarding the development

and revision of the WASL and the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs). The superintendent will share these responsibilities with the CSL.

Reading accuracy and fluency test: The law describing the second grade reading assessment is clarified. The test measures oral reading skills. The SPI may add additional reading passages to the initial list of reading passages used for the assessment.

Basic skills assessments: The third grade test is retained. A new sixth grade basic skills assessment in math and reading/language arts is required. The eighth grade assessment is moved to the ninth grade. All the basic skill tests must be consistent with the EALRs. The 11th grade assessment is repealed.

WASL at the elementary school level: Timelines are created for implementing the WASL in social studies, health, fitness, and the arts at the elementary level. The social studies assessment will be available in the 2002-03 school year, and required statewide by the 2005-06 school year. Arts and health and fitness assessments will be available by the 2003-04 school year and required by the 2007-08 school year.

WASL at the middle and high school levels: The implementation of the WASL in social studies, health, and fitness at the middle and high school levels is delayed for two years. The implementation of the WASL in the arts at the middle and high school levels is delayed for three years. The social studies assessments will be available in the 2002-03 school year, and required statewide by the 2005-06 school year. Arts and health and fitness assessments will be available by the 2003-04 school year and required by the 2006-07 school year. The high school science assessment is delayed for one year.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill deletes the requirement that schools participate if SPI accepts an invitation to participate in national sample assessments conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. The substitute also retains in current law language that permits rather than requires SPI to include a collection of related school and student information in the ninth grade norm-referenced test.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 24, 1999.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) The legislation aligns currently mandated assessments by coordinating the required norm-referenced tests with the WASLs, and spreading the tests out over a student's educational career. The WASL is beginning to drive the curriculum offered in the state's public schools. It is time to begin the implementation of goal 2 assessments in social studies, arts, health and fitness so those subjects are perceived to be as highly valued as the skills assessed in the goal 1 WASLs. However, the current timelines need to be revised since the system is not yet ready to design and implement the assessments in those subjects. A focus on health and fitness will lead to healthier children and to an ethic that students are the stewards of their own bodies. The legislation also clarifies SPI's future role in implementation of the WASLs and revision of the EALRs once the CSL no longer exists.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (Original bill) Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Sandi McCord, Orting School District; Fred Metuse, Shoreline School District; Pam Tollefsen, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Tom Wells, WCPPA; and Jerry Warren CHEF.