

Education Committee

HB 2087

Brief Description: *Authorizing advisory committees to evaluate the developmental appropriateness of the various WASL tests.*

Sponsors: *Representatives Santos, Talcott, Quall, Kenney and Schual-Berke.*

Hearing Date: *2/21/01*

Staff: *Susan Morrissey (786-7111).*

Background:

By law, students in the fourth, seventh, and 10th grades are required to take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in mathematics, reading, writing, and listening. They will also be required to take assessments in science, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness when the assessments are developed. The results of the WASL will be used, with other criteria, to determine whether a school or school district is successfully meeting its responsibilities to ensure that all children meet the state's essential academic learning requirements. Beginning with the graduation class of 2008, the results for reading, writing, mathematics, and listening will also be used as one criterion to determine whether high school students have earned a high school diploma. At some point in the future, high school students will also be required to pass the high school WASL in other subjects.

The Legislature, parents, teachers, and representatives of other educational constituencies have questioned whether some of the WASLs contain questions and material that is developmentally inappropriate for students. At the request of the legislature, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) studied the fourth grade mathematics WASL to ascertain whether its questions were developmentally appropriate for fourth grade students. The study found that most but not all of the questions were developmentally appropriate and that some questions were vague and confusing. The study also found that the way the test was given was not appropriate; the test needed to be given in shorter increments over more days. A number of critics did not agree with the report. They continue to assert that the mathematics WASL is not developmentally appropriate for fourth grade students.

Summary of Bill:

The OSPI will create separate advisory committees for each WASL in reading, writing, mathematics and, when available, science. Each advisory committee will review its assessment to determine whether it is developmentally appropriate for students at the relevant grade level. The committee will report to the OSPI on any revisions necessary to ensure that well-taught students who have devoted enough time on task are able to meet the state academic standards that are measured by the assessment. The committees will include parents, teachers, other educators, experts in child development, and other interested parties. The committees will periodically report to the OSPI. The OSPI will share those reports, with any result assessment changes, with the Governor, legislative committees, the State Board of Education, and other interested parties.

The OSPI will use a portion of its summer institutes and other professional development opportunities to help teachers learn to score the WASL. School districts are encouraged to provide ample opportunities for teachers and other educators learn to use and understand the scoring rubrics used for the WASL.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: February 21, 2001.

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