

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## E2SHB 2489

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, February 24, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to providing assistance to students who are not on track to graduate from high school on time.

**Brief Description:** Assisting students to graduate from high school on time.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Hunter, Jarrett, P. Sullivan, Springer, Morrell, Tom, Simpson, Miloscia, O'Brien, Roberts and Green).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/09/06, 96-2.

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 2/15/06, 2/24/06 [DPA, w/oRec].

Ways & Means:

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Higher Education; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Benton and Berkey.

**Staff:** Stephanie Yurcisin (786-7438)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Bryon Moore (786-7726)

**Background:** Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, most students will be required to obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) in order to graduate from a public high school in the state. Students must obtain the proficient level in reading, writing, and mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to earn a CAA. Science is added beginning in 2010.

Students in the class of 2008 will take the high school WASL in the spring of 2006. Starting in August of 2006, they will have four opportunities before 2008 to re-take all or parts of the assessment if they do not attain proficiency the first time. School districts must prepare student learning plans for all students who are not successful in the WASL.

Each fall, parents of students who took the WASL the previous spring receive their student's results. Some information is provided about content in skill areas where the student may need improvement, but the test questions and student answers to individual questions are not released.

Prior to 2005, school districts were required to administer nationally norm-referenced tests such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills to all third, sixth, and ninth grade students. Legislation enacted in 2005 repealed this requirement, but stated that the Legislature intended to allow school districts to continue using these types of assessments at district expense. The legislation also directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), within available funds and by September 1, 2006, to make diagnostic assessments available to school districts to help improve student learning.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** For each high school student not successful on the high school WASL, the school district must update the student learning plan. The district must also arrange a conference, led by the student when possible, to discuss remediation and explain the student's opportunity to meet the standards. For students in foster care, the assigned social worker from the Department of Social and Health Services is included in the conference.

Monies appropriated for remediation of students who were not successful on the high school WASL are allocated according to the biennial appropriations act. School districts must spend the funds on remedial extended learning activities, which can include summer school, before and after school and Saturday programs, tutoring, or intensive courses during the school year. Programs can be offered at school, via the internet using the Digital Learning Commons or other providers, or at other locations and times. Within available funds, any student who did not pass the WASL can participate. The funding is provided based on students served.

If a student was not successful on the high school WASL, the notice sent by a school district to the student's parent, guardian, or social worker must include the following information:

- a description of the specific skill areas where the student needs improvement;
- the student's opportunity to demonstrate that he or she has gained the necessary skills and knowledge to assist the student to graduate;
- the availability and importance of remedial extended learning activities;
- information about the next WASL retest, possible alternative assessments, and other diploma completion options;
- information about how the parent or guardian can view a copy of the assessment.

The SPI must review diagnostic tools that educators may use to evaluate the academic status of individual students, particularly students who are not successful on the high school WASL. The SPI shall, by September 1, 2007, identify diagnostic assessments that are available and distribute information to school districts about how to access the diagnostic assessments, including putting such information on its website.

If funds are appropriated, the SPI must reimburse school districts for administering diagnostic assessments in 9th and 10th grade for the purpose of identifying academic weaknesses and developing strategies to assist students before the high school WASL. Subject to funding, the SPI is required to negotiate statewide contracts and act as a broker between school districts and providers of online remedial courses, materials, and diagnostic assessments.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The amended bill still includes the provision directing the district to update the student learning plan for any student not successful on the high school WASL but removes the requirement that it must be completed by the end of that year. The conference may be student-led when possible, and the provision requiring that the student's mentor facilitate the conference is removed. The amended bill does not require school districts to administer pre-and post-remediation assessments to students served in extended learning activities. The requirement to parents regarding unsuccessful WASL attempts does not need to include contact information for a specific individual at the student's school, nor does it need to include the student's response compared to the correct test responses. Under the amended bill, the provision requiring the Superintendent of Public Instruction to release the complete high school WASL concurrently with the release of assessment results is removed. The amended bill directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to identify diagnostic assessments that help improve student learning and to make information available on its website about how districts may access these assessments. It also removes the date (2006-07 school year) by which the superintendent must reimburse districts for this purpose and makes clear that such reimbursements will occur if funds are appropriated. Finally, the amended bill removes the emergency clause.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 2, 2006.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** This bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Testimony For:** (For Original) There is a lot of discussion about how to best help students, but everyone can agree that students who are having trouble meeting standards do deserve assistance. This bill tries to provide flexible but structured ways to help kids by allowing districts a menu of choices for remedial extended learning activities. Not helping students to devise a plan for how they will succeed is inexcusable. Given the sheer numbers of students who are expected to fail the WASL, we cannot say that we are already doing "too much" remediation or that we are doing "too much" to help these students. Giving students extra help is necessary, but some of the other parts of this bill, such as releasing the full WASL and requiring that the learning plan be revised before the end of the school year are not practical. Those funds would be better spent elsewhere. The student-led conferences, while powerful, do require that the kids have some professional development about how to effectively run such a meeting. Assessing the remediation will be helpful for districts to determine whether what they are doing is helpful.

**Testimony Against:** (For Original) None.

**Testimony Other:** (For Original) The districts need more flexibility, and the money should go to the schools for remediation, not for the other things that this bill contemplates funding.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Representative Ross Hunter, prime sponsor; Leslie Goldstein, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

OTHER: Gary King, Washington Education Association.