

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5638

As Passed Senate, March 11, 2005

Title: An act relating to student assessments.

Brief Description: Changing student assessment provisions.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Poulsen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/31/05, 2/17/05 [DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 3/2/05, 3/7/05 [DP2S, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 3/11/05, 39-10.

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

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5638 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Mulliken, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

Staff: Brian Jeffries (786-7422)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5638 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair; Brandland, Fairley, Hewitt, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Pflug, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Thibaudeau.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: Under current law, beginning with the graduating class of the 2008, students must acquire a Certificate of Academic Achievement in order to earn a high school diploma, though it is not the only requirement for a high school diploma. The Certificate of Academic Achievement is evidence that a student has met state academic standards in reading, writing, and mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Beginning in 2010, science will be added as a required content area. A student may also demonstrate achievement of state academic standards on one or more objective alternative

assessments if these alternative assessments are approved by the Legislature. A student must retake the high school WASL at least once to use the objective alternative assessment in order to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement. If a student demonstrates achievement of state academic standards using an objective alternative assessment, the student would earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement. The high school transcript would note whether the student earned the certificate via the high school WASL or via an objective alternative assessment.

School districts are required to prepare a student learning plan for each student, beginning with the ninth grade students in the 2004-05 school year, who did not meet state academic standards in one or more content areas of the WASL. A student learning plan must address, among other requirements, those actions the school intends to take to improve the student's skills in any content area in which the student did not meet standards. This student learning plan and any progress made on the plan must be shared with parents annually.

Summary of Bill: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must pilot two or more alternative assessment in the 2005-06 school year, with the goal of implementing at least one in the 2006-07 school year, and must consult with stakeholders, including employers, in the piloting, development and implementation of the alternatives. The rigor of the content areas assessed on the alternative assessments must be equivalent to the knowledge and skills assessed on the WASL.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction must provide the education committees of the Legislature an opportunity to review alternative assessment options for students prior to implementation and must provide this opportunity by January 15 of the school year before the school year planned for implementation.

Student learning plans must be developed for students who did not score proficient on the WASL. OSPI must put an appeals process in place for use by students no later than the 2007-08 school year, and these must be developed with criteria that can be consistently applied throughout the state. The appeals process is added to the list of components of the high school assessment system.

Students may combine content area results from the WASL and results from alternative assessments to demonstrate achievement of state academic standards. Beginning in the 2005-06 school year and every year after, each public school must notify students and parents, in the primary language of the parent to the extent practicable, of the options under the high school assessment system for students to demonstrate achievement of state standards. Students and parents must also be notified, in the primary language of the parent to the extent practicable, of the different courses and program in career and technical education and offered at skills centers that provide students with the knowledge and skills in the those content areas assessed on the high school assessment system and included in the Certificate of Academic Achievement.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The knowledge and skills assessed on the objective alternative assessments need to be "equivalent" in rigor to those measured on the WASL rather than "equal to or greater" than the rigor in the WASL. Clarifying language is added regarding the need for student learning plans to be prepared only for students scoring below proficient on the WASL.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Not all students are the same nor do all students show what they know in the same way; therefore, a "one-size-fits-all" test like the WASL is not appropriate. Alternative assessments are necessary. OSPI should be able to move forward with the development, piloting and implementation of alternative assessments without legislative approval. Students should not have to fail the once twice in order to use alternative assessments. Career and technical education programs provide alternative environments in which students can learn and demonstrate their academic performance. Career and technical education programs are rigorous and relevant. The inclusion of career and technical educators in the development and implementation of the alternative assessments is welcomed and appreciated. With an alternative assessment, educators can begin focusing on the knowledge and skills, not just the WASL.

Testimony Against: Alternative assessments may be less rigorous than the WASL. There should be adequate reliability and validity if an alternative assessment is used. This bill does not ensure reliability and validity. There should be uniform scoring criteria and the alternative assessments should be scored at the state-level. While there is support for students to have alternatives, there should not be a high-stakes test for graduation purposes. Though the bill provides alternative assessments for students, these assessments are still high-stakes and should be reconsidered. The WASL and Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EARLs) have nothing to do academic learning. The EARLs are a generic one size fits all approach.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Mary Alice Heuschel, Deputy State Superintendent of Public Instruction; Kathleen Lopp, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education; Marianna Goheen, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education; Doug Meyer, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education; Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Suzi Wright, Tulalip Tribes; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; Mary Kenfield, Washington PTA; Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association; Bob Butts, Jennifer Priddy, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

CON: Susan Mielke, Washington Roundtable; Miebeth Bustillo-Booth, Washington Education Association; Nancy Atwood, Washington AEA; LaCrese Green; private tutor.