
Education Committee

HB 1976

Brief Description: Redesigning the statewide student assessment system.

Sponsors: Representative Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Articulates legislative intent about the principles, components, and design of the statewide student assessment system, and directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and the State Board of Education (SBE) to begin redesigning the system accordingly.
- Directs the SPI to revisit other aspects of the assessment system and report back by December 1, 2009.
- Removes the statutory date by when students must meet the state standard on the high school mathematics and science assessments for graduation purposes and instead requires that the SBE determine when this should be required, based on the validity and reliability of the assessments.

Hearing Date: 2/11/09

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

Background:

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is the statewide academic assessment used to measure student knowledge and skills on the state learning standards or Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). The WASL also serves as the state's assessment instrument for purposes of school and school district accountability under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The WASL in reading and mathematics is administered in each of grades 3 through 8 and 10. The writing WASL is in grades 4, 7, and 10, and the science WASL is in grades 5, 8, and 10. To obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA), which is required for graduation, high school students must meet the state standard on the tenth grade WASL in reading, writing, and mathematics or an approved alternative assessment. Until 2013, a student

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who does not meet the state standard on the mathematics WASL may graduate from high school without a CAA by meeting certain conditions. Beginning with the graduating class of 2013 students will also have to meet the state standards on the science WASL to earn a CAA.

Legislation was passed in 2008 directing the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to develop statewide end-of-course assessments (EOCs) for high school mathematics to be used as the mathematics WASL. The 2008 Legislature also directed the SPI to reduce the number of open-ended questions on the reading and mathematics WASL in all grades except high school.

There are different types of assessments for different purposes. Summative assessments collect performance information at the end of a unit, course, or program of study in order to sum up achievement and are often used to meet accountability requirements. Formative assessments use a variety of strategies to provide ongoing monitoring of student progress and give feedback to students and teachers that can be used to inform and improve student learning. Diagnostic assessments are a subset of formative assessments that provide a detailed analysis of an individual student's performance in a particular area to identify the reason for that performance. The WASL is a summative assessment.

"Reliability and validity" are psychometric terms used to gauge the technical quality of an assessment. Generally speaking, reliability refers to the extent that the assessment yields consistent results and does not randomly vary in its outcomes. Validity refers to the degree that the assessment measures what it is intended to measure. Included in considerations of reliability and validity is the question of whether the assessment is appropriate for its intended use or purpose.

In 2008 the Legislature created a WASL Workgroup (Workgroup) composed of seven legislative members to review and evaluate the current assessment system by January 1, 2009, and potentially make recommendations to improve it. The Workgroup developed both long-term and short-term recommendations for the assessment system. The long-term recommendations include a list of principles that should be established as legislative intent for the design of a new assessment system and a description of recommended components within that system. The short-term recommendations include certain activities to be conducted by the SPI and the State Board of Education (SBE), as well as a re-examination of the date for the graduation requirement in mathematics and science.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature finds that the statewide student assessment system should improve and inform instruction, support accountability, and provide useful information to all levels of the educational system. The Legislature intends to redesign the current assessment system to include multiple assessment formats, including formative and summative assessments; enable statewide and nationwide comparisons of student achievement; and be balanced so that information used to make significant decisions includes many data points.

Components of the assessment system include instructionally-supportive formative assessments, a state-administered summative assessment, and classroom based assessments. Key design elements and characteristics of each type of assessment are described. Preservice and ongoing training for teachers and administrators on the effective use of different types of assessments

should be provided, and as the statewide data system is developed, data should be collected for all required statewide assessments. The SPI, in consultation with the SBE, is directed to begin design and development of an overall system meeting these principles and characteristics, and report annually beginning December 1, 2009, on progress and costs.

The SPI is also required to:

- revise the number of open-ended questions on the current statewide assessment at all grades while retaining the validity and reliability of the test and continuing to measure critical thinking skills, and report to the Legislature by December 1, 2009, with a cost analysis of the changes;
- revisit the alternative assessments, the appeals process, and the portfolio assessment for students with disabilities and recommend improvements by December 1, 2009;
- beginning in 2010-11, arrange for a fee waiver for students wanting to take the PSAT if they have obtained the CAA.

The SBE is directed to provide a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2009, that examines the extent that the EALRs align with college and career readiness, and examines and justifies how their proposed high school graduation framework aligns with the current EALRs.

The specific dates by when students will be required to meet the state standard on the mathematics and science WASL in order to earn a CAA for graduation are removed from statute. Instead, this requirement is imposed only after a determination is made by the SBE that the assessments in mathematics and science are sufficiently reliable and valid. This determination must be made by September 1 of the freshman year of the graduating class to which the requirement applies. Various technical amendments are made consistent with this policy. The SPI and the SBE must recommend by December 1, 2009, whether the high school science WASL should become an end-of-course assessment.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 2/9/2009.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.