
Education Committee

HB 2333

Brief Description: Reducing state requirements on local school districts.

Sponsors: Representatives Lytton, Maxwell, Wylie, Probst, Reykdal, Jinkins, Appleton, Fitzgibbon, McCoy, Billig, Springer, Orwall, Tharinger, Roberts and Van De Wege.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that writing is no longer a subject of statewide assessment, and makes corresponding changes to reflect this.
- Requires that districts utilize classroom based assessments or other strategies to assess writing.
- Prohibits the State Board of Education (SBE) from adopting a requirement for completion of a Culminating Project.
- Allows the SBE to adopt a requirement with respect to completion of a High School and Beyond Plan (Plan), and mandates certain allowed substitutions for such a Plan.
- Changes the dates by which classroom based assessments are required.
- Limits the frequency of school district audits, with some exceptions.

Hearing Date: 1/26/12

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195).

Background:

State Graduation Requirements.

In order to graduate, the state requires students to earn 20 credits in specified course areas, pass state assessments or approved alternatives, complete a Culminating Project (Project), and prepare a High School and Beyond Plan (Plan).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Culminating Project and High School and Beyond Plan. The State Board of Education (SBE) established the Plan and the Project as graduation requirements in 2000, effective for students in the graduating class of 2008. The Plan is a formal process designed to help students think about their future and select course work that will best prepare them for their post high school goals. Students create their Plans in cooperation with parents or guardians and school staff. Ideally, students write their Plans in eighth or ninth grade and then continue to revise them throughout high school to accommodate changing interests or goals. Whether a student has met the requirements for a Plan is a decision made at the local level by the school district.

Pending legislative authorization and funding, the SBE has approved adding a variety of elements to the Plan to make it more consistent across districts and more relevant to students. These elements include:

- Personal interests, abilities, and relationship to current career goals.
- Four-year plan for course-taking that is related to graduation requirements and the student's interests and goals, including consideration of dual credit opportunities.
- Research on postsecondary training and education related to career goals.
- Budget for postsecondary education or training and life.
- Participation in one or multiple postsecondary visits.
- Completion of an application for postsecondary education and training.
- Completion of a resume.
- Identification of assessments that may assist in the planning or are required to achieve goals.
- A relationship to the student's Project.

A Project is an experiential, hands-on project that allows students flexibility to demonstrate: essential skills through reading, writing, speaking, production, and performance; skills of analysis, logic, and creativity; and the integration of experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and solve problems. According to the SBE, districts should clearly identify the Project outcomes and develop and publish assessment criteria to support those outcomes. Districts should also have a Project management system designed to support the students and staff.

The SBE is considering changes to the Project, however no action has been taken. One proposal is to require the Project to include a portfolio, a presentation, and a product. The Project may also include a research or reflective paper, community service, job shadowing, internship, or other components deemed appropriate by the district.

Statewide Assessments. Starting with the class of 2008, students are required to meet the state standard on the high school assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics to receive a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA). Students in special education who are not appropriately assessed using the state assessment can earn a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA).

Either the CAA or the CIA were to be required for graduation starting with the class of 2008, but the 2007 Legislature enacted a temporary exception for students who do not meet the state standard in mathematics. Until 2013 these students can still graduate as long as they meet standard on the reading and writing assessments and take additional mathematics courses.

The classes of 2013 and 2014 must meet the state standard in at least one of the math end of course (EOC) exams and the class of 2015 must meet the standard on both math EOCs to earn a CAA or CIA. Starting with the class of 2015, students will have to also meet the state standard on the Biology EOC for graduation.

Students who score at least a three on the following selected Advanced Placement (AP) exams may use the score as an objective alternative assessment for demonstrating that a student has met or exceeded state standards for the CAA:

- Calculus or statistics may be used for mathematics.
- English language and composition may be used for writing.
- English literature and composition, macroeconomics, microeconomics, psychology, U.S. history, world history, U.S. government and politics, or comparative government and politics may be used for reading.
- Biology, physics, chemistry, or environmental science may be used for science.

School districts may establish other local graduation requirements. High school diplomas are issued by school districts to students who meet state and local graduation requirements.

Classroom Based Assessments and Other Strategies. Not all subjects are covered by statewide assessments. School districts are required to have in place, in elementary, middle, and high schools, assessments or other strategies chosen by the district to assure that students have an opportunity to learn the essential academic learning requirements in social studies, the arts, and health and fitness. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) may not require districts to use a classroom-based assessment in these subjects and must clearly communicate to districts that they have an option to use other strategies chosen by the district for purposes of assessment. Districts must annually submit an implementation verification report to the OSPI.

With respect to civics, districts must require students to complete classroom based assessments in the following grades:

- Fourth or fifth grade, beginning with the 2010-11 school year.
- seventh or eighth grade, beginning with the 2008-09 school year.
- 11th or 12th grade, beginning with the 2008-09 school year.

Dual Credit and Other Opportunities and Programs.

Running Start. Running Start students have the opportunity to study on a college campus while acquiring credits that count toward both high school and college graduation. If the student passes the college course, he or she receives the same amount of credit as any other college student taking the course.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). The AVID is a college-readiness system designed to increase the number of students who enroll in four-year colleges. Although the AVID serves all students, it focuses on students in the academic middle. At the high school and middle level, the AVID students are enrolled in their school's toughest classes, such as AP, and receive support in an academic elective class, called AVID, taught within the school day by a trained AVID teacher. In the accelerated elective class, the AVID students receive support through a rigorous curriculum and ongoing, structured tutorials. The AVID elective teachers

support the AVID students by providing academic training, managing their tutorials, working with faculty and parents, and helping students develop long-range academic and personal plans.

Tech Prep. Tech Prep is a cooperative effort between K-12 schools, community and technical colleges, and the business community to develop applied integrated, academic and technical programs. These professional technical courses are taught on high school campuses by high school instructors. The instructors work with local colleges to assure the courses are taught at the college-level and articulate to the college program. Through Tech Prep articulation agreements, colleges award credit to students who successfully complete college-equivalent courses and programs with a "B" or better while still in high school.

International Baccalaureate (IB). The IB program is designed as an academically challenging series of courses, student work, and examinations which are usually offered over a two-year period. Students must complete courses in six subjects: primary language, secondary language, individuals and societies, science, mathematics, and either the arts or a second course in one of the other subjects. Students must also complete a Theory of Knowledge course, produce an extended essay, participate in a Creativity, Action, and Service activity, and complete internally and externally-scored assessment tasks. To earn an IB Diploma, students must also pass the EOC examinations in each of their six courses.

Advanced Placement. The AP program allows students to take college-level courses while staying on their high school campuses. Students complete courses taught by high school teachers and take standardized examinations at the end of the course. Students may score from zero to five points. Minimum scores to qualify for college credit vary by college and by subject area.

Learning Assistance Program (LAP).

The LAP, in operation for many years, is designed to help students who need additional time and assistance to achieve basic skills in reading, mathematics, language arts, and readiness skills. School districts apply to the OSPI for program funds, submitting a program plan to the agency. The plans must include district and school-level data on reading, writing, and mathematics as well as other required elements.

School District Audits.

State law requires the State Auditor (Auditor) to examine the affairs of all local governments at least once in every three years, and examine the health and welfare benefit plans and self-insurance programs of local governments at least every two years. The Auditor must establish an audit schedule.

During the 2009-2011 fiscal biennium, the Auditor is directed to conduct audits no more often than once every two years of local governments with annual general fund revenues of ten million dollars or less and no findings of impropriety for the three-year period immediately preceding the audit period. The Auditor is not prohibited from conducting audits: to address suspected fraud or irregular conduct; at the request of the local government governing body; or as required by federal laws or regulations.

The Auditor conducts a variety of types of audits:

Accountability Audits. The Accountability Audits focus on areas of the highest risk for noncompliance, misappropriation or misuse of public resources. They evaluate the local government's compliance with state laws, regulations, and its own policies and procedures governing financial operations. Whether an accountability audit is conducted on one, two, or three year cycles depends upon:

- the size of the government or school district as measured by its revenues or enrollment;
- the significance of risks such as a pattern of past audit issues, significant management or operational changes, or concerns expressed by citizens or policy makers; and
- requests from the government for more frequent audits.

Audit Assessments. The Audit Assessments are a cost-effective approach for auditing small local governments. An assessment involves analyzing information to determine if there are indications of significant irregularities or misappropriations. If risks are identified, the Auditor may conduct an on-site audit. These assessments are performed on a one, two, or three year cycle, depending on the size of the government.

School districts with more than 8,000 full time equivalency (FTE) enrollment receive an annual accountability audit. Districts with fewer than 8,000 receive a biennial or triennial accountability audit. Districts with less than 100 FTE, or without a high school, are eligible for an audit assessment if there are no indicators of high risk. Such assessments are conducted annually. Districts receive a financial audit according to their accountability cycle unless a federal audit is required.

Federal Compliance Audits. The Federal Compliance Audits assess state and local governments' management of federal programs and compliance with federal requirements. Financial statement audits are conducted when audits are a requirement of receiving federal funds or issuing bonds. Districts that expend more than 500 thousand dollars in federal funds in any year must have a federal audit. All federal audits must include a financial audit. In 2011, 210 of the 295 school districts were required to have a federal audit.

Performance Audits.

Citizens gave the Office of the State Auditor authority to conduct performance audits in November 2005 with the passage of Initiative 900. Performance audits have a broader focus on the organization's effectiveness and efficiency than more traditional financial audits. To date, the Auditor has conducted 30 performance audits and reviews of more than 80 state and local governments, programs and services.

Summary of Bill:

Assessments.

The statewide academic assessment system no longer includes writing. Students will not be required to meet state standard on the writing assessment in order to graduate. References to the statewide writing assessment are removed from several statutes, including requirements that

school districts include such data in their LAP plans and that the SBE adopt and revise performance improvement goals in writing.

By the end of the 2015-16 school year, school districts must have in place classroom based assessments or other strategies chosen by the district, to assure that students have an opportunity to learn the essential academic learning requirements in writing. In this same school year, school districts are required to submit implementation verification to the OSPI.

The dates by which districts must require students to complete classroom-based assessments to 2015-16.

Corresponding dates for districts to submit implementation verification with respect to classroom-based assessments are also moved to 2015-16.

State Graduation Requirements.

The SBE is prohibited from adopting a requirement for completion of a Project.

The SBE may adopt a requirement for completion of a Plan, but must allow students to substitute enrollment in the following courses or programs for completion of the Plan:

- Running Start program.
- AVID program.
- IB program.
- AP courses.
- Preparatory CTE courses.

School District Audits.

After the effective date, the Auditor may conduct audits no more often than once every three years of school districts that have had no findings of impropriety for the three-year period immediately preceding the audit period. This includes financial audits and accountability audits.

The Auditor is not prohibited from conducting audits:

- to address suspected fraud or irregular conduct;
- at the request of the district board of directors; or
- as required by federal laws or regulations or as a condition of the receipt of federal funds.

Technical Changes.

References to the Washington Assessment of Student Learning are changed to refer to the statewide student assessment.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 2012.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 8 relating to classroom-based assessments, which takes effect July 1, 2012.