

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2582

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to the Washington assessment of student learning.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to the Washington assessment of student learning.

Sponsors: Representatives Schindler, Koster, Cox, Lambert, Talcott, Carrell and Wensman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/27/00, 2/4/00 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will release each student's scored writing test booklets on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to the students' schools for use by parents and teachers.
- By December 1, 2000, the office will report to the Governor and legislative committees on the cost of releasing all the WASL test booklets.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Carlson; Cox; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; D. Schmidt; Schual-Berke; Stensen; Thomas and Wensman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

By law, most fourth, seventh, and 10th grade public school students in Washington are, or soon will be, required to take a Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test for their grade level. Each WASL was created to determine whether students have met the state's academic standards in reading, writing, listening, and mathematics. Additional WASLs in science and social studies are under development, and others may follow. The standards, also called essential academic learning requirements, were developed initially by the Commission on Student Learning. HB 1209, the legislation that created the system of standards and assessments, addressed some of the anticipated uses of the WASLs. One of the provisions of the legislation states: "The assessment system shall be designed so that the results under the assessment system are used by educators as tools to evaluate instructional practices, and to initiate appropriate educational support for students who have not learned the essential academic learning requirements at the appropriate periods in the student's educational development."

Once the WASLs are scored by the testing company that prepared them, and the results are considered valid and reliable, parents and teachers have access to information on how each student performed on the assessments. However, the scored test booklets are not returned to parents or teachers.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Once Washington assessments of student learning are scored and the data is considered complete and accurate, the OSPI will provide the scored writing test booklets to the schools of those who took the assessments. The schools will make the booklets available to the teachers and parents or guardians of tested students. By December 1, 2000, the OSPI will report to the Governor and the fiscal and education committees of the Legislature on the costs of releasing all scored test booklets on all tested subjects to schools, teachers, and parents.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The OSPI will release to schools, teachers, and parents only the writing portion of the WASL. The office will report to the Governor and legislative committees the costs of releasing all test booklets. The Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission is not required to report on whether the bank of test questions needs to be expanded.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 2000.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) The WASL is a high stakes test that will eventually be used to determine who will receive a high school diploma. Some school districts are using it now to help decide which students will be promoted. With teachers, parents are the primary partner in their children's education, so both should have an opportunity to see where their children need extra help to meet state standards. Teachers need to see which concepts children are having difficulty grasping. So, if returned, the test booklets could be used as diagnostic tools to improve student learning. These tests are different from the tests most parents took, so parents need to see the tests to understand how to help their children improve academically.

(With concerns) If the state decides to return test booklets to schools and parents, a number of issues need to be addressed. First, certain test items are reused from year to year in an effort to ensure the reliability and validity of the tests. Some means needs to be available for that purpose. Next, the bank of test questions needs to be significantly increased since released questions cannot be reused for at least a period of time. The costs of addressing those issues will be significant.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Schindler, prime sponsor; Representative Lambert; Cris Shardelman; Karen Davis, Washington Education Association; and Marda Kirkwood, Citizens United for Responsible Education.

(With concerns) Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors Association; and Rosemary Fitton, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.