

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5825

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to student assessments.

Brief Description: Changing student assessments.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senator McAuliffe; by request of Commission on Student Learning and Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/29/99, 4/1/99 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- The laws are revised that govern certain standardized tests that all public school students are required to take over the course of their school years.
- The eighth grade norm-referenced basic skills test is moved to the ninth grade, and a new norm-referenced test for sixth grade students replaces the test currently required for 11th grade students.
- The WASL for civics, geography, and history will be combined into a social studies assessment. Timelines are revised for the WASLs in social studies, health and fitness, the arts, and middle school reading, mathematics, writing and communications.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 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 and Wensman.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

The state currently requires the following statewide student assessments.

Reading accuracy and fluency test: School districts must assess reading accuracy and fluency in the second grade.

Basic skills assessments: School districts must assess basic skills in the third, eighth, and 11th grades. The third grade test assesses reading and math skills. The eighth grade test assesses reading, math, language, reasoning and thinking skills, and inventories student interests. The 11th grade test assesses skills in the broad content areas common to high school, and thinking and reasoning skills. Prior to the 1998-99 school year, the assessment used was the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. The current test is the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) at the elementary school level: The WASL is currently required in reading, writing, communication (listening), and math at the fourth grade. There are statutory timelines for implementing an elementary level WASL in science. There are no timelines for implementing the WASL in other content areas at the elementary school level.

WASL at the middle and high school levels: There are statutory timelines for implementing a middle and high school level WASL in reading, writing, communication (listening), math, science, history, civics, geography, arts, and health and fitness.

CSL Recommendations: At its February 3, 1999, meeting, the Commission on Student Learning (CSL) finalized a proposal that combines the assessments in history, civics, and geography into one social studies assessment. The new social studies assessment would also include economics. The proposal also would delay implementation of the middle and high school social studies and health and fitness assessments for two years. The middle and high school art assessments would be delayed by three years. Before adopting the assessment recommendations, the commission surveyed 1,000 teachers, parents, employers, and community representatives to determine the feasibility of adopting the proposed assessment timelines.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Laws are revised that govern the norm-referenced and criterion-referenced standardized tests required of public school students. In addition, the Superintendent

of Public Instruction's (SPI) responsibilities are clarified regarding the development and revision of the WASL and the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs). The superintendent will share these responsibilities with the CSL until the commission's authority to exist expires on June 30, 1999.

Reading accuracy and fluency test: The law describing the second grade reading assessment is clarified. The test measures oral reading skills. The SPI may add additional reading passages to the initial list of reading passages used for the assessment.

Basic skills assessments: The third grade test is retained. A new sixth grade basic skills assessment in math and reading/language arts is required. The eighth grade assessment is moved to the ninth grade. The 11th grade assessment is repealed.

WASL at the elementary school level: Timelines are created for implementing the WASL in social studies, health, fitness, and the arts at the elementary level. The social studies assessment will be available in the 2002-03 school year, and required statewide by the 2005-06 school year. Arts and health and fitness assessments will be available by the 2003-04 school year and required by the 2007-08 school year.

WASL at the middle and high school levels: The implementation of the WASL in social studies, health, and fitness at the middle and high school levels is delayed for two years. The implementation of the WASL in the arts at the middle and high school levels is delayed for three years. The social studies assessments will be available in the 2002-03 school year, and required statewide by the 2005-06 school year. Arts and health and fitness assessments will be available by the 2003-04 school year and required by the 2006-07 school year. The high school science assessment is delayed for one year. The middle school reading, mathematics, communications, and writing is moved up by one year.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Second Substitute Bill: The middle school WASL is moved up by one year. The ninth grade norm-referenced assessment is permitted but not required to include a collection of information about students' interests and plans for high school. The assessment is also permitted but not required to include a collection of other related student and school information.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and section 605 takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The legislation aligns currently mandated assessments by coordinating the required norm-referenced tests with the WASLs, and spreading the tests out over a student's educational career. Students are assessed on basic skills one year and on the application of those skills in the following year. It is time to begin the implementation of goal 2 assessments in social studies, arts, and health and fitness so those subjects are perceived to be as highly valued as the skills assessed in the goal 1 WASLs. However, the current timelines need to be revised since the system is not yet ready to design and implement the assessments in those subjects. A focus on health and fitness will lead to healthier children and to an ethic that students are the stewards of their own bodies.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Duncan McQuarrie and Linda Goldkey, Superintendent of Public Instruction.