

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5512

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 22, 2019

Title: An act relating to basic skills assessments for approved teacher preparation programs.

Brief Description: Concerning basic skills assessments for approved teacher preparation programs.

Sponsors: Senators McCoy, Wellman, Hunt, Wilson, C. and Hasegawa; by request of Professional Educator Standards Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/18/19, 2/22/19 [DP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes requirement that applicants to a teacher preparation program pass a basic skills assessment.
- Requires that applicants take the basic skills assessment or an alternative assessment and report scores to the state and their program.
- Establishes that a teacher preparation program may use the results of the basic skills assessment or an alternative assessment in determining a candidate's readiness for the program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Holy, Hunt, McCoy, Padden, Pedersen and Salomon.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Mullet and Wagoner.

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

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.

Background: Teacher Certification Requirements. Under state law, the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is tasked with establishing rules for teacher certification, including requirements for teacher preparation programs. Under rules set by the PESB and state law, there are several pathways to becoming a certificated teacher, with the traditional route being enrolled in a teacher preparation program as part of a bachelor or master's degree program. Currently, all individuals hoping to become certified teachers in Washington must meet testing requirements.

Washington Educator Skills Test. In 2001, the Legislature required the PESB to develop and implement a pilot assessment as a means of assessing a program applicant's basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Passing this assessment, the Washington Educator Skills Test-Basic—or WEST-B—became required in 2002 for admission to an approved teacher preparation program and for persons from out-of-state applying for a Washington State residency certificate.

State law also provides that programs may admit students who have not achieved the minimum score established by the PESB on an individual basis. However, these students may not receive certification without passing the skills assessment. The PESB may also permit exceptions from the assessment requirements on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, the PESB may accept other tests and test scores in place of the basic skills assessment as long as the tests are comparable in rigor. The PESB is required to set the acceptable score for admission to certification programs at no lower than the average national scores for the SAT or ACT.

Summary of Bill: For admission to a teacher preparation program, applicants must take the basic skills assessment or an equivalent assessment and report the results to the state and the preparation program. Teacher preparation programs may use the result of these assessments as a formative assessment of academic strengths and weaknesses in determining the candidate's readiness for the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Teachers in Washington are predominantly white; eliminating the testing requirement would allow for more teachers of color to enter into teacher preparation programs. Principals, school board members, and others all believe that the testing requirements create unnecessary barriers. Removing the test cut score will allow programs to make more comprehensive decisions in accepting candidates. Tests can often include cultural biases. Evaluative procedures already exist outside of cut scores that ensure quality teacher candidates. There is a large need to have teachers that match the student populations they teach.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator John McCoy, Prime Sponsor; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Cindy Rockholt, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; Justin Montermini, Professional Educator Standards Board; Steve DuPont, Central Washington University.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.