

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2124

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to high school graduation requirements.

Brief Description: Regarding high school graduation requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Talcott, McDermott, Tom, Haigh, Cox, Rockefeller, Hunter, Santos, Edwards and Anderson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/27/03, 3/4/03 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Clarifies the content areas of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) that high school students must pass in order to graduate and the dates that those content areas become required for graduation.
- Describes the system that must be in place before the high school WASL is required for graduation and requires agencies to report on the progress of addressing some of the issues related to the requirement.
- Renames the Certificate of Mastery as the Certificate of Academic Proficiency.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cox, Haigh, Hunter, McMahan, Rockefeller and Santos.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Anderson.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

Washington Assessment of Student Learning - High School Graduation Requirements

By law, sometime in the future, students will be required to obtain a Certificate of Mastery in order to graduate from high school. The achievement of the certificate will be based on the successful completion of the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). The WASL when fully implemented, will include a number of content areas: reading, writing, communications (listening), mathematics, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness. The State Board of Education (SBE) is required to determine whether the high school assessment system has been implemented and whether it is sufficiently reliable and valid. Once the SBE makes that determination, successful completion of the high school WASL will lead to a Certificate of Mastery.

On January 12, 2000, the SBE adopted a rule that requires students in the graduating class of 2008 to successfully complete the WASL in reading, writing, communications, and mathematics in order to receive a high school diploma. Passage of the science WASL will be required for the graduating class of 2010.

The decisions on how to include the social studies, arts, and health and fitness assessments into high school graduation requirements will be made at a later time. The SBE has indicated that passage of the social studies WASL may be required for graduation or may lead to an endorsement on the student's transcript. The SBE has also indicated that passage of the arts and the health and fitness WASL may lead to an endorsement on the student's transcript.

The SBE will continue to monitor the implementation of the WASL in order to determine its reliability and validity. It may delay its requirements if it finds that the system does not meet the SBE's interpretation of legal, policy, or technical definitions of validity and reliability.

State Board of Education - High School Graduation Requirements

By law, the SBE is responsible for determining the state's minimum high school graduation requirements. The board began to review current requirements in the fall of 1997. Following 18 months of work that included 11 public forums conducted around the state and three public hearings, the SBE adopted new graduation requirements in October 2000. The requirements will take effect for the graduating class of 2008.

Under the new requirements each student must earn at least 19 academic credits. Any subject for which essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) have been adopted must include material on those requirements plus any additional material beyond the standards that has been developed by the district. In addition to the credit requirements, two new non-credit requirements are established. Each student will complete a culminating project that allows the student to demonstrate competency in goals Three and Four of education reform. In addition, students must have an education plan for high

school and the year following graduation.

Washington Assessment of Student Learning - Implementation Responsibilities

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is responsible for creating, updating, and reporting on the EALRs and the WASL. The Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission (A+ Commission) is responsible for determining the score that students must achieve to successfully complete the assessment.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Certificate of Academic Proficiency

The Certificate of Mastery is renamed the Certificate of Academic Proficiency (CAP). Public school students who pass the high school assessment system in the content areas of reading, writing, mathematics and science will receive a CAP. Students may achieve a CAP through success in those content areas on the tenth grade WASL, or through success on a retake of the content areas in which a student was initially unsuccessful, or through an alternative means that demonstrates that the student has met state standards in that content area, including an appeals process.

The CAP will be required for graduation from a public high school subject to a series of conditions that include:

- The State Board of Education must first find that the testing system for those content areas is sufficiently valid and reliable to be used for decisions about individual students;
- Retakes and alternative ways of assessing students, including an appeals process; must be in place; and
- Each eighth through twelfth grade student who fails to successfully complete the WASL in one or more of the content areas included in the CAP will have a high school graduation plan.

Beginning with the class of 2008, in order to graduate from a public high school, students must successfully complete the high school WASL in the content areas of reading and mathematics. The graduating class of 2010 must pass the WASL in reading, mathematics, writing and science.

Beginning with the class of 2008, students will have at least two opportunities each year to retake the WASL in the content areas in which they were unsuccessful. Students in high school completion programs will also have access to retakes. In addition to

retakes, students who have been unsuccessful in a required area may use an alternative means developed and approved by the SPI to demonstrate achievement of the state standards once the students have retaken the assessment in content areas in which they were initially unsuccessful. Students may retain and use their highest score for each content area of the WASL for purposes of the CAP requirement.

The CAP graduation requirement does not apply to students enrolled in private schools or students who are home-schooled.

Completion Dates for CAP Requirements

A number of these requirements must be completed by certain dates.

- By July 1, 2004, the State Board of Education must report to the Governor and the House and Senate Education Committees on whether the high school WASL in the content areas of reading and mathematics is sufficiently valid and reliable to be used for individual student decisions. The same report for writing and science is due by December 15, 2005.
- By the spring of 2004, opportunities to retake the high school WASL will begin. By 2006 students will also have an opportunity to retake the WASL in the fall.
- By 2006 the results of the high school WASL will be returned to students, parents and schools by June 1, of each year.

In making its determination on whether the high school assessment system for the CAP is valid and reliable, the State Board must consider a number of factors described in the legislation, including whether students have had an opportunity to learn the information covered by the CAP.

The A+ Commission will review and adjust, if necessary, the cut scores that students must achieve on the high school WASL. The A+ Commission must consider using the standard error of measurement for decisions related to the certificate of academic proficiency. The A+ Commission must complete its work before the results of the 2004 high school WASL are returned to school districts. In addition, the A+ Commission must report the results of these efforts to the Governor, the OSPI and the House and Senate Education Committees.

With the assistance of an advisory committee, the OSPI will develop alternative assessment options, procedures and criteria, including an appeals process, for students to use to demonstrate achievement of the state standards required for a CAP. By July 1, 2004, the OSPI will report to the Governor and the House and Senate Education Committees with recommendations for alternative assessments and appeals. By July 1, 2005, alternative assessment options will be available for voluntary use, subject to

funding.

Task Forces Formed for Unresolved CAP Issues

The OSPI will convene three task forces to provide advice on various aspects of the CAP. By September 1, 2003, each task force will provide a progress report to the OSPI. By November 30, 2003, each of the task forces will provide its recommendations to the Governor, the OSPI, and the House and Senate Education Committees.

- One task force will provide advice on the appropriate application of the CAP requirement to special education students. The task force will recommend one or more ways to acknowledge the accomplishments of students who completed their individual education plans but did not achieve a CAP.
- One task force will provide advice on the appropriate application of the CAP requirement to students with limited English proficiency. The task force will recommend one or more ways to acknowledge the accomplishments of limited English proficient students who meet every state and local graduation requirement except that of the CAP.
- One task force will recommend best practices that schools may use with middle and high school students who need additional assistance to meet the requirements of the CAP. The task force will examine ways that current programs and student counseling efforts can be adjusted to meet those needs. It will also identify additional tools needed to provide that help to students. Finally, it will consider the elements that should be included in the high school graduation plans prepared for students who do not succeed in passing the WASL in subjects covered by the CAP.

OSPI Assessment Duties

In order to help teachers, the OSPI will provide them with as much individual student performance information as possible within the constraints of the assessment system's item bank. In addition, the OSPI will provide school districts with information on classroom-based and other assessments that may provide additional achievement information for individual students.

SBEs High School Graduation Requirements

The SBE may not require that students have a plan in order to graduate from high school.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute moves science from 2012 to 2010, requires one retake before a student may use an alternate means to demonstrate proficiency, and adds a career and technical teacher to the alternative means and best practices task forces. A special ed representative is added to the best practices task force, a specific type of organization is added to special ed task force, a parent is added to the alternative means task force, and administrators are added to the task forces. The responsibility for the validity and reliability determination on the high school assessment system is returned to the SBE and the SBE is added to the group to which the task forces will report. The task force on best practices will consider ways to consult parents and students in the preparation of a graduation plan and technical revisions are made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 27, 2003.

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

Testimony For: Currently a high school diploma has very little meaning. By 2006, only 12 percent of the state's jobs will be held by unskilled workers so giving students a meaningless diploma is a disservice to them and could prove disastrous for the state's economy. Over half of the recent high school graduates entering community colleges must take remedial classes before they are ready for college level work. Although students are required to attend and pass classes, the level of education the students receive varies from classroom to classroom and district to district. When the CAP requirements in HB 1209 and this legislation finally begin, the high school diploma will have more meaning than at any time in the state's history. The legislation sets up a system of retakes and alternatives that will give students many chances to meet the requirement. In addition, it creates a graduation plan for each student in middle and high school who is in danger of failing the requirement. Young people and high school teachers need to know that the state is serious about a meaningful diploma. Until that occurs, high schools will not meet the goals of education reform. This legislation clarifies for students, parents and schools the state's high school expectations, the system that will support those expectations, and the safety net that will support students in their efforts to reach the expectations. The delay of the writing and science requirements is warranted because each assessment should be valid and reliable at about a point-9 correlation without the need for retakes. The writing assessment does not yet reach that threshold and 2003 is the first year that high school students are required to take the science assessment. The listening WASL is unnecessary and is not valid and reliable so it should not be part of the CAP requirement.

Testimony Against: None.

(With concerns on original bill) The delay of the science requirement to 2012 is a problem since the only real leverage the Legislature has to address the achievement gap in high schools is tying an objective achievement standard to the diploma. The provision that moved the validity and reliability decision from the SBE to the OSPI should be reviewed and the bill should return the responsibility to the SBE. Students should be required to take the assessment in the content areas in which the students were initially unsuccessful before they can use an alternative means of assessment. Parents, special education representatives and career and technical educators should be added to various task forces.

(With concerns on substitute bill) Successful completion of the writing assessment should be required for the class of 2008, not 2010. Students should be required to pass the listening WASL in order to graduate from high school. If the time for the listening assessment was doubled, it could meet technical requirements for validity and reliability. The state should require students to have a plan that includes the year after high school in order to graduate. This legislation removes that provision from the SBEs high school graduation requirements.

Testified: (In support) Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Dr. Terry Bergeson, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Ann Randall and Meredith Barnes, Washington Education Association; Carol Stromberg, Parent; and Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

(In support with concerns) Judy Hartmann, Governor's Office; Kim Peery, Public School Employees; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training Coordinating Board; Bobbie May, State Board of Education; and Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals.

(With concerns) Steve Mullin, Washington Roundtable; Lynn Nixon, Agilent Technologies, American Electronics Association; Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators; and Carol Taylor Cann, Washington State Parent Teacher Association.