
Education Committee

ESSB 6475

Brief Description: Authorizing alternative methods of assessment and appeal processes for the certificate of academic achievement.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Schmidt, Eide, Weinstein, Haugen, Berkey, Kastama, Shin, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to implement three objective alternative assessment methods for students to demonstrate achievement of state academic standards.
- Establishes one method as a comparison of a student's grades in applicable courses to the grades of a cohort of students who took the same courses but who passed the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).
- Establishes a second method as a collection of work samples or other evidence that students have met state standards, and a third method as a collection of evidence designed for students in certain SPI-approved career and technical education programs.
- Directs the SPI to examine the feasibility of offering the mathematics WASL in languages other than English, and to develop an alternative assessment that divides the mathematics assessment into segments.
- Creates a Certificate of Academic Progress for students who pass all state and local graduation requirements except the WASL.

Hearing Date: 2/16/06

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Certificate of Academic Achievement.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, most students will be required to obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) to obtain a diploma. Students must meet the state standards in

reading, writing, and mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to earn a CAA.

In 2004, the Legislature authorized the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to develop options for objective alternative assessments for high school students to demonstrate they meet the state academic standards instead of relying on the WASL for this purpose. To use an alternative, a student must take the WASL at least twice. The Legislature also authorized development of an appeals process.

Alternative Assessments.

During 2004 and 2005, the SPI contracted with Dr. David Conley and the Center for Educational Policy Research to conduct a comprehensive review of alternative assessments and appeals in other states, and later an in-depth feasibility study of four possible options. The SPI is recommending two alternative assessments: a comparison of students' grades and WASL scores and a collection of evidence based on student work samples. In addition, the SPI recommends creating separate appeals procedures for students with unusual circumstances. During the spring of 2006, the SPI is working with 20 high schools, skills centers, and Educational Service Districts to field test the collection of evidence by defining and collecting work samples and developing scoring guidelines.

Students in the class of 2008 will take the high school WASL in the spring of 2006. If they do not attain proficiency the first time, their first retake opportunity will be in August of 2006. If they again do not meet the state standards, they could be eligible for an alternative assessment.

However, the Legislature must first formally approve implementation of an alternative assessment.

Summary of Bill:

Alternative Assessment Methods

Beginning in the 2006-07 school year, the SPI must implement three objective alternative assessment methods for students to demonstrate achievement of the state standards in content areas where they were not successful on the high school WASL. A student applying for an alternative assessment must meet the eligibility criteria under current law and other eligibility criteria established by the SPI.

1. One alternative assessment method is a comparison of the applicant's grades in applicable courses to the grades of a cohort of students in the same school who took the same courses, but who met or slightly exceeded the state standard on the high school WASL. If the applicant's grades are equal to or exceed the average grades of the comparison cohort, the applicant is deemed to have met the state standard. This method cannot be used if there are fewer than six students in the comparison cohort.
2. The second method is an evaluation of a collection of work samples or collection of evidence. The SPI develops guidelines for the type and number of work samples, which can be collected from academic, career and technical, or remedial courses and can include performance tasks as well as written products. Uniform scoring criteria must be developed,

and the collections must be scored at the state or regional level using a panel of trained educators.

3. The third method is a collection of work samples submitted by students in an SPI-approved career and technical program. The collection of work samples must be relevant to the particular program; focus on the application of academic knowledge within the program; include activities or projects that demonstrate academic knowledge; and represent the knowledge and skills that individuals in that field are expected to possess. An approved program is one that leads to a recognized certificate or credential and requires a sequenced progression of vocationally- intensive and rigorous courses. The applicant must also attain the certificate associated with the program in order to meet the standard on the alternative assessment.

Additional Alternatives

The SPI studies the feasibility of offering the mathematics WASL in languages other than English. The study includes estimates of the cost of translating the 10th grade WASL and scoring the assessments.

The SPI must begin development of an alternative assessment option for mathematics that presents the learning standards in segments and is comparable in rigor and content to the 10th grade WASL when all segments are considered together. The option must also be reliable and valid and able to be used to determine a student's academic performance level.

Appeals

By June 1, 2006, the SPI must implement a process for students to appeal their WASL scores. By January 1, 2007, the SPI must also implement guidelines and appeals processes for waiving CAA requirements for students who transfer to a public school in their junior or senior year or who have special unavoidable circumstances.

Certificate of Academic Progress

Beginning with the class of 2008, a Certificate of Academic Progress must be available for students who meet all state and local graduation requirements except the CAA or the Certificate of Individual Achievement. This certificate is not a diploma, but enables students to participate in commencement ceremonies.

To be eligible, students must have taken the WASL twice; maintain a 90 percent attendance level during their senior year (which may be waived by a school superintendent for circumstances such as illness); and meet with counselors, teachers, and parents to update their high school and beyond plan.

Report to Legislature

By January 2007, the SPI must report in detail to the Education Committees of the Legislature on the proposed guidelines and protocols for the alternative assessments; training to be provided for school districts and teachers; updated data on the number of students using or likely to be eligible to use the alternatives; results of the study on the bilingual mathematics alternative; and an update on development of the segmented mathematics assessment.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.