

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6475

As Passed Senate, February 10, 2006

Title: An act relating to authorizing alternative methods of assessment and appeal processes for the certificate of academic achievement.

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 History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/20/06 [DPS-WM, DNP]
Ways & Means: 2/6/06, 2/7/06 [DPS(EKHE), DNP, w/oRec].

Passed Senate: 2/10/06, 33-10.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6475 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Berkey, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Carrell and Pflug.

Staff: Ingrid Mungia (786-7423)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6475 as recommended by Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Fairley, Kohl-Welles, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Regala, Schoesler and Thibaudeau.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member and Pflug.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Brandland, Parlette and Roach.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: In 2004, the Washington State Legislature established in state law a requirement that, beginning with the Class of 2008, high school students must obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement or a Certificate of Individual Achievement to graduate. These certificates are in addition to other state and local graduation requirements.

To obtain a Certificate of Achievement, students in the Class of 2008 and beyond must demonstrate they have met the high school standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Students in the Class of 2010 and beyond also must meet the standards in science. Before students can use alternative assessments to obtain a Certificate of Achievement, the Legislature must formally approve the use of any alternative assessments.

Students demonstrate they have met high school standards and obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement in one of two ways:

- 1) By meeting the standards as measured by the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL); or
- 2) Through an alternative assessment or an appeal, if a student has not met a standard after taking the WASL twice.

The alternative assessments must be comparable in rigor to the skills and knowledge that students must demonstrate on the WASL. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is to develop recommendations for the assessments and appeals.

Summary of Bill: Alternative Assessment Methods

Beginning in the 2006-07 school year, OSPI 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 OSPI, including 95 percent minimum attendance and participation in remediation or supplemental instruction as provided in the student learning plan. School districts may waive the attendance and/or remediation requirement for special, unavoidable circumstances.

- 1) The primary 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 above the mean 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 cohort.
- 2) OSPI is directed to develop an alternative assessment method that is an evaluation of a collection of work samples prepared and submitted by the applicant and for career and technical applicants. OSPI must develop 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. Before implementation, OSPI must submit the scoring guidelines, protocols and criteria to the State Board of Education (SBE) for approval.

- 3) For students in an OSPI-approved career and technical program, the collection of work samples must also 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 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.

The collection of work samples can be implemented as an alternative assessment for applicants with fewer than six students in their comparison cohort, or for students in an approved career and technical program. The collection can be implemented for other students only if formally approved by the Legislature through the appropriations act, statute, or concurrent resolution.

Additional Alternatives

A fourth alternative assessment method is also created: a student's score on the mathematics portion of the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), or American College Test (ACT) can be used as an alternative assessment for demonstrating that the student has met the mathematics standards to earn a CAA for high school graduation. The SBE identifies the scores students must achieve on these tests to meet the state standard for mathematics.

The SBE must submit the proposed scores to the Legislature for formal approval, with the first scores submitted by December 1, 2006. School districts reimburse students for testing costs if they take the tests in order to use them as an alternative assessment; however this provision is null and void without funding in the budget.

OSPI must study the feasibility of using existing mathematics assessments in languages other than English as an additional alternative assessment option. The study includes cost estimates for translating the 10th grade assessment and scoring the assessments.

OSPI Implementation

By September 2006, OSPI must develop informational materials that describe the collection of evidence, including examples of work that meets the state standard and scoring criteria, and encourage students to begin creating a collection if they may seek to use it as an alternative assessment.

By June 1, 2006, OSPI must implement a process for students to appeal their WASL scores. By January 1, 2007, OSPI 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.

OSPI must develop a list of approved career and technical education programs that qualify for the objective alternative assessment for career and technical students.

Transcript Information

The requirement that the standardized high school transcript contain a student's highest scale score in each content area of the WASL is removed. The scholar designation for students who achieve level four the first time they take the WASL. The transcript notes whether a student

received a CAA or a CIA, but no longer reflects whether these were achieved through the WASL or an alternative assessment.

Report to Legislature

By September 10, 2006, OSPI must report in detail to the Education Committees of the Legislature on the: results of the pilot testing of the alternative assessments; guidelines, protocols and procedures used by OSPI in implementing the alternative assessment, particularly the collection of evidence; proposed criteria, rubrics and methodology for scoring the collection of evidence; description of the training provided for school districts and teachers; results of the feasibility study for mathematics assessments in other languages; and an updated estimate of the likely number of eligible students.

By December 1, 2006 and February 1, 2007 OSPI must provide the Legislature with an update on the number of students using or likely to be eligible and participating in an alternative assessment method.

By September 1, 2009 the Washington Institute for Public Policy must submit its finding to the Legislature on the results of an independent evaluation of the reliability, validity and rigor of the alternative assessment methods.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: This is a good idea because students will be able to put this together in a less stressful environment. It is good educational practice and allows students to create tasks that would be of interest to them. The bill levels the playing field for all students. Alternative assessments give students the opportunity to demonstrate competency beyond paper and pencil tests. This is the right thing to do and it doesn't water down the process. These alternative assessments give students the opportunity to demonstrate what they can do. The bill provides two appropriate assessments for students. This is a good first step, but the Legislature should also look at other possibilities in the future. The state should implement both alternative assessments at the same time. The Legislature should make this a regular assessment for students, not just an alternative. The bill should support broad concepts of alternative ways to assess students, and support opportunities for students to show their skills in alternative ways that are comparable in rigor to the WASL.

Testimony Against: None.

Testimony Other: The Legislature should approve multiple measure assessments. It is difficult to give support to something that has not been fully piloted. There is concern with the grade cohort option available. There are not enough teachers. There is concern that the content portion of the alternative assessment limits students.

Who Testified: PRO: Terry Bergeson, OSPI; Bob Butts, OSPI; Gil Mendoza, Tacoma School District; Marsha Denton-Fritz, Issaquah School District; Marc Frazer, Washington

Roundtable; Don Rash, AWSP; Mary Kinfield, PTA; Juanita Doyen, Parent Empowerment Network; Norm Wisner, AESD; Nancy Atwood, AEA; Leslie Goldstein, OSPI.

OTHER: Alton McDonald, National Autism Network; Christie Perkins, WSSEC; Gary King, WEA; Susi Wright, Tulalip Tribes/TLC.

House Amendment(s): Students must meet attendance criteria and participation in remediation in their student learning plan, unless waived by the district to participate in an alternative assessment.

OSPI is required to submit the scoring guidelines, protocols, and criteria for the collection of evidence for an alternative assessment method to the State Board of Education (SBE) for approval. After the SBE approves these items and determines that the collection will meet professionally accepted standards for reliability and validity and is comparable to or exceeds the rigor of the skills demonstrated on the WASL, SBE allows implementation of the collection of evidence method. SBE is required to make an approval decision and determination by December 1, 2006.

By September 2006, OSPI must develop informational materials that describe the collection of evidence, including examples of work that meets the state standard and scoring criteria, and encourage students to begin creating a collection if they may seek to use it as an alternative assessment.

The amended bill adds proposed scoring criteria, rubrics, and methodology for scoring the collection of evidence to the information OSPI must report to the Education Committees by September 2006. The September report is now due September 10. By December 1, 2006, and again by February 1, 2007, OSPI must provide an update on the number of students eligible or participating in alternative assessments.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy is directed to conduct an independent evaluation of the reliability, validity, and rigor of the alternative assessments and report to the Legislature by September 1, 2009.

The amended bill removes the WASL score and level from student transcripts; eliminates the scholar designation for students who score at a Level 4 on their first WASL attempt; and eliminates a notation on the transcript of whether a student met state standards through the WASL or through an alternative assessment.