

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3166

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to the design of the state assessment system and the Washington assessment of student learning.

Brief Description: Concerning the design of the state assessment system and the WASL.

Sponsors: Representatives Sullivan, Priest, Haler, Santos and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/1/08, 2/5/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop statewide end-of-course assessments (EOCs) for high school mathematics and phase them in beginning in 2009-10.
- Provides that, starting with the graduating class of 2014, the EOCs must be used as the high school mathematics assessment for graduation.
- Directs the OSPI to redesign the Washington Assessment of Student Learning in all areas except writing and all grades except high school to shorten test administration.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Haigh, Liias, Roach, Santos and Sullivan.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

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:

End-of-Course Assessments. In 2007 the Legislature enacted a policy allowing students through the class of 2012 to graduate from high school without meeting the state standard in mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) under certain conditions. Students in the graduating class of 2013 and thereafter will be required to meet the mathematics standard on the WASL or an approved alternative assessment.

The 2007 legislation also directed the State Board of Education (SBE) to examine potential changes to the high school WASL in science and mathematics, focusing primarily on moving to an end-of-course assessment (EOC) in these subjects rather than a comprehensive assessment. The Governor vetoed these particular provisions, but asked the SBE to study EOCs generally. The SBE engaged a national consultant who issued a report in January 2008. The report found that EOCs and comprehensive assessments have much in common, can serve similar purposes, and each have strengths and weaknesses.

Assessment Contractor Request for Proposal (RFP). In the spring of 2007, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) issued an RFP for a new contractor to assist with development and administration of the WASL and other components of the state assessment system. The current contract expires at the end of October 2008.

The responses to the RFP indicate a significant increase in costs compared to the current contract. The OSPI has suggested it would be possible, without negatively affecting the reliability or validity of the assessment, to generate some cost savings by reducing the number of open-ended questions on the elementary and middle school reading, mathematics, and science WASL. This should also reduce the number of testing days. Because it is used as a graduation requirement, the OSPI does not recommend changing the high school WASL.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The OSPI must develop statewide EOCs for high school mathematics in Algebra I, Geometry, Integrated Mathematics I, and Integrated Mathematics II. The Algebra I and Integrated Mathematics I assessments must be available in school districts for optional use in the 2009-10 school year. All four of the EOCs are implemented statewide in 2010-11. The graduating class of 2013 has the option of meeting the state mathematics standard for graduation purposes using the Algebra I plus the Geometry EOC, the Integrated Mathematics I plus the Integrated Mathematics II EOC, or the WASL. Beginning with the graduating class of 2014, students must meet the state standard for graduation using the EOCs.

Effective with the 2009 administration of the WASL, the OSPI must redesign the elementary and middle school assessment in reading, mathematics, and science by shortening test administration and reducing the number of open-ended questions.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

All substantive provisions of the bill are added in the substitute bill. The original bill contained only a legislative finding that EOCs have certain advantages over comprehensive assessments, and that the 2008 Legislature has an opportunity to provide policy direction in the design of the WASL.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 2008.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) In 2007 the House of Representatives twice and, in a bipartisan fashion, supported moving to EOCs for mathematics and science. The SBE report on EOCs is a high quality, comprehensive review. Interestingly, the report does not provide much in the way of new information. Rather, it confirms what was already believed: that EOCs would improve the state's instruction and assessment system for mathematics and science. There is a potential for the EOCs to cover more course content and allow teachers to cover subjects in more depth. All students would have access to the standard mathematics courses of Algebra and Geometry. Preferably, the tests would also include national comparisons so that parents have a way to gauge their students' progress compared to peers.

(In support with concerns) Teachers are interested in the idea of EOCs because testing occurs closer to instruction and contact with students. But the guiding principle is that no single test can legitimately be used to make life decisions. The state should not simply switch from one type of high stakes test to another. There are specific concerns regarding the implementation schedule. The bill calls for the EOCs to replace the WASL in a specific year. It would be better to make this decision based on data and after the state had some experience with the EOCs.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Sullivan, prime sponsor; Representative Priest; and Julie Wright, Where's the Math.

(In support with concerns) Joe Willhoft, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; and Jerry Bender, Association of Washington School Principals.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.