

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 3166

As Passed House:
February 15, 2008

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: By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Sullivan, Priest, Haler, Santos and Ormsby).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

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

Appropriations: 2/11/08 [DPS(ED)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/15/08, 94-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed 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.

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.

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

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Education be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 27 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Dunshee, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Cody, Conway, Ericks, Grant, Green, Haigh, Hunt, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Kretz, Linville, Morrell, Pettigrew, Priest, Ross, Schmick, Schual-Berke, Seaquist, Sullivan and Walsh.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Anderson, Darneille, Fromhold, Hinkle and McIntire.

Staff: Ben Rarick (786-7349).

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 Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The OSPI must develop statewide EOCs for high school mathematics in Algebra I and Geometry. The Algebra I assessment must be available in school districts for optional use in the 2009-10 school year. Both 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 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: (Education)

(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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: (Appropriations)

(In support) Superintendent Bergeson supports this legislation with one concern. The policy changes to the WASL would shorten the test in grades three to eight and would result in 40 percent fewer days spent on the WASL. The legislation would also create end-of-course

assessments in mathematics for classes like Algebra I and Geometry. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has reservations about tying these end-of-course assessments to graduation at this time. There are a lot of pieces that have to be put in place for that component to be successful, including teacher training, sufficient piloting, and the appropriate instructional materials. The OSPI is not certain what percentage of students would pass the end of course assessment if it was a graduation requirement at this time.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (Education) (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 Testifying: (Appropriations) Robert Butts and Jennifer Priddy, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Education) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Appropriations) None.