
Education Committee

HB 3166

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

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

Brief Summary of Bill

- Finds that end-of-course assessments have certain advantages over comprehensive assessments such as the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and that the 2008 Legislature has an opportunity to provide policy direction in the design of the WASL.

Hearing Date: 2/1/08

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

End-of-Course Assessments. In 2007, the Legislature passed a bill directing the State Board of Education (SBE) to examine potential changes to the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in science and mathematics, focusing primarily on moving to an end-of-course assessment in these subjects rather than a comprehensive assessment. The Governor vetoed these particular provisions, but asked the SBE to study end-of-course assessments generally. The SBE engaged a national consultant who issued a report in January 2008. The report found that end-of-course assessments 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-

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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 Bill:

The Legislature finds that end-of-course assessments have certain advantages over comprehensive assessments such as the current WASL. Because the state's assessment contract will be renegotiated, the 2008 Legislature has an opportunity to provide policy direction in the design of the WASL.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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