
Education Committee

HB 1646

Brief Description: Making adjustments pertaining to the high school Washington assessment of student learning in mathematics and science.

Sponsors: Representatives Sullivan, Priest, Kenney, Morrell and Ormsby.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends through at least the class of 2013, rather than than class of 2012, a temporary policy allowing students to graduate who have not met the state standard in mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).
- Authorizes the State Board of Education (SBE) to extend the policy beyond the class of 2013 based on a determination that additional time is needed, including considerations of the reliability and validity of new end-of-course mathematics assessments for purposes of graduation.
- Directs the SBE to examine the feasibility of the current requirement that the class of 2013 be required to meet the standard on the high school science WASL and make recommendations by December 1, 2009.

Hearing Date: 2/4/09

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

Background:

In 2007, a temporary policy was adopted that allows students who meet other high school graduation requirements, including meeting the state standard on the reading and writing portions of the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), to graduate without having met the standard on the mathematics portion of the WASL. The policy began with the graduating class of 2008 and extends through the graduating class of 2012. The result is that beginning with the class of 2013, students will have to meet the standard on the high school WASL or an approved alternative assessment in four subject areas for graduation: reading,

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writing, mathematics, and science. The State Board of Education (SBE) was authorized to set an earlier date for the mathematics and science requirements but chose not to do so.

Also in 2007, the SBE and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) were directed to undertake a comprehensive review and revision of the state learning standards in mathematics and science. For mathematics, the 2008 Legislature determined that additional work was necessary and directed the SBE and the OSPI to continue the revisions. The final mathematics standards for high school were approved for adoption in July 2008. The OSPI has submitted the science standards for review by the 2009 Legislature. Revisions to the learning standards drive changes to the WASL to align the assessment with the new standards.

The 2008 Legislature also directed that the high school mathematics WASL be redesigned as a series of end-of-course assessments (EOCs) in particular subject areas rather than a comprehensive assessment. Timelines for implementing the EOCs and for using them in place of the current mathematics WASL for purposes of graduation are outlined in statute. Due to the delay in adopting the final mathematics standards, some of the timelines can no longer be met. Redesign of the high school science WASL as a series of EOCs has been proposed, but was vetoed in 2007 by the Governor and not reconsidered in 2008.

"Reliability and validity" are psychometric terms used to gauge the technical quality of an assessment. Generally speaking, reliability refers to the extent that the assessment yields consistent results and does not randomly vary in its outcomes. Validity refers to the degree that the assessment measures what it is intended to measure. Included in considerations of reliability and validity is the question of whether the assessment is appropriate for its intended use or purpose.

Summary of Bill:

The temporary policy that allows students to graduate even if they have not met the state standard in mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is extended through at least the graduating class of 2013, rather than through the class of 2012. Provisions allowing the State Board of Education (SBE) to set an earlier date for requiring students to meet the standard on the mathematics WASL are removed. Instead, the SBE is authorized to extend the date past the graduating class of 2013, if the SBE determines additional time is needed before the requirement is imposed. The determination must be made primarily on an examination of the reliability and validity of the mathematics end-of-course assessments (EOCs) as a high stakes test for graduation purposes, but may include other considerations.

The specific timelines for implementing mathematics EOCs as a graduation requirement are removed. Instead, the EOCs must be implemented statewide in 2011, with Algebra I plus Geometry or Integrated I plus II used to assess students in the mathematics content of the high school WASL.

Provisions allowing the SBE to set an earlier date than the class of 2013 for requiring students to meet the standard on the science WASL are repealed. The SBE is directed to analyze the feasibility of the current timeline for students to meet the state standard on the science WASL for graduation. The analysis includes:

- trends and projections of student performance;
- classroom time available for science instruction;
- implementation of new science standards and alignment of curriculum;
- availability of qualified teachers;
- trends in design of high school science assessments in other states; and
- the possible impact of new graduation requirements in science.

The analysis is due December 1, 2009, including recommendations on the timeline, changes in assessment design, and other recommendations for improvement of science teaching and learning.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/26/2009.

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