

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1178

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to authorizing alternative assessments of basic skills for teacher certification.

Brief Description: Authorizing alternative assessments of basic skills for teacher certification.

Sponsors: Representatives Lytton, Maxwell, Santos, Seaquist, Reykdal, Sullivan, Fitzgibbon, Ryu, Pollet, Stanford, Tharinger and Jinkins.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/31/13, 2/14/13, 2/15/13 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits the Professional Educator Standards Board to identify and accept alternatives to the basic skills assessment that are used as a requirement for admission to teacher preparation programs and for out-of-state applicants for Washington teacher certificates.
- Requires that alternative tests be comparable in rigor to the basic skills assessment.
- Requires alternative tests be reviewed by the education committees of the Legislature before implementation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Bergquist, Haigh, Hunt, Lytton, Maxwell, McCoy, Orwall, Pollet and Seaquist.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Dahlquist, Ranking Minority Member; Magendanz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fagan, Hargrove, Hawkins, Hayes, Klippert, Parker, Pike and Warnick.

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

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:

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is a 13-member board responsible for establishing requirements for state certification of educators and approving educator preparation and certification programs.

Current law requires passage of a basic skills test for admission to approved teacher preparation programs and for persons from out-of-state applying for a Washington teaching certificate. The basic skills that are assessed in this test must include at least reading, writing, and mathematics.

The PESB established the Washington Educator Skills Test Basic (WEST-B) as the requirement for admission to PESB-approved teacher preparation programs in August 2002. This test is also required for persons from out-of-state seeking a Washington State residency teaching certificate. The WEST-B contains three sub-tests that measure basic skills in reading, mathematics, and writing. Passage of all three sub-tests is required to meet the WEST-B requirement.

Summary of Bill:

The PESB may identify and accept other tests and test scores for admission to approved teacher preparation programs and for out-of-state Washington teaching certificate applicants.

These alternative tests must be comparable in rigor to the basic skills assessment and candidates must meet or exceed the basic skills requirements established by the board.

The PESB must submit tests and test scores to the education committees of the Legislature for review and must provide an opportunity for the Legislature to act before the tests are implemented.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 18, 2013.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This alternative test will be rigorous. There is a diversity problem in the teaching corps. There needs to be a teaching corps and administration corps that accurately represents the community. The small changes that this bill incorporates can improve diversity and the quality of our teaching corps. The PESB considered removing the WEST-B altogether; it was important to follow through with the legislative intent that created that test.

This is not a standards reduction, but a need to increase recruitment. This was an unintended consequence of adoption of the WEST-B. There may be other tests that are considered, but the ACT and SAT will be the primary tests that will be considered. There is a community college exam that might meet local standards. A correlation study would be used to make sure that alternative assessments are rigorous enough. The Legislature could always come back and tell the PESB that it has erred. The difference in students that may be accepted based on the SAT but would not pass the WEST-B may not be huge, but it will improve recruiting tools. There is evidence regarding those who do not gain entrance based on the WEST-B, and the PESB will gather evidence on those who gain entrance based on an alternative test. This is a targeted approach at putting effective teachers in the classroom. Decades of research clearly demonstrates that a quality teacher allows students to overcome poverty and the achievement gap. Quality teaching is not just about the curriculum; if that were the case, every student would succeed with the status quo. Quality teachers rely on their life experience and the knowledge gained in their previous careers to deliver the curriculum in an effective manner that students can retain. Students learn in different ways and teachers with more diverse backgrounds are needed. This will open the access for teachers of diverse backgrounds. Having a diversified pool of teachers will provide students with a more relevant and effective education. Much like the Legislature creates diverse legislation from diverse backgrounds, diversity should be represented in teachers. The WEST-B presents a cultural barrier. There is a student who went on to a teaching program, a master's program, and an administrator program. The WEST-B costs money for prospective teachers.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Lytton, prime sponsor; David Brenna, Professional Educator Standards Board; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Frank Ordway, League of Education Voters; Alex Hur, Equity in Education Coalition; and Timmie Foster, League of Education Voters.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.