

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2734

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Education

**Title:** An act relating to changes to high school science assessment requirements.

**Brief Description:** Changing high school science assessment requirements.

**Sponsors:** Representative McCaslin.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 1/26/16, 1/28/16 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Eliminates the requirement that students meet standard on the statewide high school science assessment in order to earn the Certificate of Academic Achievement that is required for graduation from a public high school.
- Eliminates a provision requiring the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to implement a two-year transition period for transferring from Biology end-of-course assessment currently used as the statewide high school science assessment to a more comprehensive science assessment adopted by the SPI.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Ortiz-Self, Vice Chair; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stambaugh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Griffey, Hargrove, Hayes, S. Hunt, Kilduff, Klippert, Kuderer, McCaslin, Orwall, Pollet, Rossetti and Springer.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Magendanz, Ranking Minority Member.

**Staff:** Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

**Background:**

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*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.*

The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), in consultation with the State Board of Education (SBE), is authorized to maintain and revise a statewide academic assessment system to measure student knowledge and skills on state learning standards and for purposes of state and federal accountability. The statewide assessment system must cover the content areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and science for elementary, middle, and high school years. The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to assess students based on state learning standards in reading and mathematics in each of grades 3 through 8 and one high school grade, as well as in at least one grade in elementary, middle, and high school in science.

Students who successfully meet standards on required statewide assessments earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA). The earning of a CAA or a Certificate of Individual Achievement, a certificate that may be awarded to students requiring special education who are not appropriately assessed by the statewide assessment system, is one of the requirements for graduation from a Washington public high school.

In 2013 the SPI was directed to, beginning with the 2014-15 school year, implement student assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics that were developed with a multistate consortium. (Washington is part of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, known as the SBAC.) Full integration of the SBAC assessments will occur for the class of 2019, as beginning with that class, the 11th grade SBAC assessments will be the exclusive high school assessments for ELA and mathematics. During the multi-year transition period, however, the SPI was directed to develop and administer a 10th grade ELA assessment and algebra and geometry-based end-of-course (EOC) assessments using test items and other resources from the SBAC assessments.

Legislation adopted in 2011 directed that high school science be assessed statewide using a Biology EOC assessment. Subsequently, the Legislature expressed intent to implement a two-year transition from a Biology EOC to a comprehensive science assessment. The SPI has limited authority with regard to developing and adopting a science assessment, as a new science EOC assessment or comprehensive science assessment may only be developed and adopted when specifically directed by the Legislature. In accordance with legislation adopted in 2015 (*i.e.*, Senate Bill 6145, enacted as chapter 42, Laws of 2015, 3rd sp. sess.), attaining a passing score on the Biology EOC assessment is not required for graduation for the class of 2016, but passing the assessment is a graduation requirement for subsequent classes.

The SBE is responsible for establishing the performance scores that students must meet on state assessments or statutorily authorized alternative assessments to obtain a CAA. In accordance with statutory requirements, the SBE has established performance scores for the assessments used during the transition period, as well as for the SBAC assessments.

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### **Summary of Bill:**

The requirement that students meet standard on the statewide high school science assessment in order to earn the CAA that is required for graduation from a public high school is eliminated. The discontinuation of this requirement applies to the class of 2017 onward.

The statewide high school assessment in science continues to be the Biology EOC assessment. Provisions indicating that the Legislature intends to transition from a Biology EOC assessment to a more comprehensive science assessment are retained, but a provision requiring the SPI to implement a two-year transition period after it adopts a more comprehensive science assessment is removed.

Various statutory references to the "Washington Assessment of Student Learning," a statewide assessment that was discontinued in 2009, are changed to "statewide student assessment."

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**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) Last year we suspended the Biology EOC assessment for two years. This change has been a blessing and a curse, in that some confusion has been created for students in different graduation classes. This is basically a clean-up bill.

The Washington Education Association (WEA) supports the full de-linking of the Biology EOC assessment from graduation requirements. Experience has shown that using the Biology test as the only measure of science success that matters assures a narrow focus on Biology, even if policymakers want to prioritize a broad science, technology, engineering and math focus. Prioritizing the new, broad 24-credit system, and using math and the ELA tests as the measure of that success, assures a narrow focus on two slivers of data at the expense of the broader goal of successfully implementing the 24-credit system. The WEA wishes this bill went further to de-link all of the SBAC tests from graduation requirements. Eight hundred test-optional colleges and universities agree, grade point average and challenging course-taking are the strongest predictors of post-secondary success, not standardized tests.

The Biology EOC assessment issue is a discrete issue. Even organizations that support the premise of exit exams have concerns about the current science testing system. The SBE is trying to get students college and career ready, and the tests in ELA and mathematics help in determining what skills students need to succeed in post-secondary education. A student passing a Biology test is not an adequate representation of being college and career ready in science. The SBE supports assessments and their role in diplomas, but exit exams must be established very carefully. The state, by clinging to the Biology test, is creating an improper focus on Biology at the expense of other science objectives the state is trying to achieve. The

state should not cling to an assessment because it does not have a replacement: make the correct education decision and eliminate the requirement to pass a Biology EOC assessment.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative McCaslin, prime sponsor; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; and Ben Rarick, State Board of Education.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.