

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1621

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**As Passed House:**  
March 6, 2019

**Title:** An act relating to basic skills assessments for approved teacher preparation programs.

**Brief Description:** Concerning basic skills assessments for approved teacher preparation programs.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Ybarra, Steele, Santos, Harris, Bergquist, Ortiz-Self and Jinkins; by request of Professional Educator Standards Board).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 2/12/19, 2/18/19 [DPS].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 3/6/19, 96-0.

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Provides that achieving minimum assessment scores on the basic skills assessment is no longer required for admission to a teacher preparation program.
- Requires that an applicant to a teacher preparation program take a basic skills assessment and report the result to the Professional Educator Standards Board and the teacher preparation program, so that the result can be used to determine the applicant's readiness for the program.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Steele, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Callan, Corry, Harris, Kilduff, Kraft, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Stonier, Thai, Valdez and Ybarra.

**Staff:** Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

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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.*

**Background:**

With some exceptions, applicants must achieve the minimum score established by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) on the following assessments:

- basic skills assessment for admission to a teacher preparation program;
- uniform, externally administered assessment for professional teacher certification; or
- subject knowledge assessment for adding an endorsement to a teacher certification.

Since 2002 a basic skills assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics has generally been required: (1) for admission to a PESB-approved teacher preparation program; and (2) for people from out-of-state applying for a residency teacher certificate. Since 2013, tests that are comparable in rigor to the basic skills assessment may be accepted by a teacher preparation program if an applicant meets or exceeds a minimum score set by the PESB. However, the PESB must set the minimum score at no lower than the average national scores for the SAT or ACT.

On an individual basis, teacher preparation programs may admit students who have not achieved the minimum basic skills assessment score, though passage of the assessment is required to receive a teacher certification. In addition, people from out-of-state who are applying for a teacher certification or for a master's degree level teacher preparation program may demonstrate that they have the requisite basic skills based on completion of an assessment or alternative assessment approved by the PESB.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

An applicant for an approved teacher preparation program must take the basic skills assessment, or an alternative or equivalent assessment as determined by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB). However, achieving a minimum assessment score on the basic skills assessment is no longer required for admission to a teacher preparation program. Instead, the applicant must report the assessment results to the PESB and the teacher preparation program, and the teacher preparation program may use the assessment result as a formative assessment of academic strengths and weakness in determining the applicant's readiness for the program.

The PESB is no longer required to set the acceptable score for admission to teacher preparation programs at no lower than the average national scores for the SAT or ACT.

**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) For the past few years, Washington has suffered from a shortage of qualified teachers. There is a shortage of teachers in every school district. The bill removes an

unnecessary roadblock to entry into a teacher preparation program and will help to increase the number of candidates in teacher preparation programs. Currently every teacher candidate is required to pass a Washington Educator Skills Test-Basic (WEST-B) basic skills assessment test by a cut score. This bill will eliminate the cut score requirement. While achieving a passing score will no longer be required for entry, teacher preparation programs may use it as one of the multiple measures that gauge a candidate's basic skills, similar to Graduate Record Examinations in graduate programs.

The Professional Educator Standards Board's Testing Barriers Work Group was formed in an effort to introduce more people into the teaching profession. This group recommended moving away from using standardized tests as a single predictor of knowledge and skills. Research suggests that standardized testing is ineffective as a singular measurement of knowledge and skills. The group's recommendation calls for a system that values all the skills that contribute to make a great teacher, including community knowledge, cultural responsiveness, social-emotional skills, and the ability to develop relationships with students and families. Ultimately, teacher candidates will still have to complete the teacher preparation program, a content knowledge assessment, and a performance assessment before they are fully certified to teach.

One score on one assessment is a huge barrier to attracting and recruiting teachers that look and sound like the students in Washington. It is important that teachers have basic skills to access the rigorous content that they need to know, so that they can convey the content to students. Allowing a teacher preparation program to look at the results of a basic skills assessment to determine where the applicant's strengths and weaknesses are will allow the program to target coursework to help build any skills that the applicant is lacking. The reason for not eliminating the test altogether is to protect consumers from facing multiple entry requirements. This way applicants only have to take one test to apply to a number of programs.

Eliminating the basic skills test completely would be best, but this is a good first step. This assessment is particularly biased against people of color and those living in poverty. A few years ago an analysis was done comparing the SAT scores to the WEST-B scores; candidates of color consistently scored lower on the WEST-B than on the SAT. Historically, entrance tests to teachers colleges were used to keep candidates of color out of these programs. That probably was not the intent in Washington, but it is the effect of the assessment in Washington. Applicants have to pay for the basic skills assessment and now they will only have to pay for it once. It costs \$155 to take the test. In order to figure out which questions were missed, the diagnosis is another \$140.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Ybarra, prime sponsor; Krissy Kim; Justin Montermini, Professional Educator Standards Board; Maddy Thompson, Office of the Governor; Cindy Rockholt, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; and Steve DuPont, Central Washington University.

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