

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1621

As of March 22, 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: Passed House: 3/06/19, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/18/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes requirement that applicants to a teacher preparation program pass a basic skills assessment.
- Requires applicants to take the basic skills assessment or an alternative basic skills assessment and report the individual results to the Professional Educator Standards Board and an approved teacher preparation program.
- Establishes that a teacher preparation program may use the results of the basic skills assessment or an alternative assessment in determining a candidate's readiness for the program.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Benjamin Omdal (786-7442)

Background: Teacher Certification Requirements. Under state law, the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is tasked with establishing rules for teacher certification, including requirements for teacher preparation programs. Under rules set by the PESB and state law, there are several pathways to become a teacher, with the traditional route being enrolled in a teacher preparation program as part of a bachelor or master's degree program. Currently, all individuals hoping to become certified teachers in Washington must meet testing requirements.

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.

Washington Educator Skills Test. In 2001, the Legislature required the PESB to develop and implement a pilot assessment as a means of assessing a program applicant's basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Passing this assessment, the Washington Educator Skills Test-Basic, became required in 2002 for admission to an approved teacher preparation programs and for persons from out-of-state applying for a Washington State residency certificate.

State law also provides that programs may admit students who have not achieved the minimum score established by the PESB on an individual basis. However, these students may not receive certification without passing the skills assessment. The PESB may also permit exceptions from the assessment requirements on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, the PESB may accept other tests and test scores in place of the basic skills assessment as long as the tests are comparable in rigor. The PESB is required to set the acceptable score for admission to certification programs at no lower than the average national scores for the SAT or ACT.

Summary of Bill: For admission to a teacher preparation program, applicants must take the basic skills assessment or an equivalent assessment and report the results to the PESB and an approved program. Teacher preparation programs may use the result of these assessments as a formative assessment of academic strengths and weaknesses in determining the candidate's readiness for the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on March 14, 2019.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The WEST-B is difficult for those who have not recently been in school, but who otherwise are in quality programs. Current requirements have been impediments for bilingual teacher candidates in diverse communities. Teacher preparation programs still have many requirements and steps in place to ensure teacher quality. Current tests have cultural biases in them. Basic skills tests were not required for years and are not a quality measure of teacher candidates. This bill grows educator supply rather than exclude individuals. Teacher preparation programs are some of the only majors to require an entry test on the front-end. The entry test can be prohibitively expensive for some candidates. Tests should only be one source of information, not a barrier to entry.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Alex Ybarra, Prime Sponsor; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; Sue Anderson, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Bernard Koontz, Highline Public Schools; Steve DuPont, Central Washington University; Justin Montermini, Professional Educator Standards Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.