

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2695

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to modifying the timelines for the development and implementation of the student assessment system.

Brief Description: Changing the timelines for development and implementation of the student assessment system.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Brumsickle and B. Thomas; by request of Joint Select Committee on Education Restructuring, Board of Education and Commission on Student Learning).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/25/96, 2/1/96 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/23/96, 91-0.

Passed Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Brumsickle, Chairman; Elliot, Vice Chairman; Johnson, Vice Chairman; Clements; Fuhrman; McMahan; Pelesky; Smith; Talcott and Thompson.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hatfield; Linville; Poulsen; Quall; Radcliff; B. Thomas and Veloria.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: The Commission on Student Learning was created by the Legislature in 1992 to identify the knowledge and skills all public school students need to know and be able to do, to develop student assessment and school accountability systems, and to take other steps necessary to improve student learning in the state.

Current law requires that the assessments being developed by the commission for all grade levels be available for reading, writing, communication, and mathematics for

voluntary use by school districts in the 1996-97 school year, unless the Legislature takes action to prevent or delay implementation of the assessments. The assessments being developed for all grade levels for the social sciences, physical and life sciences, civics, history, geography, arts, health, and fitness are required to be available for voluntary use by the 1998-99 school year. Beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, all school districts will be required to administer the assessments.

Current law also provides that once the state Board of Education finds that the high school assessments are valid and reliable, successful completion of the high school assessments shall lead to a "Certificate of Mastery," which will be required to graduate from high school.

Summary of Bill:

Reading, writing, communications, and mathematics. The timeline for the voluntary implementation of the assessments being developed by the Commission on Student Learning for reading, writing, communications, and mathematics is modified.

The initial voluntary implementation of these assessments in the elementary grades is not changed from the 1996-97 school year. The assessments for the middle grades are postponed one school year, from the 1996-97 school year until the 1997-98 school year. The assessments for the high school grades are postponed two years, from the 1996-97 school year until the 1998-99 school year.

Assessments in elementary grades. The elementary grade assessments in history, civics, geography, health, fitness, and the arts are made voluntary in the elementary grades. The voluntary assessments are to be classroom-based. The state Board of Education is to make recommendations to the Legislature in 2001 as to whether state-level assessments in these content areas should be required.

Goal 2 (except math) timeline. The Commission on Student Learning is directed to recommend to the Legislature a revised timeline for assessments in science, history, civics, geography, health, fitness, and the arts by December 15, 1996.

Certificate of Mastery. A provision is removed that requires a student to achieve a "Certificate of Mastery" to graduate from high school. However, the state Board of Education and the Commission on Student Learning are directed to make recommendations regarding the implementation timeline for the certificate, and whether it should be reinstated as a graduation requirement or be used in other ways to raise standards in schools and for students. The initial recommendations to the Legislature from the board and the commission are due by December 15, 1996.

Approval of "Essential academic learning requirements." The Commission on Student Learning is authorized to modify the "Essential academic learning requirements," as needed, after the learning requirements are initially adopted.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 17, 1996.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) It is more important that we do the assessments correctly, rather than quickly. The schedule proposed in the bill will allow school districts to phase in the assessments starting with the early grades.

Testimony Against: (Original bill) None.

Testified: Terry Bergesen and Gordon Ensign, Commission on Student Learning; Gary Gainer, State Board of Education; and John Traynor, Gonzaga Prep.