



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Title: Legislative Position on Assessment Requirements and Alternatives	
As related to:	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal One: Develop and support policies to close the achievement and opportunity gaps. <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Two: Develop comprehensive accountability, recognition, and supports for students, schools, and districts. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal Three: Ensure that every student has the opportunity to meet career and college ready standards. <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Four: Provide effective oversight of the K-12 system. <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Relevant to Board roles:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy leadership <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> System oversight <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Convening and facilitating
Policy considerations / Key questions:	In 2017, ESHB 2224 significantly changed the high school assessment system by creating new, locally determined assessment alternatives. During the 2018 Legislative session, it is likely that the Legislature will consider bills that “delink” high school assessments with high school graduation. What is the State Board of Education’s position on the high school assessment system?
Relevant to business item:	The Board will consider approval of a legislative position on assessment requirements and alternatives.
Materials included in packet:	A memo, “How Did ESHB 2224 Affect the Current Assessment System, and How Might the Assessment Landscape Change if Assessments Were Not Required for High School Graduation?” was created for the Board in December 2017 and is included in this packet. Additional research briefs concerning assessments, such as “Standardized Assessments: Impacts on Curriculum, Learning and Pedagogy” were created at the request of members, and are included in “Additional Materials” in the online meeting materials .
Synopsis:	The Board will discuss the high school assessment system and develop a legislative position on assessment requirements and alternatives, that will guide the Board’s response to potential legislation that may be introduced in the 2018 session.



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HOW DID ESHB 2224 AFFECT THE CURRENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM, AND HOW MIGHT THE ASSESSMENT LANDSCAPE CHANGE IF ASSESSMENTS WERE NOT REQUIRED FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION?

Washington state is in the midst of a multi-year transition to a new assessment system which reflects the state’s shift to new learning standards. House bill 2224, layered on additional changes to the system during the transition and will change the structure of the assessment system following the transition.

During the coming session, the Legislature is likely to consider “total delink” legislation—that is, legislation that would remove any relationship between high school assessments and graduation. How did HB 2224 change the system, and how would the system change further if there were a total delink?

Table 1 summarizes the differences between the previous assessment system, the projected assessment system resulting from implementation of ESHB 2224, and what the system would look like with a total delink. The comparison is for the Class of 2021 and beyond, after the changes due to the transition are completed and assuming no additional changes.

Table 1: Comparison of current assessment system to the system before ESHB 2224 and how the system might change if a delink bill were to pass.

	Previous system by the Class of 2021, without HB 2224	CURRENT SYSTEM By the Class of 2021	If a “total delink” were to be implemented
Grade of testing	11 th grade in ELA, math, and Biology	10 th grade for English language arts (ELA) and math, 11 th grade for science	Possible change back to 11 th grade for ELA and math. 11 th grade for science.
Alternatives available to students who don’t meet the graduation standard on the assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collection of Evidence (COE). Grade Point Average (GPA) Comparison. SAT, ACT, International Baccalaureate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally determined course and locally determined assessment tied to that course (includes Bridge to College courses). GPA Comparison. SAT, ACT, International Baccalaureate. Dual credit courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No alternatives needed.
Learning standards assessed in math and ELA test	High school learning standards.	Learning standards expected of 10 th grade students.	Depends on testing grade.

Each of the scenarios shown in Table 1 have advantages and disadvantage. ESHB 2224 addressed some of the significant disadvantages of previous system. The bill provided more time for students to address learning gaps and take an alternative by moving testing in ELA and math from the 11th to the 10th grade, The bill also provided a course-based alternative. Table 2 summarizes some of the advantages and disadvantages of each system.

Table 2: Summary of some of the advantages and disadvantages of the previous, the current, and a “delinked” assessment system.

	Previous system by the Class of 2021, without ESHB 2224	CURRENT SYSTEM By the Class of 2021	If a “total delink” were to be implemented
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing in 11th grade in ELA and math allowed for more learning and more standards to be assessed, and may more accurately assess career- and college readiness. • Institutions of higher education may have been more amenable to use the test results in placement decisions, and possibly eventually admissions decisions. • Linking the tests to graduation would likely motivate students to do well in school and on the test. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing in 10th grade allows more time for students to address gaps in learning and complete an alternative. • There is a motivation for students to do well on the test—those who meet graduation standards will have more freedom in high school course-taking, and currently most of the postsecondary placement agreements remain. • With the addition of Dual Credit as an alternative, there is more motivation for students to complete Dual Credit courses. • The elimination of COEs saves expense and time. • Encourages Bridge to College courses, a high-quality alternative designed to fill gaps in student learning. • Establishing locally-determined course-based alternatives removes barriers for students moving ahead and reduces re-takes. • Providing a course-based alternative may eliminate discouragement and stress for some students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces expense—no re-takes and no alternatives. • Removes barriers for students moving ahead. • Would reduce the stressors and pressures on high school students.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating higher stakes on the test may have discouraged or stressed some students. • Testing in 11th grade allowed little time for students to address learning gaps and complete an alternative. • COEs, while valued by some districts, were expensive and time consuming for educators and students. • The system created a significant barrier for some students in moving forward—multiple retakes and COEs, and some students for whom an assessment was the single barrier to graduation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing in 10th grade reduces the learning standards that would be assessed and may lead to institutions of higher education withdrawing from placement agreements. • Developing and implementing the local course-based alternative, and OSPI’s approval process for the assessment tied to the course, may be challenging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students will not be motivated to do well leading to test results that may not be useful in evaluating students’ readiness for postsecondary education and careers. • Could lead to a perception that the diploma is less meaningful. • Students may be less motivated to take, and districts less motivated to offer, Dual Credit and Bridge to College courses.

Impact of ESHB 2224 on the assessment system

ESHB 2224 changed the assessment system so that Washington no longer has exit exams. While high school assessments remain linked to graduation, students no longer need to pass statewide tests to graduate. For students who earn the graduation score, their assessment graduation requirement would be met and they would be rewarded by having greater freedom in the course-taking choices through the rest of their high school. They may also be able to take advantage of the higher education agreements for placement into college-level courses.

For students who do not meet the graduation score, most would likely take the locally-determined course with a locally-determined assessment linked to the course, as their alternative. Under ESHB 2224, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must approve the locally-determined assessment.

ESHB 2224 did not amend the provision in statute that states that “The objective alternative assessments shall be comparable in rigor to the skills and knowledge that the student must demonstrate on the statewide student assessment and be objective in its determination of student achievement of the state standards.” (RCW 28A.655.061(10)(a)). This means that the course and its associated assessment must address the same learning standards as the statewide assessment, and be objective and of “comparable rigor.” Over the course of the next year, OSPI will be working on an approval process and guidance for districts developing courses and locally determined assessments.

Through ESHB 2224, the Legislature attempted to ensure high school assessments are meaningful and that students are motivated to take them seriously, while also providing local options to prevent the assessments becoming barriers for student to moving forward and earn a diploma. The legislation also eliminated COEs and the negative issues associated with them, and promotes Bridge to College and Dual Credit courses.

Possible impact of legislation that would delink high school assessments from high school graduation requirements

Removing all connections between high school assessments and high school graduation would create a much simplified system. There would also be some cost savings in eliminating retests and alternatives. However, the most expensive alternative, the COE, was already eliminated by ESHB 2224.

Completely delinking high school assessments from graduation would represent a significant policy shift for the state, which has linked high school assessments to high school graduation through the Certificate of Academic Achievement since the Class of 2008. The success of state of Massachusetts, which compares well to other states for student achievement, [has been attributed](#) in part to the state’s commitment to the stability of the framework of its standards-based reform effort. The success of Washington’s standard-based reform effort might benefit from a similar commitment to stability. “Change fatigue” is something that educators working in the system often mention, and there may be value in waiting and evaluating the effect of reforms rather than reversing course and negating years of effort.

While a delink would represent a major policy shift, the practical impact on students who do not meet standard on the exam may not be as major. Under the current system, a student who does not meet the graduation standard on the test would be enrolled in a locally-determined course that would address the learning standards the student would need to be career- and college-ready. Under a delinked

system, a student who does not meet standard on the tests would, in a school that consciously responds to student needs, be guided to enroll in a class that would address the learning standards the student would need to be career- and college-ready.

Conclusion

ESHB 2224 gave back a great deal of control over the high school assessment system to schools and districts through the alternative of a locally-determined course and assessment. The legislation attempted to balance local control with state control, as well as balance a uniform standard for high school graduation with flexibility for individual students. A delinked system would give even more local control to schools and districts, and more local responsibility to ensure that all student graduate ready for their next steps with a meaningful diploma.

Questions for the Board to consider in forming a response to possible delink legislation may include:

- What is the “right amount” of local control when it comes to the high school assessment system?
- How does the high school assessment system interact with the meaning of a high school diploma and the meaning of graduation rates?
- How equitable is the current assessment system and how equitable would a delinked system be?

Links and resources:

SBE memo on ESHB

2224: <http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2017/September/12%20House%20Bill%202224%20Update%20v2.pdf>

OSPI documents about ESHB 2224:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/Assessment/StateTesting/ESHB2224.aspx>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/Assessment/StateTesting/pubdocs/ESHB2224Outline.pdf>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/Communications/PressReleases2017/PathwaysAssessmentBill.aspx>

<http://www.k12.wa.us/bulletinsmemos/Bulletins2017/B065-17.pdf>

Legislative webpage on ESHB 2224:

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=2224&Year=2017>

If you have questions regarding this memo, please contact Linda Drake at Linda.drake@k12.wa.us.