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LB 812

Senator Stuhr, Senator Beutler and the commissioner and myself on the subject. And I think we're having a bullet sheet made up for all of you, so it will simply assist you in knowing what LB 812 will eventually do. But let me talk, as the amendment is coming down from Bill Drafters, about where we ended up at General File. As you remember, we adopted Senator Beutler's amendments that mandated actually the standards and said that every school district would have those standards and also that they would be clear and more specific. The one error in the Beutler amendment ended up doing that for every grade. So if you heard from some of your schools, they were very upset, thinking that they were going to have to do this for every grade. That was not the intention of Senator Beutler, and we've had...so part of that amendment will clarify that this will only be in those areas, those grades that are going to be assessed. And so that will be cleared up for those...for the schools that have had that question. What...I think everyone here and all the schools agree, as far as the writing assessment. Where there was some discussion with Senator Beutler was what the department talked...referred to as wrap-around tests, or those criterion reference tests that the different schools would be doing. In the original department plan, they would allow every school district to develop their own that would reflect the standards in their district. A number of people had raised the issue, why would we do this? That seems very confusing; how is anyone going to know how their districts are doing when you would have so many different...the possibility of so many different tests? The answer to this was well this part wasn't about accountability, this was to help schools know how their standards were making a difference in the classroom. However, since that time and in our discussions we came up with the possibility of that first year, next year every school district would do a writing assessment. Every school district would be allowed to develop their own assessment in reading. At the end of the year all of those reading exams would be turned into a national institute that does testing. They would review those and they would come back with a recommendation of the five tests in the state that would be the best tests. From thence forward, schools would select one of those tests, so there would no longer be the possibility of 150 or 200 tests or exams, there would be the possibility of 5. Each year then, the next year, the next year they would do writing, and then they plan to add,