

Draft Legislative Proposal

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION QUALIFYING EXAM

LEGISLATION PROPOSAL

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CHAIR OF THE SENATE HESS COMMITTEE**

THE GOAL OF LEGISLATION:

Maintain accountability for the school districts, schools and teachers by continuing to require the exam. Create another path for students to receive a diploma, i.e. solve the current situation where the state is facing the probability that a large number of high school students will fail the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) and not receive a diploma. Creating such a path will fortify the legal defensibility of the exam. Also, a goal is to provide an improved long-term system for testing students and the quality of their education, while also providing an incentive to do well on the exams and in school.

A TWO PHASE APPROACH:

Phase I:

Alter AS 14.03.075 (HSGQE Statute by modelling it after Indiana Statutes). Indiana faced the same issue that we are currently (not giving diplomas to students who fail the exit exam). The Indiana statute provides three alternative methods to graduate and receive a diploma. I propose that we do the same.

Beginning with the group of students who will expect to graduate in 2002, all students who receive a diploma must: have a "C" average and must have an attendance record of 95% (not including excused absences). Exit exam scores will be shown on a student's transcripts.

Students who fail the exit exam will have the opportunity to receive a diploma if they meet the following requirements:

1. For all Students who fail the exit exam:
 - Remediation courses must be taken and completed for each failed exam subject area;
 - Attendance 95%;
 - Grades – "C" Average, including the remediation courses; and
 - Teacher/Principal Recommendations

2. For Special Needs Students who fail the exam or who have modified plans based on an Individual Education Plan (IEP):
 - Remediation courses taken and completed for each failed exam subject area;
 - Attendance 95%;
 - Grades – "C" Average, including the remediation courses;
 - Alternative Tests (this is proposed for some flexibility and discussion);
 - Teacher/Principal Recommendations; and
 - IEP Team recommendations.

3. For Vocational/Technology Students who fail the exam:
 - Essentially, we should have the same requirements as in numbers 2 & 3 above, but add a section that requires the state board of education to develop an appropriate curriculum (one already largely exists) for students emphasizing in technological or vocational fields.

Phase II:

In 2004 (a date based on testimony concerning the amount of time needed to prepare proper state educational standards), Phase I will be eradicated and in its place a student will instead be able to receive a Diploma with a specific endorsement stated on the Diploma itself (the diploma for those students who graduate with a Diploma of Minimum Competency will denote no endorsement). Students would still have to take the exit exam. In order to receive a diploma, all students would still have to have a “C” average, a 95% attendance record and remediation for any subject portions of the exam that they failed.

The endorsements would denote performance above and beyond a minimum competency level that everyone with a diploma must achieve. The board will develop the standards for each endorsement. The following are endorsements that could be listed on the diploma:

1. Diploma of Advanced Mastery—denoting academic mastery or a College Preparation endorsement
 - Board develop the appropriate curriculum and exit exam score standards
2. Diploma of Foundational Mastery—denoting academic proficiency
 - Board would develop core curriculum and exit exam score standards
3. Diploma of Vocational/Technological Mastery—denoting mastery in technical or vocational fields
 - Board would develop vo-tech curriculum standards (“Workability” language has been developed by the work force group)
 - Students would have to pass the exam with foundational mastery level.
4. Diploma of Mastery of Individual Education Plan—this is to offer a route for special needs students (students with learning disabilities & developmentally disabled) to receive a diploma using a path outside the norm.
 - The board will adopt standards and requirements in order to make accommodations for these students when taking the exit exam (already being done to an extent, but needs improvements)
 - The board will develop the curriculum and standards for special needs students
5. Diploma of Minimum Competency—denoting that students have attended school and have achieved a minimum level of competency in the educational standards developed by the state board of education for all Alaska’s Students
 - For all Students who fail to meet the test standards qualifying them for a Foundation Mastery level diploma they must meet the following criteria to receive a diploma:
 - Remediation courses must be given and passed for all subject areas of the exam that were failed;

- Attendance 95%;
- Grades – “C” Average; and
- Teacher/Principal Recommendations

Additionally, the legislation should include:

1. The department develop uniform standards for recording information on the student transcript;
2. Requirement that the exit exams are NOT administered on a school day, e.g. the exams should be administered on inservice days;
3. Appropriate exams must be developed for the learning disabled and developmentally disabled (already being done);
4. Language providing that uniform pre-exam study materials are provided for students;
5. That the board develop uniform instruction language for those who administer the exit exam to be used at test time;
6. That the board develop definitions for the terms “vocational,” “technical” and “special needs” students.
7. That each school district or educational attendance area provide the state department of education, every semester and/or quarter, with:
 - A list of the courses taught;
 - The name of the teachers teaching each course; and
 - The number of hours and weeks per semester or quarter that each class is taught.
8. That the Board develop a plan to deal with the students who transfer into the state.