

Alaska State Legislature

Session:
State Capitol, Room 125
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Phone: (907) 465-6600
Fax: (907) 465-3805



Interim:
600 E. Railroad Ave.
Wasilla, AK 99654
Phone: (907) 376-3370
Fax: (907) 376-3157

Senate Health, Education and Social Services Committee

Senator Lyda Green, Chair

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION QUALIFYING EXAM Draft Legislation

The draft legislation creates a two-phase approach to 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. This proposal is meant to fortify the legal defensibility of the exam while addressing the needs of special needs students. Another 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:

A new section is added to the uncodified law of the state of Alaska that reads:
Transition; Academic standards for public high school graduation:

- (a) Beginning January 1, 2002, and ending December 31, 2003, before graduating from public high school, each pupil is required to
 - (1) take a competency examination or with the approval of the IEP team take an alternative assessment in the areas of reading, English, and mathematics; and
 - (2) meet graduation requirements established by the state and the school board of the borough or city school district or regional educational attendance area in which the pupil is enrolled.
 - (b) The Department of Education and Early Development shall determine the form and contents of the competency examinations and shall score completed examinations.
 - (c) A pupil shall receive an endorsement on the pupil's diploma and transcripts identifying the areas of examination or assessment successfully passed.
 - (d) The Department of Education and Early Development shall establish by regulation uniform standards for awarding endorsements required under (c) of this section.
-

PHASE II:

Amends Sec 14.03.075 to add language to codify the following:

Prior to January 1, 2004, the Department of Education and Early Development shall determine the form and content of a High School Essential Skills Examination (HSESE). The exam will focus on essential and foundational skills and content in the areas of reading, writing and arithmetic/mathematics which the general community would expect a student to have or know in order to function at an introductory level in our society.

Effective January 1, 2004, all students will have to pass the Alaska High School Essential Skills Examination and meet other district requirements in order to be eligible to receive a diploma. Additionally, identified special education students and 504 students (defined under 29 U.S.C. 794) who successfully complete the Alaska High School Essential Skills Examination, or alternative assessment as described and required in a student's individual education plan or 504 plan (developed under 29 U.S.C. 794), and meet other district requirements, shall be eligible to receive a high school diploma. Course of study and exams taken and passed will be reflected on the student's transcript and diploma.

In addition, the department is directed to develop a waiver for students to receive their diploma if they meet other district requirements yet fail the HSESE. The standards for the waiver will be determined by the Department.

ADDITIONALLY, THE LEGISLATION INCLUDES:

1. The department shall develop uniform standards for recording information on the student transcript;
2. A Requirement that the exit exams are NOT administered on a school day, e.g. the exams should be administered on inservice days;
3. That the board develop uniform instruction language for those who administer the HSESE to be used at test time;

INTENT LANGUAGE

Intent Language is added:

The Department of Education and Early Development shall determine procedures that are reasonable, fair and in the best interest of the student. Schools and districts are encouraged to develop and promote endorsements and awards which document high levels of achievement (ex: proficient and advanced), specific or career pathways or preparations (ex: technical, academic, arts, vocational) or significant achievement or accomplishment (ex: artistic, academic, vocational or technical) on the part of students graduating from their school or district.