



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.

Title: Exploration of Assessment Alternatives For Graduation

As Related To:

<input type="checkbox"/> Goal One: Develop and support policies to close the achievement and opportunity gaps.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal Three: Ensure that every student has the opportunity to meet career and college ready standards.
<input type="checkbox"/> Goal Two: Develop comprehensive accountability, recognition, and supports for students, schools, and districts.	<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 type="checkbox"/> Communication
<input type="checkbox"/> System Oversight	<input type="checkbox"/> Convening and Facilitating
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	

Policy Considerations / Key Questions: Are there additional options for assessment alternatives that should be considered for students to demonstrate meeting standard if they are not successful on the SBAC?

Possible Board Action:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt
<input type="checkbox"/> Approve	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Materials Included in Packet:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Memo
<input type="checkbox"/> Graphs / Graphics
<input type="checkbox"/> Third-Party Materials
<input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint

Synopsis: At the January 2015 Board meeting the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted a [Position Statement on High School Assessments Required for Graduation](#). Part of the position statement included a list of options the Board wanted to explore. These included:

1. Tenth grade students taking the high school SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment), allowing more time for high school course-taking and alternatives if the student is not on-track.
2. Earning credit in Bridge To College transition courses recognized by higher education for college placement.
3. Earning dual credit in specific college-level courses.
4. Earning a professional certification or completing a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program.
5. Additional assessments as alternatives, including CTE and work-readiness assessments.

This memo contains additional information about these options. At the Board meeting, SBE staff and Dr. Doug Kernutt will present information on these options.



EXPLORATION OF ASSESSMENT ALTERNATIVES FOR GRADUATION

Policy Considerations

At the January 2015 Board meeting the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted a [Position Statement on High School Assessments Required for Graduation](#). Part of the position statement included a list of options the Board wanted to explore. These included:

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3. Earning dual credit in specific college-level courses.
4. Earning a professional certification or completing a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program.
5. Additional assessments as alternatives, including CTE and work-readiness assessments.

This memo contains additional information about these options, and was created with Dr. Doug Kernutt, Retired Deputy Superintendent for Clover Park School District. Dr. Kernutt and SBE staff contacted selected district administrators, ESD staff, principals, skill center directors, OSPI staff and Career and Technical administrators to collect additional information and to provide perspective from stakeholders on assessment options.

Background

Other than tenth grade students taking the high school SBAC, the options listed above are alternatives to statewide assessments required for graduation. Current alternatives to statewide assessments required for graduation are specified in statute ([RCW 28A.655.061](#), [RCW 28A.655.065](#)) so adding any additional alternatives would require legislative action. Current approved alternatives include:

- Collection of Evidence
- College Entrance Scores (IB, AP, SAT, ACT)
- Out-of-State Tests
- Grades Comparison
- Recent Transfer Waiver
- Special Education Alternatives

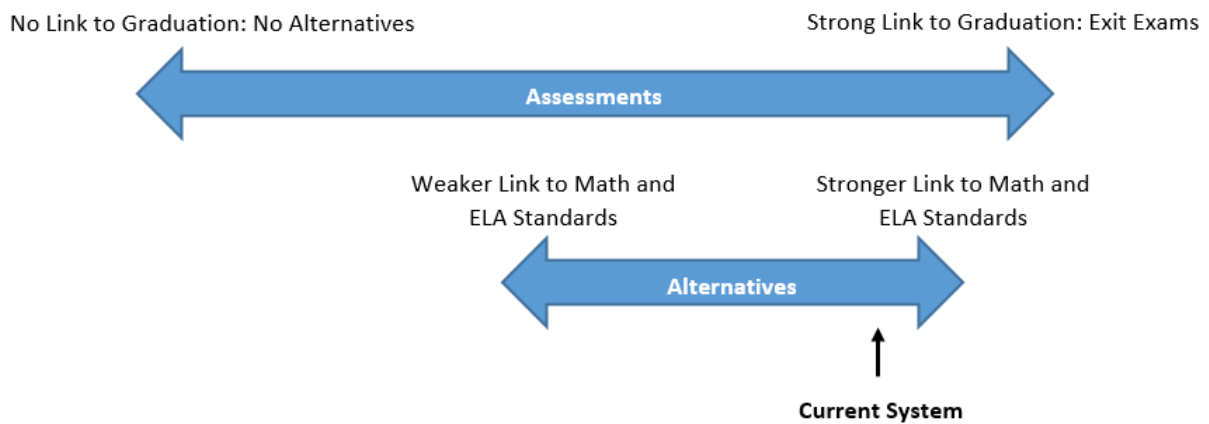
At the September 2014 Board meeting OSPI shared information on how assessment requirements were met by all students in the Class of 2014. Some of these alternatives are not being used by very many students. For example, Grades Comparison (which allows students who were not successful on the tests to be deemed to have met standard if their grades are

equal or higher than a comparison group of students who passed the test) is used by zero percent of students. By statute ([RCW 28A.655.065](#)), the Grades Comparison option is only available to students with a grade point average of 3.2 or higher. This option appears to be well suited for students who have mastered the standards but who do not test well. The Superintendent's "Option B" for the assessment system (presented to the Board at the September 2014 meeting) recommended removing the grade point average requirement. Streamlining the assessment system and system of alternatives should include examining the existing options and exploring whether they are being used effectively.

Statute requires 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\(10\)\(a\).](#))

Figure 1 is intended to graphically illustrate the range of linkage between high school assessments and graduation, and the range of linkage between alternatives and standards. The current system of assessments and alternatives is on the right-hand side of the visual, with assessment linked to graduation and alternatives that are "comparable in rigor." Possible assessment alternatives may have weaker links to standards, such as earning college-level credit in non-math and non-ELA subjects or earning a CTE certification. As the state transitions to a diploma tied to career and college readiness, the Board may want to have a policy discussion about whether there are valid ways that students may demonstrate career and college readiness that are less strongly linked to learning standards in math and ELA.

Figure 1: Range of Assessments and Alternatives Relative to Graduation and Standards



Further Information on Options

Comparable rigor, Transition Courses, and college math and ELA courses

The proposed alternative of college credit in math and English Language Arts (ELA) and Transition Courses (or Bridge Courses) both appear to meet the "comparable rigor" standard. Passing a 100-level college course in mathematics or ELA is logically comparable to passage of the exit exam, since it would *ipso facto* demonstrate readiness for college math or ELA. Successful completion of a Transition Course is also logically comparable to passage of the exit exam, since the course development process and curriculum are so closely aligned with the standards. The involvement of higher education in developing the courses has led to the

agreement by institutions of higher education in the state to accept the courses for college placement into college credit-bearing courses.

CTE assessments and industry certifications

There are several assessments and certifications that are used in the CTE arena. It may be possible in the future to compare performance on these tests to performance on the SBAC, similar to the way that the SAT, ACT, and others have been compared to the math End of Course Exams and the High School Proficiency Exams to determine the score needed on the alternative for “comparable rigor.” For a statistically valid comparison, results need to be available from a significant cohort of students who have taken both the SBAC and the alternative assessment.

Precision Exams are Career Skills exams and certifications supported by OSPI. They are relatively new to the state within the past few years, but are now being used in more than 50% of the districts in the state. Some districts are piloting the system and others are using them in a more comprehensive manner. A large number of assessments are available for a wide range of CTE courses including exams in:

- Agriculture, Food, and Natural resources
- Architecture and Construction
- Arts, A/V Technology and Communication
- Business Management and Administration
- Education and Training
- Finance
- Government and Public Administration
- Health Science
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security
- Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Science, technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- Transportation Distribution and Logistics

Districts and even skill centers are unable to offer classes in all of the above areas. The availability, however, gives districts and their students the ability to better connect their programs to industry standards and assess their students on their knowledge in each area.

Precision Exams, while important, do not meet the comparability standard currently in place. They do not focus on the ELA and Math standards in the same manner that the Smarter Balanced Assessment does (although the developers of Precision Exams have written the exams at a 10th to 11th grade reading level). While some of the individual exams may end up being of “comparable rigor” we currently do not have any evidence. Clearly the bulk of the individual assessments are focused on their specific industry skills and knowledge.

Another example of CTE assessment models is the **ACT “WorkKeys”** assessment. This is an expensive assessment that only a few districts have, or are utilizing. It focuses on assessments in:

- Applied mathematics
- Locating information
- Reading for information

We have no information that would allow us to show that “WorkKeys” is comparable in rigor to the high school Smarter Balanced Assessment.

A third example often referenced is the [ASVAB \(Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery\)](#). The ASVAB consists of the following eight individual tests:

- General Science
- Arithmetic Reasoning
- Word Knowledge
- Paragraph Comprehension
- Mathematics Knowledge
- Electronics Information
- Auto and Shop Information
- Mechanical Comprehension

Students are provided with scores on each of these individual tests and three Career Exploration Score composites: Verbal Skills, Math Skills and Science and Technical Skills. The battery takes approximately three hours to complete, and test results are returned to schools in a few weeks.

The Military uses students' ASVAB scores to identify the occupations that best suit their abilities. Junior, senior and post-secondary school students can use their ASVAB scores for enlistment for up to two years after taking the test.

While a widely used assessment, we do not have the information necessary to show that the ASVAB is assessing the same knowledge we are requiring in the Smarter Balanced assessment. It was developed as more of an interest inventory than as an exit exam for high school proficiency.

There are a number of other assessments or industry certifications that could be part of the discussion. For example, there are numerous certifications in the Information Technology arena (Adobe, Microsoft exams, etc). While the certifications show expertise in a certain arena, they do not, at face value, meet the comparable rigor standard of the state's graduation exit exams in math and ELA. Additional assessments that could be considered for an equivalency study might be the tests used by community and technical colleges for placement decisions (COMPASS and ACCUPLACER.)

CTE Programs of Study

[Career and Technical Education Programs of Study](#) were also mentioned as an option for exploration as we look at potential alternatives. OSPI has completed a significant amount of work developing the Program of Study concept.

“Programs of Study are detailed guides for students, mapping out specific course options for a chosen career path from high school through postsecondary education. Programs of Study show how to smoothly transition into postsecondary education from high school CTE programs. They exemplify the importance of career planning, beginning in the freshman year in high school, and even earlier.

There are 78 model Programs of Study (POS) for the 16 Career Clusters based on CareerClusters.org. Each model has been updated with the following information:

- Certificate and 4-year information as posted on [Workforce Explorer](#) (Note: Individual post-secondary institutions may change this data)
- Active apprenticeships in Washington (as of 6/1/2010)
- Current 2-year degrees at [Washington State Community and Technical Colleges](#) based on the SBCTC Matrix (published January 11, 2010)
- High demand jobs as published on [Workforce Explorer](#) (as of 6/1/2010)"

The Program of Study model is a strong model that can help our students in thinking about, planning, and preparing for their futures. There is not, however a connection of the Program of Study to the comparable rigor standard in the RCW's. The Program of Study model does not, for example, require a certain number of credits, the course type, etc... Programs vary between districts and were not expected to focus on the same skills assessed in the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

Conclusions related to CTE options and their ability to be used as an alternative assessment under the current RCW requiring assessments of comparable rigor

The proposed CTE options (certifications/assessments, program of study) do not meet the comparable rigor standard. Educational staff (teachers, principals, superintendents, assessment staff) at all levels of the system are in basic agreement that the options are not of comparable rigor. **However**, most, if not all, of the educators we talked with agreed that further study could be of value in the ongoing struggle to help insure we provide our students with a variety of alternatives.

Additional information obtained during our review

Educators from across the state are, and have been, thinking deeply about Washington's high school exit exam process. Although there are a number who believe the assessment should be delinked from high school graduation, there are others who believe the exit exam continues to serve a valid purpose. The following is additional information that may be of value in our ongoing considerations:

- There is strong agreement that the **High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP)** process could be a critical component as we move forward. Helping students understand career options, identify their interest areas, and determine the academic path during the 7th-12th grade years can be critical to student focus and motivation. Key issues include more rigorous standards, improved technology access, appropriate training, and appropriate staffing.
- There is strong agreement that the **development of CTE alternatives is important** if the exit exam process is maintained. Development of the Program of Study concept was an area that appeared to be of interest and could connect with certifications/exams (e.g. Precision Exams).
- There is general agreement that our **current College and Career ready standard is focused on readiness for College but does not adequately address readiness for Career**. Most agreed that College and Career ready connection should undergo further research as we move forward. CTE directors, representing all regions of the state, for example, were unanimous in their view that College and Career ready are not the same standard.
- District and program **size will continue to impact students' access to alternatives**.

- While not a focus of our review, all participants made sure that we were aware of the impact that our current assessment process is having on the educational programs in their school systems. While some stress during the assessment process is normal, participants report that the impacts are growing, students are losing a significant amount of instructional time, technology labs and resources are unavailable for instructional purposes for much of the assessment windows, and students who are in the alternative process are being pulled out of elective classes, including CTE courses.

Considerations for future action

- Development of a focus group or study committee (utilizing the process followed in development of the “Transition Courses” alternative proposal) to explore assessment alternatives in CTE. Set a goal for work completion prior to the 2016 legislation session.
- Conduct a thorough review of the research on how the College and Career ready concepts impact student readiness for their futures. Discuss the concept of academic preparation for college as it relates to academic preparation for a career. Utilize the research, as appropriate, in future decision making. Review the article on [“The Nation’s Report Card and 12th Grade Academic Preparedness”](#) to help spur the discussion.

Action

No Board action is required at this meeting.

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