



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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State Board of Education Position Statement on High School Assessments Required for Graduation

Adopted January 8, 2015

Background

1. College- and career-ready Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC) threshold scores were set nationally by the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium in November 2014, establishing scores for Achievement Levels 1 to 4. The scores must be approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) for use in Washington. The SBAC assesses both mathematics and English Language Arts.
2. SBAC tests will be taken by Washington students in spring 2015, with results expected by summer 2015.
3. By statute (EHB 1450 passed in 2013), by the end of August 2015 the SBE must set an SBAC threshold score students must meet for high school graduation.
4. In its resolution on assessments adopted in January 2013, the SBE previously affirmed that exit exams are a part of a meaningful high school diploma.
5. Accountability framework rules adopted by the SBE in May 2014 states that graduation requirements should ultimately be aligned to the performance levels associated with career and college readiness. The rules also recognized the necessity of a minimum proficiency standard for graduation as both students and educators adapt to the increased rigor of Common Core State Standards.
6. The legislature stated its intent in statute (EHB 1450 passed in 2013) that the state transition from a biology end-of-course assessment to a more comprehensive science assessment.
7. By its resolution adopted in November 2014, the SBE urged the Legislature to end the biology end-of-course exam as a high school graduation requirement in favor of developing a comprehensive science exam that aligns with the Next Generation Science Standards.
8. Washington public institutions of higher education have agreed to use the high school SBAC for postsecondary placement decisions.
9. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and OSPI have an on-going project to establish high school transition courses for Math and English Language Arts, called Bridge To College courses.

Guiding principles

The State Board of Education:

1. Holds a goal of a graduation requirement that aligns with a career- and college-ready performance level; but recognizes that it will take time for students, educators, and the system to adapt to the increased rigor of Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards.
2. Recognizes that the state is in a time of transition to new standards and assessments. There are challenges, but there are also opportunities to strengthen education and create greater alignment between secondary and postsecondary education, training and career systems.



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3. Reaffirms high school exit exams, or alternatives, aligned to rigorous standards that all students are required to take as part of a meaningful high school diploma and an opportunity for students to demonstrate their readiness for postsecondary education, training and careers.
4. Supports multiple ways for students who are not successful on the assessments to demonstrate meeting standard and readiness for postsecondary options.
5. Intends to set initial minimum scores for graduation on the high school SBAC that bridges past statewide performance on exit exams to the initial statewide performance of students on the SBAC assessments. This approach will begin the process of moving toward the more rigorous SBAC college- and career-ready level by setting initial high school proficiency scores that would impact students in the next few years approximately equally to how students have been impacted by exit exams during the past few years. These initial minimum scores would be re-evaluated over the following years, as new standards are implemented and as more students gain the skills necessary to be SBAC College and Career Ready.
6. Supports the use of the SBAC assessments, and in the future the Next Generation Science Standards assessment, by postsecondary institutions in placement and admissions decisions.
7. Supports the development and use of transition courses to prepare high school students for success in college-level work.
8. Supports continued work on the integration of career readiness into high school assessment systems.
9. Supports the streamlining of the high school assessment system, including alternatives to passing exit exams, and further research on the impact of exit exams.
10. Continues to recommend ending the biology assessment as a requirement for graduation, while maintaining the exam for federal accountability, in favor of developing a comprehensive science exam that aligns with the Next Generation Science Standards.

Options to explore:

The State Board of Education (SBE) sees potential in additional options for high school students to demonstrate meeting standard and readiness for postsecondary education and work, as quality alternatives to meeting standard on high school assessments required for graduation. The SBE supports seeking further information and exploration of:

1. Tenth grade students taking the high school SBAC, 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.