

S B

1 3 3

**SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT
First Committee of Referral**

DATE: 3/9/01

FURTHER: Finance

Date of 5-Day Notice: _____
(in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED
IN TO OFFICE: 3-19-01

Health, Education and Social Services Committee considered

SENATE BILL NO. 133

PUBLIC SCHOOL EXIT EXAM

"An Act relating to a two-year transition for implementation of the public high school competency examination and to establishing an essential skills examination as a high school graduation requirement; and providing for an effective date."

and recommends:

- be replaced with _____ CS SB 133 (HES)
- adopt previous _____ CS _____ (_____)
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt Letter of Intent by _____ Committee
- further referral to _____ Committee

Senate Bill:

same title

new title

House Bill:

same title

technical title

new: SCR # _____

NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):

Department	Date	Fiscal	Zero	FN#
FN forthcoming				

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S):

Department	Date	Fiscal	Zero	FN#

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
<i>Andrew D. Jensen</i>	✓			
<i>Samuel</i>	✓			
<i>David</i>	✓			
<i>Betty Davis</i>	✓			
CHAIR: <i>Lynne</i>	✓			



Alaska State Legislature

Please enter into the record my testimony to the _____

SATES

committee name

Committee on _____

HSGQE - SB/33

dated _____

3/10/01

bill # / subject

Letters to the Editor

High school exit exam falls 'equal consideration of interest' argument

Recent articles and opinions on the state of Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) have focused on the need for performance standards, fairness, legal problems, and delay or not to delay. Today, the Legislature is struggling to modify the HSGQE. I submit that these discussions are misdirected and that the HSGQE should be dropped as unethical under the "equal consideration of interest" argument.

Before I continue let me say that those who passed the HSGQE legislation are not unethical. They believe that it is the right thing they are doing and therefore are operating under an ethical standard. I am just submitting that they did not consider a key ethical standard in the debate.

The basic principle of equal consideration of interests does not require equal or identical treatment; it requires equal consideration of each student's best interest. Equal consideration for different students may lead to different treatment and different rights.

Our society has historically provided equal consideration of interest in the educational environment. Students with special abilities or disabilities are not treated equally with other students, but their interests are given equal consideration. A student who needs extra help is allocated greater resources to meet that student's educational needs. Students who excel in physical abilities are provided opportunities in sports. Within the classroom, teachers evaluate each student's abilities and knowingly provide learning opportunities to meet the need of each student.

This is also demonstrated in a variety of testing and intervention plans. Course offerings provide a diversity of opportunities. Parents become involved as advocates of their own child's interests and have the opportunity to define an educational path, which meets those interests. Historically, high school diploma requirements speak to required courses and curriculums but allow flexibility in assessment and presentation in the classroom to meet each student's needs.

The HSGQE legislation does not give equal consideration of interest to each student. It treats all students as equal — a position that is not defensible. Like it or not, we must accept that all students are not equal. They come in different shapes and sizes; they have different intellectual abilities and learning styles; they come with different capacities to experience pleasure or pain.

As the ethical writer Peter Singer notes: "There is no logically compelling reason for assuming that a factual difference in ability between two people justifies any difference in the amount of consideration we give to their needs and interests." Each is a student with a capacity to learn and develop. To require a single series of tests to pass high school does not recognize these differences and interests.

Instead, today we hear from some individuals, including school board members and public officials, that there is an acceptable failure rate. Is the interest of the student who fails being given equal consideration when we publicly accept a failure rate? If the HSGQE passage rate were 90 percent would there be discussions of a delay in testing? I maintain that no discussion would take place. Today, students are dropping out of high school because they fear they cannot pass the HSGQE. Is each student's best interest being given equal consideration when we force students to leave school for fear of a single test?

I submit that we are heading down a path that can only lead to harm. With the HSGQE we changed the philosophical approach to education — a system which is punitive instead of educational, one which costs society more than it will benefit, and one which does not

give equal consideration to the interest for each human being.

We have an ethical obligation to consider each student's best interests and provide an educational path for that student. To knowingly do differently is unethical.

Kenneth E. Tarbox
Soldotna

TO: The Alaska Senate Health, Education, and Social Services Committee; Sen. Lyda Green, chair

FROM: Michael Jones, teacher, Leonhard Seppala High School (Personal Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1393, Nome, AK 99762)

RE: High School Graduation Qualifying Exam; Senate Bills 120, 128, 129, and DATE: March 9, 2001

Members of the Senate Health, Education, and Social Services Committee:

I support considerations that lead to postponing the effective date of Alaska's high school graduation qualifying exam to create time to ensure that the exam and examination processes are fair, non-biased, sensible, and will coincide with sound education ideologies.

The members of the class of 2002 have been left waiting in an unfair position while decisions regarding this test -- and the students' futures -- are made and unmade and remade. I applaud efforts of both houses of the Alaska Legislature to address the issues brought up by the mandated test. It is obvious that not everyone will be pleased with whatever legislation results from discussions this spring, and it is clear that the new and continuing questions surrounding the exit exam will not and cannot be answered by the time this legislature adjourns.

There are issues, however, that do need to be addressed in policy, if not in legislation:

- A more rapid rate of return of test scores is necessary for effective placement of students in appropriate foundational and preparatory courses.
- Content of the tests, and what numbers constitute passing scores, must be more firmly established.
- Alternative and authentic methods of assessment -- alternatives to the traditional pencil-and-paper test -- must be developed to conform with current teaching and testing methods if the test is truly to serve as a piece of good-faith education reform.
- Testing procedures and alternatives for the state's special needs students must be developed.
- Fiscal attachments acknowledging the expenses incurred by Alaska school districts implementing the exams need to accompany testing legislation.
- How do we address the program needs of students who:
 1. are at-risk and prefer to leave school than to endure another test; or
 2. fail more than once, give up, and leave school knowing that it doesn't matter if they are in school if they don't pass the test?

Senate Bill 120 lessens the high-stakes pressure associated with the test, but it still affects the class of 2002 by taking effect as law on January 1, 2002, after seven-eighths of the typical 2002 graduate's high school career has passed.

Jones 1/2

Senate Bill 129 also lessens the high-stakes pressures that members of the class of 2002 have been forced to endure. If the subject-area endorsements placed on a student's diploma don't mean anything in the long run, why create law that will make it mandatory to place such endorsements on diplomas?

Senate Bill 133 goes far in protecting for the rights of special needs students. I suggest this: take this one step further to allow alternatives and choices in method of assessment of all students.

~~Senate Bill 128~~ does allow for more time for issues surrounding this exam to be address more thoroughly and less hurriedly. However, I again ask: If the endorsement stickers on the diplomas don't really affect the student one way or the other, why bother with them?

Why not just delay the effectiveness date, cleanly, and outline what the State of Alaska must do to create a more authentic testing method on which to base our seniors' functional knowledge?

The State of Alaska has not been in the forefront of the creation and implementation of a high school exit exam. There is no reason that justifies rushing testing-related legislation when it is our students who will, initially, pay the price. I urge you to support postponement of the high school exit exam until it is more educationally sound and less politically correct.



Jones 2/2

Stephanie M. Dredla
P.O. Box 1106
Nome, Alaska 99762

Dear Members of the Senate HES Committee:

I am a student at Leonhard Seppala High School (in Nome) who has recently transferred from Florida. The county which I attended school in, Manatee County, requires that all high school students pass the High School Competency Test (HSCT).

I graduate this year, 2001, and have taken and passed the HSCT. My experience with this test is that it was a distraction from our academic work. The staff spent many class periods preparing us for taking the test successfully. Doing this practice may have helped other students, but for me, I do not believe it made a difference in how I did score.

I feel that the idea of the exam is a wise idea, however minimal time should be spent on preparation and the main focus should remain on academics. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Stephanie M. Dredla

Subject: High School Graduation Qualifying Exam--Legislation Proposal

Date: Wed, 7 Mar 2001 12:41:42 -0900

From: "Sherman Minter" <sminter@shungnak.nwabsd.schoolzone.net>

To: <Senator_Lyda_Green@legis.state.ak.us>

I have seen a draft of your proposal and wanted to write to say how strongly I agree with your thinking. I support the idea of offering a variety of diplomas and a variety of ways to get there. The details would require a lot of work but could have a huge impact on education in Alaska. If we offered a vocational diploma, we would, of course, need to offer a complete vocational program, which is now lacking in our area of the state.

I know it is controversial but the idea of regional high schools in the bush has great appeal to me because those schools could offer vocational programs, art programs, music programs, and technology programs which are now essentially unavailable to our students.

I support high stakes testing and standards, but I also believe that more choices are essential to success.

Thank you for your efforts and good luck with the legislation.

Sherman Minter
Principal
Shungak School

Association of Alaska School Boards
Comparison of Key Provisions in Legislation Addressing
High School Graduation Qualifying Exam

Sponsor	Transition	Endorsements	Special Ed	Other provisions
Sen. Ward SB 120	None. Repeals and reenacts current law. Students who do not pass the HSGQE may still be eligible to receive a diploma if they meet local requirements.	On the pupil's <i>diploma</i> identifying the areas of the exam successfully passed. Endorsement consisting of the Alaska flag symbol for those who do not pass.	NA	
Sen. Leman SB 128	2 year transition (until 2004) ...at which time current law again takes effect: students who do not pass the HSGQE do not receive a diploma (but do receive a certificate of attendance) Students who do not pass may still graduate if they meet local requirements, until 2004.	On the pupil's <i>diploma and transcript</i> identifying the areas of the exam successfully passed. No endorsement or designation for those who do not pass.	NA	
SB 133 S. HESS (Sen. Green, chair)	2 year transition (until 2004) ...at which time students who do not pass a "High School Essential Skills Exam" do not receive a diploma. Adds a provision allowing DEED to grant waivers to the HSESE. Language is deleted offering a certificate of attendance in lieu of a diploma for those who do not pass the exam. Students who do not pass may still graduate if they meet local requirements, until 2004.	On the pupil's <i>diploma and transcript</i> identifying the areas of the exam successfully passed. After the transition period, exam results are to be recorded on a pupil's <i>transcripts</i> .	Special Ed students who fail the exam are eligible to receive a diploma if the student completes an alternative assessment required by the IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) team or required in the education plan for the student under 29.USC 794., and meets local requirements.	Includes intent language describing essential skills necessary for students to have upon graduation. Requires DEED to establish uniform standards for pre-exam study materials, procedures to administer the exam, and award waivers for military student transfers, etc. New board duty includes adopting regulations implementing a High School Essential Skills Exam developed by DEED. The exam may

DRAFT

				not be administered during a day in session.
Sen. Davis SB 129	<p>Staggered implementation: Reading, English effective 2004 Math effective 2005</p> <p>Students who do not pass may still graduate if they meet local requirements, until the transition dates.</p>	On the pupil's <i>diploma</i> identifying the areas of the exam successfully passed.	NA	
Rep. Bunde (conceptual at this time)	<p>Staggered implementation: Reading effective 2002 Writing effective 2003 Math effective 2004</p> <p>Students who do not pass may still graduate if they meet local requirements, until the transition dates.</p>		Remand the issue back to the State Board for remedy.	
Rep. Stevens HB 166	2 year transition (until 2004)	NA	NA	
Gov. Knowles HB94 & SB56	<p>4 year transition (until 2006)</p> <p>...at which time current law again takes effect: students who do not pass the HSGQE do not receive a diploma (but do receive a certificate of attendance)</p> <p>Students who do not pass may still graduate if they meet local requirements, until 2006.</p>	On the pupil's <i>transcript</i> identifying the results of the exam (areas both successfully passed and not passed).	The board shall determine the requirements for a pupil with a disability who is receiving educational services through an IEP.	Requires progress report of each school by Jan. 15 of each year.

AASB Position

AASB supports student performance standards and assessments. The vast majority of those in the education community and the public support standards and testing of those standards. Alaska has made remarkable gains in these areas. Schools are reporting significant changes in the way they do business. Alaska schools are requesting support and resources necessary to ensure that every classroom is prepared to deliver on the promise that no child is left behind. A transition period before implementing consequences of the HSGQE is necessary to fully align curriculum so that all students are receiving instruction that is tested in the HSGQE, and so problems in the exam can be ironed out.

Association of Alaska School Boards
Comparison of Key Provisions in Legislation Addressing
High School Graduation Qualifying Exam

Sponsor	Transition	Endorsements	Special Ed	Other provisions
Sen. Ward SB 120	None. Repeals and reenacts current law. Students who do not pass the HSGQE may still be eligible to receive a diploma if they meet local requirements.	On the pupil's <i>diploma</i> identifying the areas of the exam successfully passed. Endorsement consisting of the Alaska flag symbol for those who do not pass.	NA	
Sen. Leman SB 128	2 year transition (until 2004) ...at which time current law again takes effect: students who do not pass the HSGQE do not receive a diploma (but do receive a certificate of attendance) Students who do not pass may still graduate if they meet local requirements, until 2004.	On the pupil's <i>diploma and transcript</i> identifying the areas of the exam successfully passed. No endorsement or designation for those who do not pass.	NA	
S. HESS Cmte. (work draft 3/7/01)	2 year transition (until 2004) ...at which time students who do not pass a "High School Essential Skills Exam" do not receive a diploma. Adds a provision allowing DEED to grant waivers to the HSESE. Language is deleted offering a certificate of attendance in lieu of a diploma for those who do not pass the exam. Students who do not pass may still graduate if they meet local requirements, until 2004.	On the pupil's <i>diploma and transcript</i> identifying the areas of the exam successfully passed. After the transition period, exam results are to be recorded on a pupil's <i>transcripts</i> .	Special Ed students who fail the exam are eligible to receive a diploma if the student completes an alternative assessment required by the IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) team or required in the education plan for the student under 29.U.S.C 794., and meets local requirements.	Includes intent language describing essential skills necessary for students to have upon graduation. Requires DEED to establish uniform standards for pre-exam study materials, procedures to administer the exam, and award waivers for military student transfers, etc. New board duty includes adopting regulations implementing a High School Essential Skills Exam developed by DEED. The exam may not be administered during a day in session.
Sen. Davis (work draft)	Staggered implementation: Reading, English effective 2004 Math effective 2005 Students who do not pass may still graduate if they meet local requirements, until the transition dates.	On the pupil's <i>diploma</i> identifying the areas of the exam successfully passed.	NA	
Rep. Bundo (conceptual at this time)	Staggered implementation: Reading effective 2002 Writing effective 2003 Math effective 2004 Students who do not pass may still graduate if they meet local requirements, until the transition dates.		Remand the issue back to the State Board for remedy.	
Gov. Knowles HB94 &	4 year transition (until 2006) ...at which time current law again takes effect:	On the pupil's <i>transcript</i> identifying the results of the exam (areas both successfully passed and not passed).	The board shall determine the requirements for a pupil	Requires progress report of each school by Jan. of each year.

SB56	students who do not pass the HSGQE do not receive a diploma (but do receive a certificate of attendance) Students who do not pass may still graduate if they meet local requirements, until 2006.		with a disability who is receiving educational services through an IEP.	
------	--	--	---	--

AASB Position

AASB supports student performance standards and assessments. The vast majority of those in the education community and the public support standards and testing of those standards. Alaska has made remarkable gains in these areas. Schools are reporting significant changes in the way they do business. Alaska schools are requesting support and resources necessary to ensure that every classroom is prepared to deliver on the promise that no child is left behind. A transition period before implementing consequences of the HSGQE is necessary to fully align curriculum so that all students are receiving instruction that is tested in the HSGQE, and so problems in the exam can be ironed out.