

SB

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<TARGET><BILL>SB 111</BILL><SUBJECT>SB
111</SUBJECT><COMM>SFIN28</COMM></TARGET>

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2014 Legislative Session

Bill Version: SB 111
Fiscal Note Number: _____
() Publish Date: _____

Identifier: SB111CS(EDC)-EED-SSA-01-31-14
Title: REPEAL SECONDARY SCHOOL EXIT EXAM
Sponsor: STEVENS, GARDNER
Requester: Senate Finance Committee

Department: Department of Education and Early Development
Appropriation: Teaching and Learning Support
Allocation: Student and School Achievement
OMB Component Number: 2796

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2015	Included in	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
	Appropriation Requested	Governor's FY2015 Request	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2015	FY 2015					
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services	(1,438.0)	2,759.4	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
Total Operating	(1,438.0)	2,759.4	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)

Fund Source (Operating Only)

1004 Gen Fund	(1,438.0)	2,759.4	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)
Total	(1,438.0)	2,759.4	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)	(1,438.0)

Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues							
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Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2014) cost: 0.0 (separate supplemental appropriation required)
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2015) cost: 0.0 (separate capital appropriation required)
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? Yes
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? 09/30/14

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:

This fiscal note reflects the changes in the CS for SB 111 allowing adults who did not earn a diploma because of a failure to pass the exit exam the opportunity to take the exam during a transition period and earn a high school diploma. The Committee Substitute also changes the effective date of the bill.

Prepared By: Erik McCormick, Director of Assessment, Accountability & Info. Mgmt. Phone: (907)465-8686
Division: Teaching and Learning Support Date: 01/31/2014 03:45 PM
Approved By: Mike Hanley Date: 01/31/14
Agency: Commissioner

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2014 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. CSSB111 (EDC)

Analysis

This legislation repeals the high school graduation requirement for passing a competency exam in reading, English, and mathematics.

The continued fiscal impact that results from this legislation is an allowance for former students who were required to pass the HSGQE to receive a diploma the opportunities to continue participation and earn a public school diploma through June 30, 2017.

The effective date of this legislation is September 1, 2014.

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

SENATE BILL 111

Version: 28-LS1113/U
January 25, 2014

"An Act repealing the secondary student competency examination and related requirements; and providing for an effective date."

Senate Bill 111 repeals the Alaska Secondary student competency examination, also known as the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) or "Exit Exam."

The HSGQE was initiated in 2001 and became fully effective in 2004, following federal pressure for more assessment requirements in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. It was never clear that the Alaska HSGQE would improve performance and measure whether students would be better prepared for college or a career. There has also persisted the question of why so many high school students, having passed the HSGQE and received a high school diploma, are nonetheless requiring remedial math and writing coursework in our university system.

The HSGQE has become a high stakes hurdle harming many Alaskan students. It costs millions of dollars and significant man-hours to administer, and removes students from 6 days of time in the classroom. It causes anxiety in those that fail. It signals to 10th graders who pass that they no longer need to work hard to graduate. It has run its course. We tried it, but it doesn't do what it was intended. Meanwhile we have a whole new accountability system in place, along with new Alaska Academic Standards being implemented and accompanying assessments aligned to those new standards. It no longer makes sense to continue funding and executing the exit exam.

The latest version of this bill (version U) phases out the exit exam to allow students who failed the exam prior to July 1, 2014 an opportunity to pass it before it is discontinued entirely. The window to retake the exam would close on June 30, 2017.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

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SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

SENATE BILL III

Version: 28-LS1113/U

January 25, 2014

"An Act repealing the secondary student competency examination and related requirements; and providing for an effective date."

- Section 1: Deletes the high school competency examination reference in the Department of Education and Early Development's annual report to the legislature.
- Section 2: Deletes the high school competency examination reference in the Department of Education and Early Development's annual report to the public on school performance.
- Section 3: Deletes the high school competency examination reference in the Department of Education and Early Development's school accountability system.
- Section 4: Deletes the high school competency examination reference in the charter school operational requirements.
- Section 5: Repeals the high school competency test requirements.
- Section 6: Phases out the exit exam to allow students who failed the exam prior to July 1, 2014 an opportunity to pass it before it is discontinued entirely. The window to retake the exam would close on June 30, 2017.
- Section 7: Provides for a July 1, 2014 effective date.

HSGQE Relevancy

National Comparison

- As of June 2013 there were 26 states reporting having current or planned high school exit exam policies (*25 current, 1 planned - RI*)
 - o This represented 69% of the nation's public high school students (*25 states*)
 - o 4 states have recently decided to phase out exit exam requirements (*AL, NC, GA, TN*)
 - o 18 states, including Alaska have Comprehensive exit exams (*aligned to state standards and generally targeted to the 9th or 10th grade level*).
 - Of the 18 states with Comprehensive exit exams 7 also assess at least one end-of course (EOC) exams (*FL, GA, MA, NM, SC, TX, WA*)

Alaska Summary

- Passage of the HSGQE to obtain a diploma became effective in 2004
 - o Students must pass 3 separate subtests – Reading, Writing, Mathematics
 - o Individuals can participate twice a year
 - o Grade 10 students take a combined SBA/HSGQE in Spring
 - o Grade 11-12 students take HSGQE Retest in either Fall or Spring
- Skills tested by HSGQE
 - o Reading
 - Reading comprehension, identification and support for main ideas, application of multi-step directions, ability to make and support assertions, and analysis and evaluation of themes
 - Multiple-choice questions target specific skills, and constructed response questions allow students to elaborate on and to make comparisons among various aspects of the texts. Excerpts from published literature are the basis for evaluating reading skills.
 - o Writing
 - Writing compositions, using conventions of Standard English (spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation), and revising writing to improve expression.
 - Multiple-choice questions evaluate specific aspects of writing skill, and constructed-response writing prompts ask students to write and edit narrative, descriptive, and persuasive essays on various topics.
 - o Math
 - Computation skills; reading, interpreting, and constructing graphs; and principles of geometry and measurement
 - Students will use a ruler and a protractor for a portion of the subtest. Procedures such as estimation and mental computation are interwoven throughout this examination.

- Current Grade 10 HSGQE Pass Rates (2013):
 - o Reading – 84%
 - o Writing – 72%
 - o Math – 77%
 - o All Three – 65%

- The 2012 senior class cohort group had a combined cumulative passage rate of over 90%
 - o This means that over 90% of the students in the 2012 senior class passed all three parts of the HSGQE in their high school career

- There were 1,597 seniors in 2010 that completed the school year but did not receive a diploma
 - o Over 53% of those seniors had already passed all three parts of the HSGQE

- There were 1,325 seniors in 2013 that completed the school year but did not receive a diploma
 - o Over 62% of those seniors had already passed all three parts of the HSGQE
 - 16% of this group were LEP students
 - 21% of this group were IEP students

- Our statewide graduation rate increased by 2.1% to 71.7% in 2013. This is the fifth consecutive year showing an increase.

Historical Graduation Rates

Year	Rate	Grads
2004	62.9%	7,290
2005	61.4%	6,905
2006	61.6%	7,361
2007	63.0%	7,666
2008	62.6%	7,855
2009	67.5%	8,008
2010	67.7%	8,245
2011	68.0%	8,064
2012	69.6%	7,989
2013	71.7%	7,795

Current High School Graduation Requirements

21 total units of credit

4 units – language arts

3 units – social studies (*0.5 credit must include Alaska history*)

2 units – mathematics

2 units – science

1 unit – health/physical education

- Twenty states require more than 21 credits, five others require 21, eighteen require less than 21 and six other states did not have requirements.

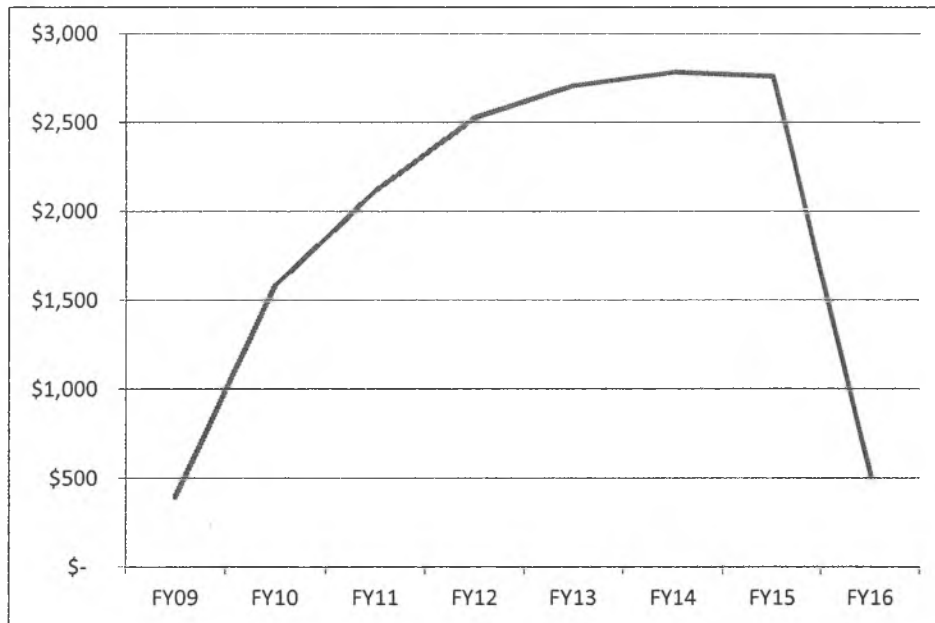
Total Contractual Costs for the HSGQE

Source: AK Dept. of Education & Early Development

(Amounts are in thousands of dollars)

FY09	\$ 395 *
FY10	\$ 1,586
FY11	\$ 2,119
FY12	\$ 2,528
FY13	\$ 2,707
FY14	\$ 2,783
FY15	\$ 2,759
FY16	\$ 524 *

*Please note that FY09 and FY16 are transitional years where two full administrations of the HSGQE were not provided.



STATEWIDE SPRING 2013 HSGQE

Total Numbers and Percentages of Students Scoring Above and Below Proficiency

		Grade 10					
Subject	Test Year	Proficient		Not Proficient		Enrollment	Participation Rate ²
		Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹		
READING	Spring 2009	8,190	90.0%	907	10.0%	9,708	93.7%
READING	Spring 2010	7,518	84.2%	1,409	15.8%	9,504	93.9%
READING	Spring 2011	7,251	83.4%	1,444	16.6%	9,258	93.9%
READING	Spring 2012	7,340	84.2%	1,373	15.8%	9,094	95.8%
READING	Spring 2013	7,282	83.5%	1,437	16.5%	9,130	95.5%
WRITING	Spring 2009	7,226	78.8%	1,949	21.2%	9,708	94.5%
WRITING	Spring 2010	6,646	74.3%	2,301	25.7%	9,504	94.1%
WRITING	Spring 2011	6,199	71.1%	2,521	28.9%	9,258	94.2%
WRITING	Spring 2012	6,494	74.4%	2,237	25.6%	9,094	96.0%
WRITING	Spring 2013	6,262	71.8%	2,456	28.2%	9,130	95.5%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2009	7,334	80.2%	1,806	19.8%	9,708	94.1%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2010	6,902	77.2%	2,033	22.8%	9,504	94.0%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2011	6,655	76.9%	1,999	23.1%	9,258	93.5%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2012	6,749	77.5%	1,954	22.5%	9,094	95.7%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2013	6,658	76.5%	2,041	23.5%	9,130	95.3%

¹ Percent Proficient and Percent Not Proficient rates only include students that participated in the exams.

² Participation rate is calculated by dividing the total count of students tested by the enrollment on the first day of testing.

Note: 2006 is the first year both a 10th grade SBA and 10th grade HSGQE test was administered. 10th graders' results represent both populations using only the HSGQE questions. The Participation Rate may not include all of these students as some may be 2nd year 10th graders.

STATEWIDE SPRING 2013 HSGQE GRADE 10

Statewide Results by Ethnicity, Gender and Groups

READING	Proficient		Not Proficient		Enrollment	Participation Rate
	Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹		
African American	241	75.3%	79	24.7%	333	96.1%
Alaska Native/American Indian	1,193	64.5%	656	35.5%	1,967	94.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	717	80.4%	175	19.6%	929	96.0%
Caucasian	4,228	92.4%	349	7.6%	4,757	96.2%
Hispanic	412	81.4%	94	18.6%	535	94.6%
Two or More Races	491	85.4%	84	14.6%	608	94.6%
Female	3,713	87.0%	556	13.0%	4,460	95.7%
Male	3,569	80.2%	881	19.8%	4,669	95.3%
Disabled	435	45.7%	516	54.3%	1,013	93.9%
Disabled with Accommodations ²	337	45.9%	397	54.1%	N/A	N/A
Non Disabled	6,847	88.2%	921	11.8%	8,116	95.7%
Limited English Proficient	179	28.9%	440	71.1%	670	92.4%
Low Income	2,517	71.8%	991	28.2%	3,712	94.5%
Not Low Income	4,765	91.4%	446	8.6%	5,417	96.2%
Migrant	440	72.0%	171	28.0%	646	94.6%
WRITING	Proficient		Not Proficient		Enrollment	Participation Rate
	Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹		
African American	184	57.7%	135	42.3%	333	95.8%
Alaska Native/American Indian	936	50.4%	920	49.6%	1,967	94.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	666	73.8%	236	26.2%	929	97.1%
Caucasian	3,720	81.6%	840	18.4%	4,757	95.9%
Hispanic	339	66.5%	171	33.5%	535	95.3%
Two or More Races	417	73.0%	154	27.0%	608	93.9%
Female	3,382	79.5%	872	20.5%	4,460	95.4%
Male	2,880	64.5%	1,584	35.5%	4,669	95.6%
Disabled	253	26.6%	698	73.4%	1,013	93.9%
Disabled with Accommodations ²	194	26.1%	549	73.9%	N/A	N/A
Non Disabled	6,009	77.4%	1,758	22.6%	8,116	95.7%
Limited English Proficient	142	22.6%	485	77.4%	670	93.6%
Low Income	2,035	58.0%	1,471	42.0%	3,712	94.5%
Not Low Income	4,227	81.1%	985	18.9%	5,417	96.2%
Migrant	377	62.0%	231	38.0%	646	94.1%
MATHEMATICS	Proficient		Not Proficient		Enrollment	Participation Rate
	Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹		
African American	176	55.2%	143	44.8%	333	95.8%
Alaska Native/American Indian	1,126	60.6%	731	39.4%	1,967	94.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	678	75.2%	223	24.8%	929	97.0%
Caucasian	3,895	85.8%	646	14.2%	4,757	95.5%
Hispanic	354	69.7%	154	70.3%	535	95.0%
Two or More Races	429	74.9%	144	25.1%	608	94.2%
Female	3,260	76.7%	989	23.3%	4,460	95.3%
Male	3,398	76.4%	1,052	23.6%	4,669	95.3%
Disabled	315	33.5%	624	66.5%	1,013	92.7%
Disabled with Accommodations ²	239	33.4%	476	66.6%	N/A	N/A
Non Disabled	6,343	81.7%	1,417	18.3%	8,116	95.6%
Limited English Proficient	190	30.6%	430	69.4%	670	92.5%
Low Income	2,239	63.9%	1,265	36.1%	3,712	94.4%
Not Low Income	4,419	85.1%	776	14.9%	5,417	95.9%
Migrant	430	70.6%	179	29.4%	646	94.3%

¹ Percent Proficient and Percent Not Proficient rates only include students that participated in the exams.

² Enrollment count for Disabled with Accommodations is not collected at this time therefore Participation Rate cannot be calculated.

Note: 2006 is the first year both a 10th grade SBA and 10th grade HSGQE test was administered. 10th graders' results represent both populations using only the HSGQE questions.

The Participation Rate may not include all of these students as some may be 2nd year 10th graders.

STATEWIDE SPRING 2013 HSGQE
Total Numbers and Percentages of Students
Scoring Above and Below Proficiency
HSGQE STUDENT RETESTS

		Grade 11			
Subject	Test Year	Proficient		Not Proficient	
		Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹
READING	Spring 2009	600	63.6%	344	36.4%
READING	Spring 2010	320	48.1%	345	51.9%
READING	Spring 2011	468	56.7%	358	43.3%
READING	Spring 2012	481	48.4%	512	51.6%
READING	Spring 2013	455	56.2%	355	43.8%
WRITING	Spring 2009	701	49.3%	720	50.7%
WRITING	Spring 2010	444	40.9%	641	59.1%
WRITING	Spring 2011	653	51.5%	614	48.5%
WRITING	Spring 2012	547	42.5%	741	57.5%
WRITING	Spring 2013	620	49.1%	644	50.9%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2009	676	45.1%	824	54.9%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2010	338	31.9%	720	68.1%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2011	512	37.6%	849	62.4%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2012	504	39.2%	782	60.8%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2013	438	34.5%	833	65.5%

¹ Percent Proficient and Percent Not Proficient rates only include students that participated in the exams.

STATEWIDE SPRING 2013 HSGQE GRADE 11

Statewide Results by Ethnicity, Gender and Groups

READING	Proficient		Not Proficient	
	Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹
African American	32	62.7%	19	37.3%
Alaska Native/American Indian	144	45.0%	176	55.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	47	43.9%	60	56.1%
Caucasian	169	79.0%	45	21.0%
Hispanic	32	48.5%	34	51.5%
Two or More Races	31	59.6%	21	40.4%
Female	186	56.2%	145	43.8%
Male	269	56.2%	210	43.8%
Disabled	118	44.0%	150	56.0%
Disabled with Accommodations	42	38.9%	66	61.1%
Non Disabled	337	62.2%	205	37.8%
Limited English Proficient	78	29.0%	191	71.0%
Low Income	251	49.2%	259	50.8%
Not Low Income	204	68.0%	96	32.0%
Migrant	44	50.6%	43	49.4%
WRITING	Proficient		Not Proficient	
	Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹
African American	35	48.6%	37	51.4%
Alaska Native/American Indian	183	37.8%	301	62.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	53	42.1%	73	57.9%
Caucasian	253	63.6%	145	36.4%
Hispanic	52	51.0%	50	49.0%
Two or More Races	44	53.7%	38	46.3%
Female	227	53.0%	201	47.0%
Male	393	47.0%	443	53.0%
Disabled	156	37.2%	263	62.8%
Disabled with Accommodations	56	36.4%	98	63.6%
Non Disabled	464	54.9%	381	45.1%
Limited English Proficient	83	25.6%	241	74.4%
Low Income	301	41.0%	434	59.0%
Not Low Income	319	60.3%	210	39.7%
Migrant	54	40.0%	81	60.0%
MATHEMATICS	Proficient		Not Proficient	
	Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹
African American	30	31.9%	64	68.1%
Alaska Native/American Indian	126	27.5%	332	72.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	35	28.5%	88	71.5%
Caucasian	191	47.4%	212	52.6%
Hispanic	29	26.1%	82	73.9%
Two or More Races	27	32.9%	55	67.1%
Female	199	31.8%	427	68.2%
Male	239	37.1%	406	62.9%
Disabled	92	22.9%	310	77.1%
Disabled with Accommodations	28	17.3%	134	82.7%
Non Disabled	346	39.8%	523	60.2%
Limited English Proficient	52	16.1%	270	83.9%
Low Income	214	29.1%	521	70.9%
Not Low Income	224	41.8%	312	58.2%
Migrant	33	30.0%	77	70.0%

¹ Percent Proficient and Percent Not Proficient rates only include students that participated in the exams.

STATEWIDE SPRING 2013 HSGQE
Total Numbers and Percentages of Students
Scoring Above and Below Proficiency
HSGQE STUDENT RETESTS

		Grade 12			
Subject	Test Year	Proficient		Not Proficient	
		Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹
READING	Spring 2009	164	57.5%	121	42.5%
READING	Spring 2010	121	46.0%	142	54.0%
READING	Spring 2011	148	47.6%	163	52.4%
READING	Spring 2012	172	42.5%	233	57.5%
READING	Spring 2013	189	51.9%	175	48.1%
WRITING	Spring 2009 ²	288	68.4%	133	31.6%
WRITING	Spring 2010	186	42.1%	256	57.9%
WRITING	Spring 2011	228	46.0%	268	54.0%
WRITING	Spring 2012	193	37.1%	327	62.9%
WRITING	Spring 2013	292	49.6%	297	50.4%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2009	205	39.0%	320	61.0%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2010	140	29.2%	340	70.8%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2011	189	31.8%	405	68.2%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2012	219	34.7%	412	65.3%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2013	221	36.4%	386	63.6%

¹ Percent Proficient and Percent Not Proficient rates only include students that participated in the exams.

² Students who were attending ninth grade or higher in Alaska during the 2005-2006 school year were declared to have tested proficient if the test score achieved during the spring administration of the 12th grade year would have met the pre-2007 proficiency score [per 4 AAC 06.755(j)(2)(C)].

STATEWIDE SPRING 2013 HSGQE

GRADE 12

Statewide Results by Ethnicity, Gender and Groups

READING	Proficient		Not Proficient	
	Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹
African American	10	47.6%	11	52.4%
Alaska Native/American Indian	59	39.6%	90	60.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	28	43.8%	36	56.3%
Caucasian	64	76.2%	20	23.8%
Hispanic	19	54.3%	16	45.7%
Two or More Races	9	81.8%	2	18.2%
Female	85	55.6%	68	44.4%
Male	104	49.3%	107	50.7%
Disabled	54	45.4%	65	54.6%
Disabled with Accommodations	26	44.8%	32	55.2%
Non Disabled	135	55.1%	110	44.9%
Limited English Proficient	62	36.3%	109	63.7%
Low Income	102	45.5%	122	54.5%
Not Low Income	87	62.1%	53	37.9%
Migrant	16	51.6%	15	48.4%
WRITING	Proficient		Not Proficient	
	Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹
African American	16	51.6%	15	48.4%
Alaska Native/American Indian	100	39.8%	151	60.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	39	51.3%	37	48.7%
Caucasian	100	61.3%	63	38.7%
Hispanic	23	50.0%	23	50.0%
Two or More Races	14	63.6%	8	36.4%
Female	82	44.8%	101	55.2%
Male	210	51.7%	196	48.3%
Disabled	78	37.3%	131	62.7%
Disabled with Accommodations	43	39.8%	65	60.2%
Non Disabled	214	56.3%	166	43.7%
Limited English Proficient	88	39.6%	134	60.4%
Low Income	158	42.6%	213	57.4%
Not Low Income	134	61.5%	84	38.5%
Migrant	25	48.1%	27	51.9%
MATHEMATICS	Proficient		Not Proficient	
	Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹
African American	12	24.5%	37	75.5%
Alaska Native/American Indian	53	24.7%	162	75.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	32	41.0%	46	59.0%
Caucasian	91	51.1%	87	48.9%
Hispanic	23	39.7%	35	60.3%
Two or More Races	10	34.5%	19	65.5%
Female	90	31.9%	192	68.1%
Male	131	40.3%	194	59.7%
Disabled	50	25.1%	149	74.9%
Disabled with Accommodations	30	27.3%	80	72.7%
Non Disabled	171	41.9%	237	58.1%
Limited English Proficient	51	24.4%	158	75.6%
Low Income	106	30.5%	242	69.5%
Not Low Income	115	44.4%	144	55.6%
Migrant	14	29.2%	34	70.8%

¹ Percent Proficient and Percent Not Proficient rates only include students that participated in the exams.

STATEWIDE SPRING 2013 HSGQE
Total Numbers and Percentages of Students
Scoring Above and Below Proficiency
HSGQE STUDENT RETESTS

> Grade 12					
Subject	Test Year	Proficient		Not Proficient	
		Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹
READING	Spring 2009	14	37.8%	23	62.2%
READING	Spring 2010	3	13.0%	20	87.0%
READING	Spring 2011	11	42.3%	15	57.7%
READING	Spring 2012	11	35.5%	20	64.5%
READING	Spring 2013	11	22.9%	37	77.1%
WRITING	Spring 2009	6	25.0%	18	75.0%
WRITING	Spring 2010	5	20.0%	20	80.0%
WRITING	Spring 2011	15	37.5%	25	62.5%
WRITING	Spring 2012	11	26.2%	31	73.8%
WRITING	Spring 2013	21	30.9%	47	69.1%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2009	10	17.5%	47	82.5%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2010	10	16.9%	49	83.1%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2011	17	27.4%	45	72.6%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2012	17	19.1%	72	80.9%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2013	20	19.2%	84	80.8%

¹ Percent Proficient and Percent Not Proficient rates only include students that participated in the exams.

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Alaska high school exit exam faces legislative test as repeal chorus grows

Dermot Cole [1]

December 7, 2013

Alaska's high school exit exam may be ready for its final exit. The three-part test, which has been a required for a public high school diploma in Alaska for a decade, has lost support among many legislators and public school officials who say that the test no longer measures up, if it ever did.

The Association of Alaska School Boards voted in November to ask that the Legislature end the test requirement, arguing that the exam won't meet the new state assessments for grades three to 11 set to begin in 2015.

The exam, which originated with a state law enacted before the federal No Child Left Behind Law prompted a series of other tests, is given twice a year in high schools over a period of three days.

"It is one of a number of assessments at the high school level that can be ended, realizing a cost savings that can be put towards the new assessment system," the Association of Alaska School Boards said in a resolution approved last month.

"Importantly, this gains six additional school days in the high school year that can focus on instruction. It frees up personnel time in administering another assessment."

School board members from across the state have come to believe the idea of giving an "exit exam" to sophomores gives them the wrong idea about high school.

"Many students have been misled, believing they have accomplished all high school has to offer once they pass at the tenth grade, which causes them to lose interest in the remaining coursework," the board members said.

'If it's not doing its job, then let's get rid of it'

It appears the school boards will find ready allies for that point of view in the Legislature.

At a meeting Monday of a Senate subcommittee in Fairbanks, four senators said they favored getting rid of the test, while a fifth said that the question of its survival should be debated during the 2014 session.

"I guess I agree with the districts that have come before us. If it's not doing its job, then let's get rid of it," said Eagle River Sen. Anna Fairclough. "We're testing all over the place."

She said the Legislature should direct the state education department to “choose one assessment tool and have the districts align under it.”

“I just was told that WorkKeys is so outdated that it shouldn’t be used for any kind of performance,” she said, referring to another test used by the state.

Test of 'minimum skills'

The Legislature approved the law requiring an exit exam in 1997, but later delayed implementation of the rule linking it to diplomas until 2004. Legislators said there were too many high school graduates without basic skills and that the exam would show whether students were prepared for college or the workforce.

“There is a fundamental problem with education in Alaska when our students are able to graduate from high school and receive a diploma without learning the skills necessary to compete in a university setting or in the job market,” former legislator Con Bunde, who led the pro-test crowd in the Legislature, put it in 2000.

But despite pronouncements that the test would prove the value of an Alaska diploma, the Alaska test never became a means of determining readiness for college, the military or anything else. It has been described as a test of “minimum skills,” a term that remains deliberately vague.

While some school officials have said over the years that the test reflects skills that students should master by the eighth grade, others say the Alaska test is designed to include content taught through the end of 10th grade. No one argues that the test contains material taught through the 12th grade.

Adding to the confusion is that the 10th grade exam is actually two tests in one. Federal school standards require a different test, which is incorporated into the high school exam but graded separately. It is possible to fail one test but not the other. The federal part of the test is not required for graduation.

A 2012 report by the Center on Education Policy said the overall success of exit exams in the more than two dozen states that require them remains questionable and that the goals and standards vary widely from state to state.

Dumbed down?

Alaska requires students to take its test as sophomores. If they don’t pass all three parts, students have to retake the parts they fail at least once a year as juniors and seniors.

About three-quarters of sophomores pass the reading, writing and math portions on the first go-around, while those who don’t try again as juniors or seniors. Students who don’t pass the three parts by the end of 12th grade, but complete all other requirements for graduation, receive a Certificate of Achievement. They are able to go back in later years and take the test again if they wish.

In 2012, 7,989 graduates earned diplomas in Alaska, while 366 students collected Certificates of Achievement.

Sen. Berta Gardner said the original idea of the Alaska exam was to have students demonstrate that they had reached a basic level, “but then it was dumbed down.”

The state made the math test easier in 2002 after only about one-third of tenth-graders passed an early version. In 2007, the state made the writing test more difficult and the reading test easier.

Wasilla Sen. Mike Dunleavy said there is “very little correlation” between the standards measured on the test and the introductory math class at the University of Alaska. He said the assessment doesn’t match new standards about what high school students have to learn.

“You’re probably going to see the Department of Education require that the high school qualifying exam go” because it doesn’t match new standards, he said. “Right now the high school qualifying exam is going extinct one way or another.”

Final test coming for exit exam?

A spokesman for Education Commissioner Mike Hanley said the state board has taken a position on ending the test but expects it will be reviewed in 2014.

Fairbanks Sen. Pete Kelly, who was in the state House at the time the test requirement was enacted, said he decided shortly after voting for it that the whole thing was a mistake.

“The test is a bit of piling on because a diploma used to mean you hit all those things that you were trying to measure in an exit exam. That’s what it meant,” he said.

He said a student in Alaska who completes all other graduation requirements, but fails the exit exam, is at a disadvantage competing for a job against a student with the same talents who happens to graduate in a state with no exit exam. The student from Outside would have a diploma, while the student from Alaska who failed the exam would have a certificate.

Kodiak Sen. Gary Stevens said that while legislators have heard from some students that they “give up” once they pass the test and coast through the final two years of high school, he’d like to see legislative hearings on whether the state should abandon the requirement. That may be the final test for the exit exam.

Dermot Cole can be reached at [dermot\(at\)alaskadispatch.com](mailto:dermot(at)alaskadispatch.com) [3]. Follow him on Twitter at [@DermotMCole](https://twitter.com/DermotMCole) [4].

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Moore v. Alaska, decision ..

RE: HSGQE – Exit Exam

p. 33 # 81. “This reform was a reaction by the legislature to frustration that children were receiving high school diplomas but were lacking in basic skills.”

p.34 #83. “State acknowledges that ‘children have a property interest in their prospective diploma, and cannot be deprived of that property interest by a test that is unfair to them because they have not had notice of the content of the test.’”

p. 36 #92 ‘Bering Strait’s graduation rate has fallen significantly since 2002-2003, when it was 59.4%. This may be due to the introduction of the exit exam requirement since that date, but also may be due in part to the “Quality Schools” program in place there that allows students additional time to complete their studies past 12th grade.’”

p. 38 #95 “While the dropout rate may be some indication as to whether an educational program is meeting a student’s need, the evidence showed that not all students drop out because of low academic achievement. Family and work commitments, among other reasons, may also be factors.”

p.38 #96 “Some students drop out because they are unable to pass the exit exam.

p.56 #164 Mr. Morgan was concerned about the exit exam and the impact may have on students dropping out: “There’s so much focus to pass [the exit exam] and I think there’s more to life than just passing the exist exam.”

p. 56 #165 Mr. Morgan ... had classes in photography, foreign languages and pottery, which have not been available to his children. He also believes there were more teachers. And he remembered that everyone graduated then. Now, he is ‘saddened by the kid who [does not] get the diploma but still walks.

p. 72. #226 “Dr. Davis (BSSD) testified that small schools in Alaska should not be expected to offer all of the course available in large schools. Instead, his position is that “we should offer an adequate education.”

p. 72. #229 Dr. Davis defines an adequate education as an “education that gives young people the tools to succeed in whatever live they choose.” He testified that BSSD students are receiving an adequate education due in part to supplemental activities and education from families. He does not think they meet state standards but they are successful based on their own standards and the improvements they have made.

p. 77. Note: Bering Strait School District has some of the highest paid teachers and highest funding per student (Kuspuk School District: received \$21,758 per student in 2005).

Comments - Moore v. State

Page 1 of 2

p. 79 #246 Dr. Laster testified that “we are in good faith really working to try to get those core competencies to students: reading, writing and math. But it’s really important to have an interdisciplinary approach; an approach that respect the community that kids come from, the culture that they come from, that engages them in a way that grabs them and engages them and has them working on stuff that that is rally meaningful to them.”

From: larry.talley@gmail.com [<mailto:larry.talley@gmail.com>] **On Behalf Of** larry talley

Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2014 3:46 PM

To: Sen. Gary Stevens

Cc: rlsanders@pci.net; Sen. Dennis Egan; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Beth Kerttula; andimike@ak.net; Keith Pahlke; Josephson, Ronald P; Hal Geiger; Bill Johnson; Mary Alice McKeen; Priscilla and Wilson Valentine; Jeffrey Kelly; Deb and Jeff Hartman; Joyce Talley

Subject: Testimony in favor of SB 111

Dear Senator Gary Stevens,

thanks for the opportunity to voice my support for SB 111.

My son Matthew Talley is recent graduate of Juneau Douglas High School.

I would specify his graduating year but that is a bit ambiguous, because while Matthew walked down the aisle with the class of 2011, he had not yet passed the exit exam, he was handed not a diploma but a certificate of completion, and he was thereby prevented from continuing his education at Landmark College where he had already been accepted for the fall 2011 semester.

Apologies for repeating myself, but, the HSGQE prevented my son from continuing his education at an accredited college where he had already been accepted! To add injury to insult, because my son was no longer a full-time student (due to the HSGQE), he was dropped from my health insurance and I had to pay out-of-pocket for oral surgery for his wisdom teeth, which cost me \$2,000!

Matthew worked with a private tutor throughout the summer of 2011 and took the HSGQE for the sixth time in the fall of 2011. We considered whether he could start at Landmark College in the spring of 2012, but didn't receive confirmation that he had passed his sixth try at the HSGQE until too late for the spring semester, so, Matthew started college at Landmark in the fall of 2012, a year later than our plans.

Matthew is thriving at Landmark College. He has been on the Deans List. He is learning and growing. It is very difficult to understand what public purpose was served by the HSGQE's holding him back for a year, and subjecting him to repeated humiliation and stress.

Of course as a parent it is that humiliation and stress that is much more important than the money and the time. Matthew failed the HSGQE five times. Because Matthew had an IEP he was given extra time, and once he stayed at school until 6PM working on the test. Five times the public education system told my son that he wasn't smart enough to earn a high school diploma. I am very appreciative of the teachers and counselors and others that encouraged Matthew to persevere, I am very appreciate of the parts of the educational system that did work for Matthew. But I am extremely upset about the HSGQE and how relentlessly it worked against everything that our educational system should be about.

Matthew is a charming young man and I am a proud parent. But, Matthew has multiple learning disabilities which make it very difficult for him to do well on standardized tests. Matthew is capable of learning, he has always made steady progress in school, and all of his teachers like him and appreciate his participation in class.

School is very difficult for students with learning disabilities. Matthew can and does learn, but, learning isn't easy, and it was extremely disheartening for Matthew that after four years of struggle he still didn't earn a high school diploma. Further, Matthew recognized that his best chance for an education was at Landmark College, an accredited college that specializes in educating students with learning disabilities. Matthew wanted to go to Landmark College more than you can imagine. It was very discouraging for him to learn that he couldn't start college in the fall of 2011, after he had been accepted, because of the HSGQE.

You can imagine how incredibly frustrated I have been when my son stays at school till 6pm doing something that is very hard for him to do, to fail through no fault of his own. I have to assume that the people who created the HSGQE, and those that oppose SB 111, must have some good reasons for their positions. But I find it hard to understand what public good can come from applying the cruel and unusual punishment of the HSGQE to innocent children.

I strongly encourage you to vote for SB 111. Please consider encouraging all your colleagues to pass this bill. Let's at least get rid of this unfortunate situation before it damages other families.

Thanks again for the opportunity to speak on this important issue.

Larry Talley

SB 111 Support Letter: SANDERS

From: Rachel Sanders [mailto:rlsanders@gci.net]

Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2014 7:45 PM

To: larry talley

Cc: Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Dennis Egan; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Beth Kerttula; andimike@ak.net; Keith Pahlke; Josephson, Ronald P; Hal Geiger; Bill Johnson; Mary Alice McKeen; Priscilla and Wilson Valentine; Jeffrey Kelly; Deb and Jeff Hartman; Joyce Talley; Bruce Christianson

Subject: Re: Testimony in favor of SB 111

Thank you for this outstanding letter Larry Talley!!!! You have eloquently articulated the faults of the damn HSGQE--and I don't curse! As a specialist with the schools since 1986, I have also witnessed the incredible stress that his test has added to our students with IEPs. It's as if the State is asking a blind person to take an eye sight exam or a person in a wheelchair to time themselves running a mile. It's incredibly unfair.

Rachel Sanders

SPRING HSGQE RESULTS

Total Numbers and Percentages of Students Scoring Above and Below Proficiency

		Grade 10					
Subject	Test Year	Proficient		Not Proficient		Enrollment	Participation Rate ²
		Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹		
READING	Spring 2004	6,564	70.1%	2,795	29.9%	10,187	91.9%
READING	Spring 2005	6,453	69.1%	2,883	30.9%	10,210	91.4%
READING	Spring 2006 ³	7,097	73.7%	2,529	26.3%	10,389	92.7%
READING	Spring 2007 ⁴	8,538	90.9%	857	9.1%	10,040	93.5%
READING	Spring 2008	8,019	85.2%	1,395	14.8%	9,990	94.2%
READING	Spring 2009	8,190	90.0%	907	10.0%	9,708	93.7%
READING	Spring 2010	7,518	84.2%	1,409	15.8%	9,504	93.9%
READING	Spring 2011	7,251	83.4%	1,444	16.6%	9,258	93.9%
READING	Spring 2012	7,340	84.2%	1,373	15.8%	9,094	95.8%
READING	Spring 2013	7,282	83.5%	1,437	16.5%	9,130	95.5%

WRITING	Spring 2004	8,026	86.2%	1,286	13.8%	10,187	91.4%
WRITING	Spring 2005	7,797	84.1%	1,470	15.9%	10,210	90.8%
WRITING	Spring 2006 ³	8,591	89.9%	967	10.1%	10,389	92.0%
WRITING	Spring 2007 ⁴	7,622	81.2%	1,766	18.8%	10,040	93.5%
WRITING	Spring 2008	7,191	76.3%	2,238	23.7%	9,990	94.4%
WRITING	Spring 2009	7,226	78.8%	1,949	21.2%	9,708	94.5%
WRITING	Spring 2010	6,646	74.3%	2,301	25.7%	9,504	94.1%
WRITING	Spring 2011	6,199	71.1%	2,521	28.9%	9,258	94.2%
WRITING	Spring 2012	6,494	74.4%	2,237	25.6%	9,094	96.0%
WRITING	Spring 2013	6,262	71.8%	2,456	28.2%	9,130	95.5%

MATHEMATICS	Spring 2004	6,292	66.7%	3,142	33.3%	10,187	92.6%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2005	6,732	71.9%	2,630	28.1%	10,210	91.7%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2006 ³	7,395	77.1%	2,201	22.9%	10,389	92.4%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2007 ⁴	7,563	80.6%	1,815	19.4%	10,040	93.4%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2008	7,160	76.3%	2,224	23.7%	9,990	93.9%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2009	7,334	80.2%	1,806	19.8%	9,708	94.1%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2010	6,902	77.2%	2,033	22.8%	9,504	94.0%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2011	6,655	76.9%	1,999	23.1%	9,258	93.5%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2012	6,749	77.5%	1,954	22.5%	9,094	95.7%
MATHEMATICS	Spring 2013	6,658	76.5%	2,041	23.5%	9,130	95.3%

¹ Percent Proficient and Percent Not Proficient rates only include students that participated in the exams.

² Participation rate is calculated by dividing the total count of students tested by the enrollment on the first day of testing.

³ Note: 2006 is the first year both a 10th grade SBA and 10th grade HSGQE test was administered. 10th graders' results represent both populations using only the HSGQE questions. The Participation Rate may not include all of these students as some may be 2nd year 10th graders.

⁴ Proficiency scores were adjusted.