
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: AB 830 **Hearing Date:** June 7, 2017
Author: Kalra
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Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Lynn Lorber

Subject: High school exit examination

SUMMARY

This bill permanently repeals the requirement that students pass the high school exit exam as a condition of graduation from high school.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) During the 2015-16 through 2017-18 school years, suspends the administration of the high school exit examination (exit exam) and the requirement that students pass this exam as a condition of graduation from high school, and requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to grant a diploma to any student who completed grade 12 in the 2003-04 or subsequent school year and met all applicable graduation requirements other than passage of the exit exam. (Education Code § 60851.5, 60851.6)
- 2) Required the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to develop, and the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt, an exit exam in English language arts and mathematics in accordance with the academic content standards adopted by the SBE. (EC § 60850)
- 3) Requires pupils to successfully pass the exit exam as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation, in addition to completing state and local graduation requirements. (EC § 60851, 51225.3 and 51224.5)
- 4) Specifies that the exit exam is not required as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation or a condition of graduation from high school for a student completing grade 12 in 2015 and who has met all other high school graduation requirements. (EC § 60851.1)
- 5) Establishes the Academic Content Standards Commission for the purpose of developing the California Common Core Standards (CCCS) in English language arts and mathematics, and required the SBE to reject or adopt those standards by August 2, 2010. (EC § 60605.8)
- 6) Revamps the State's assessment system by eliminating several assessments that were aligned to prior academic content standards, transitioning to assessments that are aligned to the common core standards in English language

arts and mathematics, and requiring existing assessments for English language development and primary language to be revised for alignment with the common core standards. (EC § 60640)

- 7) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), by March 1, 2016, to submit to the State Board of Education (SBE), the appropriate legislative policy and fiscal committee and the Director of Finance, recommendations on expanding the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress to include additional assessments. Existing law also requires the SPI to convene an advisory panel to provide recommendations to the SPI on the continuation of the high school exit exam (HSEE) and on alternative pathways to satisfy the high school graduation requirements. (EC § 60640(c))

ANALYSIS

This bill permanently repeals the requirement that students pass the HSEE as a condition of graduation from high school. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Deletes the requirement that the SPI develop, and SBE adopt, a HSEE in English language arts and mathematics.
- 2) Deletes the requirement that, beginning with the 2003-04 school year, each student completing grade 12 successfully pass the HSEE as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation or a condition of graduation from high school.
- 3) Deletes the requirement that each student take the HSEE in grade 10 and authority to take the HSEE during each subsequent administration, until each section of the HSEE has been passed.
- 4) Deletes the authority for an eligible student with a disability to receive a diploma of graduation without first passing the HSEE.
- 5) Deletes the requirement that a school principal, at the request of the parent or guardian, submit to the governing board of the school district a request for a waiver of the requirement to pass the HSEE for a student with a disability who has taken the HSEE with modifications.
- 6) Deletes the requirement that supplemental instruction be provided to any student who does not demonstrate sufficient progress toward passing the HSEE.
- 7) Requires the governing board or body of a local educational agency, and the California Department of Education on behalf of state special schools, to grant a diploma of graduation from high school to any student who completed grade 12 in the 2003-04 through 2014-15 school years and met all applicable graduation requirements other than the passage of the HSEE.
- 8) Deletes the requirement that charter schools administer the HSEE.
- 9) Deletes the requirement that the SPI recommend, and the SBE select, members of a panel to make recommendations regarding alternative means for eligible

students with disabilities to demonstrate that they have achieved the same level of academic achievement in the content standards required for passage of the high school exit exam (HSEE).

- 10) Deletes the requirement that the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) contract for the development and distribution of a workbook containing information on the proficiency levels that must be demonstrated on the HSEE and sample questions.
- 11) Deletes the requirement that the SPI contract for a multiyear independent evaluation of the HSEE.
- 12) Relative to the Academic Performance Index (see Comment # 10), deletes reference to student data from the HSEE and the incorporation of HSEE scores.
- 13) Relative to the dual enrollment of a high school student in a community college summer session, deletes reference to preparation for the HSEE related to an exemption from the 5 percent cap on enrollment of high school students in a community college summer session.
- 14) Deletes reference to continuously enrolled grade 12 students who have not passed the HSEE relative to adult average daily attendance for regional occupational centers and programs. This bill deletes the HSEE as an indicator to measure progress relative to the receipt of funds for regional occupational centers or programs.
- 15) Deletes the authority for comprehensive educational counseling to include counseling related to the HSEE. This bill also changes reference from the obsolete California Standards Test to the new California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress.
- 16) Deletes the requirement that the school accountability report card include an assessment of the percentage of students completing grade 12 who successfully complete the HSEE as compared to the percentage of students in the district and statewide completing grade 12 who successfully complete the HSEE.
- 17) Deletes the requirement that the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System include passage rates on the HSEE, have the ability to sort by demographic element collected from the HSEE and the capability to monitor student achievement on the HSEE, and the requirement that local educational agencies (LEAs) retain individual student records collected from the HSEE.
- 18) Deletes the requirement that each school district notify parents at the beginning of the school year of the requirement to successfully pass the HSEE as a condition of receiving a high school diploma.
- 19) Relative to the After School Education and Safety program, deletes HSEE scores as data that a LEA may submit to an operator of an after school program.

- 20) Relative to the 21st Century High School After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens program, deletes preparation for the high school exit exam (HSEE) as one of the academic assistance elements and for consideration by the California Department of Education in awarding grants.
- 21) Deletes the requirement that the University of California's Professional Development Institutes provide instruction that will enhance the ability of teachers to prepare students for the HSEE.
- 22) Delete reference the HSEE relative to the authority of the State Board of Education or Superintendent of Public Instruction to hold closed sessions on its review of assessment instruments.
- 23) Deletes reference to the HSEE relative to data provided to the State Chief Information Officer. This bill also changes reference from the obsolete Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program to the new California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress.
- 24) Deletes reference to youth at risk of not passing the HSEE relative to the authority of the Governor to set aside a portion of workforce training funding specifically for programs to improve the academic skills of low-achieving youth.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, "The CAHSEE retains education reforms initiated in 1999 and is based on content standards for English language arts and mathematics that were adopted by the State Board of Education in 1997. In the meantime, California has made a paradigm shift from an accountability-focused assessment system to a system that is focused on the preparation of students for postsecondary success in college and career through new and rigorous Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics, and increased student learning by implementing a new assessment system designed to improve teaching and learning. This paradigm shift allows for the observation of student performance over time and moves us away from using a single assessment event, like the CAHSEE, for high-stakes decisions. Moreover, California's new accountability and continuous improvement system under the Local Control Funding Formula significantly changed how California provides resources to public schools and holds local educational agencies accountable for improving student performance, including college and career readiness. After a decade of implementation, the HSEE is outdated and incompatible within the new standards, assessment, and accountability framework to prepare students to become college and career ready in the 21st Century."
- 2) ***Purpose of the high school exit exam.*** According to independent evaluations conducted by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO), California's high school exit exam served a valuable purpose by ensuring students demonstrate competency on standards, providing remediation opportunities prior to grade 12, and helping to overall narrow the achievement gap between subgroups. The findings of HumRRO's 2014 Biennial Report

include:

- a) Performance on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) continues to improve, but remains low for English learners and students with disabilities.
- b) CAHSEE passage rates for students with disabilities have been mixed, and the availability of an exemption or waiver to the requirement appears to influence passing rates.
- c) Graduation rates have continued to improve and dropout rates continue to decrease. Over time, more students persisted into grade 12 and beyond.
- d) A very strong relationship was discovered between CAHSEE achievement and college enrollment.
- e) Preliminary screening of the CAHSEE item bank indicated limited alignment to the Common Core Standards (CCSS) and, for mathematics, alignment of some items to CCSS at a lower grade level.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/documents/cahsee14biennlrpt.pdf#search=cahsee%20contract&view=FitH&pagemode=none>

This bill eliminates the requirement to pass the exit exam; the high school graduation requirements would therefore be the coursework required by the State and any locally-imposed requirements.

- 3) ***Alignment with curricular standards.*** The State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the California CCSS in English language arts and mathematics in August 2010. The California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) is aligned to English language arts and mathematics standards that were adopted by the SBE in 1997. The CAHSEE has not been updated for alignment with current academic content standards. AB 484 (Bonilla, Ch. 489, 2013) revamped the State's assessment system to, among other things, transition to assessments that are aligned to the common core standards, including subject-matter exams, the English language development test and the primary language assessment.

The 2014 Biennial Report provided by Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) states that the evaluators observed review meetings held by the exit exam contractor to evaluate the 16,000 items the contractor considered to be associated with the CCSS. According to HumRRO, approximately half of those items were judged not aligned when evaluated directly to common core standards, and an additional number of mathematics items were judged to align to CCSS at an earlier grade than the California content standard did. HumRRO reports that these results indicate that the exit exam item bank would need to be substantially revised (e.g., replacing or modifying a significant number of items) to align to the CCSS.

- 4) ***New assessment and accountability system.*** The SBE has developed and adopted a new school accountability framework that is designed to help schools

identify strengths and weaknesses using multiple measures, and implement a system of continuous improvement focused on improving student outcomes. The new accountability framework is designed to identify struggling learners across all grade levels, and includes a College and Career Indicator, while the high school exit exam (HSEE) served to identify students in grades 10-12 who did not demonstrate competency on standards.

The State Board of Education (SBE) also developed and adopted the California School Dashboard, which serves as a tool for school districts to assess performance across all state priorities using multiple indicators. The Dashboard measures performance across two dimensions: status, which is based on the most recent year for each indicator; and change, which is the difference between the most recent year data and the prior year data. It displays performance at the school district and school level for all students and student groups. School districts are to use the Dashboard to measure progress and inform their local control and accountability plans (LCAPs), which are to include a description of the annual goals for all students and each student group, and a description of the specific actions the school will take to achieve those goals.

As noted in Comment # 3, AB 484 (Bonilla, Ch. 489, 2013) revamped the State's assessment system to, among other things, transition to assessments that are aligned to the common core standards, including subject-matter exams, the English language development test and the primary language assessment.

The adoption of updated academic content standards, the Dashboard, LCAPs, and the new accountability framework, the HSEE has been rendered outdated and obsolete.

- 5) **Contract.** The contract for the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) expired on October 31, 2015. Pursuant to this contract, the last administration of the CAHSEE was in July 2015. The California Department of Education (CDE) maintains that the Department of General Services prohibited the CDE from extending the contract for the CAHSEE, and instead would have required the CDE to issue a Request for Proposal. This process can be time consuming and expensive; the cost to the state for the administration of the CAHSEE is about \$10 million annually (not including costs for the development of an exam that is aligned to current standards).
- 6) **Why suspend?** Existing law suspended the administration of the high school exit exam, and the requirement that students pass this exam as a condition of graduation from high school. Prior legislation did not eliminate the high school exit exam, require the exit exam to be updated or replaced, or provide for a replacement or alternative during the term of suspension because the decisions of whether the exit exam should be updated, replaced with other measurements, or eliminated was to be considered by a workgroup established by prior legislation (see Comment # 8).
- 7) **What has happened since the suspension?** Existing law requires local educational agencies to grant a diploma to any student who completed grade 12 in the 2003-04 or subsequent school year and met all applicable graduation

requirements other than passage of the exit exam. Various news sources have reported that an unknown number of people across the state have received their high school diploma during this period of suspension of the high school exit exam (HSEE); it is estimated that 30,000–40,000 people have not earned a diploma simply due to not passing the HSEE. Staff is unaware of any new reports of a corresponding increase in an unprepared workforce or postsecondary students.

This bill restates the existing requirement to grant a diploma of graduation from high school to any student who completed grade 12 in the 2003-04 through 2014-15 school years and met all applicable graduation requirements other than the passage of the HSEE. This bill also requires the California Department of Education to grant diplomas on behalf of state special schools. This language is necessary because the state special schools were not included in the existing requirement to issue diplomas, and because this bill repeals the chapter of the Education Code in which the requirement is placed.

- 8) ***Superintendent's recommendations.*** Existing law required the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to convene an advisory panel to provide recommendations to the SPI on the continuation of the HSEE and on alternative pathways to satisfy the high school graduation requirements. This report was released in September 2016, and recommends removal of the requirement to pass a HSEE as a condition of graduation. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/>
- 9) ***Fiscal impact.*** According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill has no fiscal impact. The CAHSEE was suspended in 2016 and this bill would ensure that the program is repealed permanently, resulting in Proposition 98/General Fund savings potentially in the range of \$10 million to \$12 million, due to the suspension of the test.
- 10) ***Related legislation.*** AB 1661 (Limón) repeals the requirement to develop an Academic Performance Index (API) and replaces it with a requirement to develop a multiple measures public school accountability system based on the state priorities addressed by the local control and accountability plans. AB 1660 is pending referral in the Senate.

SUPPORT

Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson (sponsor)
 Alameda County Office of Education
 American Civil Liberties Union
 Association of California School Administrators
 California Federation of Teachers
 California School Boards Association
 Los Angeles County Office of Education
 Los Angeles Unified School District
 Public Advocates
 Riverside County Superintendent of Schools
 San Francisco Unified School District
 School for Integrated Academics and Technologies (SIATech)
 Small School Districts Association

OPPOSITION

None received

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