

Research Memorandum No. 436

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND TESTING FOR GRADUATION

Legislative Research Commission
Frankfort, Kentucky
April 7, 1988



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Vic Hellard, Jr., Director
Legislative Research Commission

FROM: Bonnie Brinly *BB*

SUBJECT: Research Study Directed by
Senate Concurrent Resolution 98

DATE: April 7, 1988

During the 1986 session of the General Assembly, the Legislature adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution 98, calling for a study of high school graduation requirements and examining the feasibility of requiring students to pass a test prior to graduation.

This memorandum is submitted in fulfillment of those directives.

BB/chs

Enclosure

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND TESTING FOR GRADUATION

Introduction

The 1986 General Assembly adopted SCR 98, calling for a study of high school graduation requirements and an examination of the feasibility of requiring students to pass a test prior to graduation. This paper considers the high school graduation requirements in Kentucky and other states, reviews the testing programs in states requiring students to pass a test as a prerequisite for graduation, and reviews the literature on the legal and educational considerations associated with adopting a testing for graduation policy.

High School Graduation Requirements

In order to graduate, high school students are required by the Kentucky State Board of Education to obtain twenty credits, twelve required courses and eight electives. The specific course requirements are listed in Table 1.

The State Board of Education adopted the twenty-credit requirement in 1983, effective for students entering ninth grade in 1983-84. Previously, students were required to complete eighteen credits for graduation.

The State Board of Education has also established a Commonwealth Diploma to encourage high academic achievement and college attendance. Students desiring this credential must complete the twenty-two credit pre-college curriculum set by the Council on Higher Education, as well as advanced placement and international baccalaureate course work.

Table 1
KENTUCKY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS *

Required Credits	
Language Arts ¹	4
Social Studies ²	2
Mathematics ¹	3
Science ¹	2
Health	½
Physical Education	½
Total	12
Electives ³	8

Students are to complete two credits in English, two credits in science and two credits in mathematics at the ninth and tenth grade levels.

One social studies credit must be U.S. History.

One of the electives must be from the curriculum areas of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies or approved vocational courses.

Information from 704 KAR 3:305

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) has compiled information concerning high school graduation course requirements in the states current as of August, 1987. The chart in Appendix A shows a range of state-required credit hours from no statewide requirement in five states to a twenty-four credit requirement in Florida and Utah. The most common requirement is twenty credit hours, with thirteen states having this as a state board of education or legislative mandate. The core prescribed courses are generally in the areas of language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, physical education, and health. Other courses states have required for graduation are practical arts, vocational education, computer literacy, fine arts, free enterprise, home and personal management, and consumer education. A more detailed state summary of specific course requirements is featured on page 7 of the ECS chart in Appendix A.

Testing For Graduation

Other States

According to the ECS compilation, eighteen states presently require their high school seniors or a future senior class to pass a minimum competency test in order to graduate from high school. Ohio will implement this requirement in 1988, Mississippi in 1989, South Carolina in 1990, Arizona in 1991 and Oregon in 1992. Hawaii's students must pass a test or demonstrate mastery of essential competencies in order to obtain a diploma. Its students have the option of successfully completing a course for essential certification or proving mastery by a combination of testing and demonstration. California has required its school districts to adopt performance standards in reading, writing, and mathematics and to measure their accomplishment through a testing program. School districts are prohibited from awarding high school diplomas to students not meeting the locally determined performance standards.

A review of the programs in the twelve states which presently require students to pass a test in order to graduate shows that all twelve administer a state-developed, criterion-referenced test. All the states test for mathematics, ten states specifically test for reading, Texas tests for English, which includes reading, writing, and language arts, and Tennessee administers a language arts test. Eight states test writing skills. In addition, Hawaii includes assessment of oral communication and functional life skills in its testing program, while Maryland tests for citizenship. States have chosen various grades for the first administration of the test: four states first give the test in grade nine, three states first test in grade ten, and three begin testing in grade eleven. New York administers the mathematics test for the first time to ninth graders, while the eleventh grade is the first opportunity its students have for taking the reading and writing tests.

The pass rates are listed in Appendix B, with rates for subgroups included for some states. In terms of subgroups, females tend to have a higher pass rate than males, and whites tend to have a higher pass rate than minority groups.

Kentucky

Kentucky has two school districts, Covington Independent and Jefferson County School Districts, presently implementing a board-adopted policy requiring students to pass a competency test in order to graduate. The Covington board endorsed the policy as a future goal in 1979 and the graduating class of 1986 was the first group affected. The program was developed with the assistance of a broad-based community task force. The district-developed test is first administered in the fall of the eleventh grade. The basic skills portion of the test includes reading, writing, and mathematics, while the life skills portion covers consumer economics, community resources, government and law, mental and physical health, and occupational skills. The district makes remediation available and permits four opportunities to retake the test. Seventy-five percent of the students pass the test the first time it is administered and by the fifth time, 98% pass. Females tend to perform slightly better than males and no disparate effect for minorities has been observed.

The Superintendent reports no major objections to the test, notes that the test is well received by the community, and cites the program as an extra incentive for students to study.

In 1986, the Jefferson County Board of Education adopted pupil progression, promotion and grading procedures which include a testing component. If a student does not pass the Kentucky Essential Skills Test (KEST) at the end of grades 2, 4, or 7, the student is given the opportunity to attend summer school and retake the test. If the student again fails the test, he goes into the next grade and is given a third opportunity to pass the test, which must be taken by December. If the student fails the test the third time, he is retained in the grade in which he is currently enrolled. Students are likewise given three opportunities to pass the eleventh grade KEST in order to graduate: at the end of grade 11, in summer school, and in December of the twelfth grade.

Legal Considerations

The legality of requiring passage of a minimum competency test as a prerequisite for high school graduation has been challenged in the courts. The most widely publicized case is *Debra P. v. Turlington*, which questioned the constitutionality of requiring passage of the State Student Assessment Test, Part II, a functional literacy test as a prerequisite for obtaining a high school diploma in Florida.¹

The U.S. District court ruled that "the State of Florida may deny diplomas to the members of the Class of 1983 who have not passed the SSAT-II."² The defendants successfully argued that "the test was instructionally valid as students had an adequate opportunity to learn the skills tested, and . . . there was no causal link between [the] disproportionate failure rate of black students and [the] present effect of past school desegregation."³

Christiane H. Citron has reviewed the different court rulings on student testing and outlined the following guidelines for state and local districts planning to adopt student

competency testing as a prerequisite for graduation. Appropriate use of competency tests is constitutional, but students must have adequate notice of the new requirement. The courts have not set a specific time period, but the length of notice should be related to the magnitude of the decisions being made as a result of the test scores.

Another crucial factor that must be documented by those using competency testing as a requirement for high school graduation is that the tests reflect material actually taught. The courts have not gone so far as to place a burden on the state or district to prove that every teacher completed every lesson, but instructional validity must be addressed.⁴

Florida documented the instructional validity of its test for the courts by contracting with a consulting firm for a four-part study. First, teachers were asked whether they had taught each of the skills tested and, if so, whether that instruction would have enabled students to master the skill. Second, school districts completed six survey forms: SSAT-II Skills by Grade Summary, Major SSAT-II Instructional Program Variations, Description of SSAT-II Remedial Programs, Summary of SSAT-II Staff Development Activities, Instructional Materials Analysis for SSAT-II Skills, and additional SSAT-II District Activities. Third, site visit teams visited each of the districts to verify the accuracy of the reports. Fourth, the site visit teams administered a survey to a sample of eleventh grade students, asking whether they had been taught in school how to answer questions similar to those found on the SSAT-II Test.⁵ Other states implementing competency testing as a prerequisite for graduation have followed procedures similar to Florida's for assuring that students have been afforded the opportunity to learn the skills tested.

Another standard that must be met is that competency testing and specific test items not reflect racial bias. The state and district must also be able to show that there is no intent to discriminate through the testing program. One argument against testing for graduation is that the program has a disparate effect on blacks and other minorities. For example, the 1983 Florida testing results showed 57 percent of the failing students were black, even though only 20 percent of the total student population is black. Florida was forced by the court to delay implementing its testing for graduation requirement until the last class that had been subjected to segregation had graduated.⁶

Citron also reports that neither Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 nor Public Law 94-142 prohibits requiring that handicapped students pass a valid test in order to receive a regular diploma, if adequate notice has been provided.⁷ Hammes advises that, based on *Brookhart v. Illinois State Board of Education* (697 F 2d 179), handicapped students should be provided more time and free special education courses designed to ensure that students have an opportunity for learning the skills tested. States must address the needs of the handicapped by modifying the testing format and the testing environment to accommodate the physically impaired. For example, blind and visually impaired students should be given large print or Braille tests.⁸

Educational Considerations

Mitchell Lazarus has listed the following general goals for minimum competency testing:

1. To make the diploma meaningful by ensuring that people who carry it have at least the minimum ability to read, write, and compute—meaningful only in those states that have diploma sanctions, of course;
2. To help employers identify (through the diploma) job candidates who have these minimum skills;
3. To pressure students to acquire the minimum skills, and thus become more employable, better able to act as informed consumers, and better equipped for a satisfying life;
4. To pressure schools and teachers to provide more instruction in the basics, less in “frills”;
5. To identify students who need remediation in the basic skills;
6. To create a consistent data base for monitoring the progress of education on a statewide basis.

Some less charitable motives have also been ascribed to the states adopting minimum competency programs:

7. To respond to political pressure to “do something” about the schools—as quickly and inexpensively as possible;
8. To strengthen state influence over local education;
9. To support a management model that sees the educational system in factory terms, which requires a measurement of output;
10. To resegregate society by denying diplomas, and hence employment, to substantial numbers of minority youth while certifying the large majority of whites.⁹

W. James Popham cites measurement-driven instruction as one favorable outcome of competency testing. In effect, instruction improves in order to better prepare students for taking competency tests. Popham says, “If properly conceived and implemented, measurement-driven instruction currently constitutes the most cost-effective way of improving the quality of public education in the United States.”¹⁰ A properly conceived and implemented program incorporates the following elements: uses criterion-referenced tests because they describe clearly what is to be tested; tests defensible skills and knowledge because the purpose is to enhance instruction; tests a manageable number of general targets so that adequate instructional time is available; designs tests so that they provide instructional illumination; provides instructional support, such as study guides, so that tests serve as vehicles of instructional clarification.¹¹

Not all educators agree with Popham’s praise of measurement-driven instruction. Gerald Bracey, in a written debate with Popham published in the *Phi Delta Kappan*, calls measurement-driven instruction a catchy phrase but a dangerous practice.

With regard to the curriculum, MDI fragments it, narrows it, deflects it, trivializes it, and causes it to stagnate. With regard to instruction and

learning, MDI has similar effects; in addition, MDI exacerbates the problems of the teacher centered classroom, in which 70% of instructional time is taken up by teacher talk.¹²

Some have expressed the fear that the education system may produce students who are able to pass tests, but, in fact, are undereducated, since tests only sample the knowledge domain. Critics maintain that minimum competency testing promotes minimal skills to the level of new maximums.

George Madaus (1985) states that his concerns are rooted in history which provides many examples of the results of such a policy. The exam becomes the master and not the servant of the educational process; it invariably leads to cramming; it narrows the curriculum; it concentrates attention on the skills most amenable to testing, and today this means skills amenable to the multiple-choice format; it constrains the creativity and spontaneity of teachers and students; and finally, it demeans the professional judgment of teachers.¹³

Conclusion

The 1984 Legislature adopted the Kentucky Essential Skills Testing (KEST) program whereby students in grades kindergarten through twelve are tested on their mastery of identified skills for their grade in the areas of mathematics, reading, spelling, writing and library research reference. The criterion-referenced tests were developed by CTB/McGraw-Hill and yield estimated normative information. In 1986, the Legislature passed a sunset provision for KEST, effective at the end of the 1987-88 testing cycle, and established, by resolution, a seven-member special subcommittee to study the program. These actions were taken in response to questions concerning the tests and their results. The subcommittee has recommended that the KEST program continue as strictly a criterion-referenced test, that a norm-referenced test also be administered in grades 3, 5, 7, and 10, and that Kentucky take part in the Southern Regional Education Board/National Assessment of Educational Progress Testing program.

Adding a component to the KEST program requiring students to pass a competency test in order to graduate could be implemented if the guidelines discussed earlier are followed. As to the advisability of implementing such a program, respected educators have argued both sides of the issue. The General Assembly must determine whether to modify the KEST program at this time and determine whether the adoption of such a policy is in the best interest of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Debra P. v. Turlington*, 564 F. Supp. 177, (M.D. Fla. 1983).
2. *Debra P. v. Turlington*, at 189.
3. *Debra P. v. Turlington*, at 177 and 178.
4. Christiane H. Citron, *Legal Rules for Student Competency Testing*, Issuegram 36 (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1983), pp. 2 and 3.
5. *Debra P. v. Turlington*, at 180 and 181.
6. Christiane H. Citron, p. 4.
7. Christiane H. Citron, pp. 4 and 5.
8. Richard R. Hammes, *Legal Implications of Competency Testing*, ERIC Document 250 335, 1983, p. 12.
9. Mitchell Lazarus, *Goodbye to Excellence: A Critical Look at Minimum Competency Testing* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 6 and 7.
10. W. James Popham, "The Merits of Measurement-Driven Instruction," *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 1987, p. 697.
11. W. James Popham, pp. 680 and 681.
12. Gerald W. Bracey, "Measurement-Driven Instruction: Catchy Phrase, Dangerous Practice," *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 1987, p. 684.
13. George F. Madaus, "Public Policy and the Testing Profession—You've Never Had It So Good?" *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practices*, Winter 1985, p. 6.

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Some less charitable motives have also been ascribed to the states adopting minimum competency programs:

7. To respond to political pressure to “do something” about the schools—as quickly and inexpensively as possible;
8. To strengthen state influence over local education;
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10. To resegregate society by denying diplomas, and hence employment, to substantial numbers of minority youth while certifying the large majority of whites.⁹

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Minimum High School Graduation Course Requirements
Page Two

State	(Numbers Refer to Years of Instruction)							Total	Enacted by:	Date of Enactment	Effective for Grad. Class of:	Notes
	English/ Lang. Arts	Social Studies	Mathematics	Science	PE/Health	Electives	Other					
Georgia Standard	4	3	2	2	1	8	1 fine arts, voc. ed., computer tech. or ROTC	21	SBE	4/87	1988	Students who successfully complete 4 units in voc. ed. courses in addition to requirements receive a formal seal of endorsement by SBE. For advanced degree students, two of the science units must be labs. Passage of minimum competency test is a requirement for graduation.
Advanced	4	3	3	3	1	4	2 foreign lang. 1 fine arts, voc. ed., computer tech. or ROTC					
Hawaii	4	4	2	2	1.5	6	.5 guidance	20	SBE	1978	1983	Minimum competency test, which may be either applied performance or course, is required for graduation.
Idaho (4)	4	2	2	2	1.5	6	.5 reading, .5 speech, .5 consumer ed. 1 humanities 1 history/gov.	21	SBE	Spring 1984	1988	Practical arts may substitute for 1 unit of humanities. In addition, SBE requires either a C average, demonstrated competency in core curriculum on junior class competency test, or adherence to local district's achievement plan for graduation.
Illinois (5)	3	2	2	1	4.5	2.25	.25 consumer ed., 1 art, foreign lang. music or voc. ed.	16	Leg	5/83	1988	One year of mathematics may be computer technology. One year of social studies must be U.S. History or half U.S. History and half American Government.
Indiana	4	2	2	2	1.5	8		19.5	SBE	9/83	1989	State does not use standard Carnegie units.
Academic Honors	4	3	4	4	1	4 or 5	3 or 4 in foreign lang. (3 in one or 2 yr each in 2)	24	SBE	1987	1990	State requires all districts to offer the Academic Honors Program
Iowa (3)		1.5			1				Leg			Legislative requirements in effect for many years. Local districts determine remaining requirements.
Kansas	4	3	2	2	1	8	1, local bd. determines	21	SBE	1983	1989	
Kentucky	4	2	3	2	1	7	1 additional math, science, social studies or voc. ed.	20	SBE	1982	1987	
Commonwealth Diploma	5	2	---	6	---	1	1 foreign lang. in advanced placement (AP)	22	SDE	1985	1986	Additional language course, 1 of the electives, and one additional unit of either math or science must be advanced placement course. In addition to the above testing, students must complete an AP exam in at least 3 of the 4 required AP courses.
Louisiana	4	3	3	3	2	7.5	.5 computer literacy	23	SBE	4/84	1989	
Louisiana Scholar Program	4	3	3	3	2	7.5	.5 computer literacy	23	SBE	1986	1987	Must have ACT score of 29 or above, 3.5 GPA with no semester grade lower than a "B", no unexcused absences and no high school suspensions to receive a Scholar Program seal on diploma. State issues only 250 diplomas.
Regents' Scholar	4	3.5	3	3	2	4.5	3 foreign lang. 1 fine arts	24	Bd. of Reg.	1983	1983	Award not based on grades, other than passage, simply on student completion of recommended courses for college-bound students.
Maine	4	2	2	2	1.5	3.5	1 fine arts	16	Leg & Comm. of SBE	9/84	1989	American History is required. All students must pass computer proficiency standard.

State	(Numbers Refer to Years of Instruction)							Total	Enacted by:	Date of Enactment	Effective for Grad. Class of:	Notes
	English/ Lang. Arts	Social Studies	Mathematics	Science	PE/Health	Electives	Other					
Maryland	4	3	3	2	1 PE	5	1 fine arts, 1 practical arts (industrial arts/tech., home economics, vocational ed. or computer study)	20	SBE	1974	1989	4 credits must be earned after Gr. 11. Students can earn state-wide certificate of merit with fulfillment of additional requirements (1 added year of science and 1 foreign language). Special ed. certificate for those unable to meet requirements but who complete a special ed. program. Minimum competency test is required for graduation, as is a writing test and passage of a quiz on citizenship.
Massachusetts		1			4				Leg			Legislative requirements in effect for many years. American History required. Local boards determine additional requirements.
Michigan (SBE recommends-- Standard Diploma College Prep.)	(4) (4)	(3) (3)	(3) (3)	(2) (2)	(1) (1)		(2 for. lang./ fine or perf. art or voc.ed. .5 computer ed.) (At least 2 yr. foreign lang.)		Leg			Legislative requirements in effect for many years. Local boards determine additional requirements. The state board published graduation requirement guidelines, in Jan. 1984, which local districts are urged to incorporate.
Minnesota (3)	4	3	1	1	1	9.5		20	SBE	1982	1982	Requirements took effect immediately for all graduates.
Mississippi	4	2	2	2		8		18	SBE	1985	1989	At least one of the science units must include lab. Minimum competency test is required for graduation.
Missouri Standard	3	2	2	2	1	10	1 practical arts; 1 fine arts	22	SBE	3/84	1988	
College Prep. Studies Cert.	4	3	3	3	1	8	1 practical arts; 1 fine arts	24	SBE	3/84	See Notes	For college preparation, specific core subjects must be taken and 3 electives must be in advanced courses.
Montana	4	1.5 or 2	2	1	1	10.5 or 10		20	SBE	Spring 1984	1986	Core requirements in effect for several years. Social studies requirement has two alternatives.
Nebraska									Leg	4/84	1991	Local boards determine specific requirements. For graduation, state requires 200 credit hours (20 units), with at least 80% in core curriculum courses.
Nevada	4	2	2	2	2.5	8.5	1 arts/human. .5 computer literacy	22.5	SBE	11/86	1992	Computer literacy may be waived by demonstration of competence. Minimum competency test is required for graduation.
New Hampshire	4	2.5	2	2	1.25	4	.5 arts; .5 computer science; 3 from 2 off--arts, voc. ed., foreign lang., practical arts	19.75	SBE	7/84	1989	Use of minimum competency test as requirement for graduation is option of the local district.
New Jersey	4	2	3	2	4	4	1 fine, practical or performing arts; .5 career exploration; 1 world history and cultures	21.5	SBE	12/86	1992	10 credit hours and minimum competency test required for graduation. State does not use standard Carnegie units.

Minimum High School Graduation Course Requirements
Page Four

State	(Numbers Refer to Years of Instruction)							Total	Enacted by:	Date of Enactment	Effective for Grad. Class of:	Notes
	English/ Lang. Arts	Social Studies	Mathematics	Science	PE/Health	Electives	Other					
New Mexico (4)	4	3	3	2	1	9	1 communication skills	23	SBE	1986	1990	The SBE, in 6/84, began requirement that all students achieve computer literacy prior to high school graduation. Areas of writing and speaking are emphasized in communication skills. Students preparing for college have an advanced curriculum.
New York Local Diploma	4	4	2	2	.5	vary	1 art and/or music	18.5	Bd. of Reg.	11/84	1989	.5 is for health only; 2 non-credit units of physical ed. in addition to total. Minimum competency test is a graduation requirement for all students. By 1991 areas covered will include reading, writing, math, American history and government, science and global studies. Two diplomas are offered in New York. "local diploma" and "Regents' diploma" with distinction made in the choices available for the student in the 3-5 sequence in "Other" column. Additionally, Regents' diploma students must pass comprehensive exams in subject areas.
Regents' Diploma	4	4	2	2	.5	vary	3 to 5 in a sequence of specific courses must be chosen by student. See Note.					
North Carolina Standard	4	2	2	2	1	9		20	SBE	1/83	1987	Minimum competency test is required for graduation. One science class must include lab.
Scholars Program	4	4	3	3	2	1	1 voc. ed; 1 arts ed.	22	SBE	9/83	1984	Must have an overall "B" average. Students have option of concentrating their electives in one of seven areas. Minimum competency test is required for graduation.
North Dakota	4	3	2	2	1	5		17	St. Supt	8/83	1984	
Ohio	3	2	2	1	1	9		18	SBE	9/83	1988	Competency test for graduation is to be required by 1990.
Oklahoma Standard	4	2	2	2		10		20	SBE	1982	1987	
College Prep.	4	2	3	2			4 from choice (see Notes)	15	SBE and Reg. of Higher Ed.	1984	1988	Slight variations between 2- and 4-year and junior colleges. The choice in "other" includes: foreign language, computer science, economics, English, geography, government, math, history, sociology, science, speech and pschylogy. If election is foreign lang. 2 years must be in same language. Total hour requirement is less but the curriculum is more rigorous and restrictive.
Oregon	3	3.5	2	2	2	8	.5 career dev.; 1 applied arts, fine arts or foreign lang.	22	SBE	4/84	1988	Minimum competency test will be required for graduating class of 1992. "Honors Degree" diplomas will be available for students graduating in 1988 who have maintained at least a 3.5 GPA. Recipients will have an honors seal on diploma.
Pennsylvania	4	3	3	3	1	5	2 arts and humanities	21	SBE	12/83	1989	Local boards determine "elective" units. Computer science can be option instead of arts and humanities. State has prescribed learning objectives and curriculum guidelines for 12 goals of quality education.
Rhode Island Basic Diploma	4	1	1	1		9		16	Bd. of Reg. for	1/85	1989	
Career-bound	4	2	2	2		6		16				

Minimum High School Graduation Course Requirements
Page Five

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	English/ Lang. Arts	Social Studies	Mathematics	Science	PE/Health	Electives	Other						
Rhode Island (cont) College-bound	4	2	3	2		4	2 foreign lang. .5 arts, .5 computer lit.	18	EI./ Sec. Ed.	6/83	1988		
South Carolina(3)(6) Standard	4	3	3	2	1	7		20	SBE and Leg.	7/84	1987	Beginning with class of 1990, all students must pass exit exam of minimum competency. Standard diploma students may, if approved by SDE, count one unit of com- puter science for a math require- ment.	
Academic Achieve- ment Honors	4	3	3	2	1	7	2 foreign lang.	22	SBE		1986	Requires a "B" or higher in each semester course; SAT score of 650 verbal or 700 math or com- bined 1350 score or better on ACT.	
South Dakota	4	3	2	2		8	.5 computer studies, .5 fine arts	20	SBE		1989	Increased total requirements are being phased in: 19 in 1988, 20 in 1989.	
Tennessee Standard	4	1.5	2	2	1.5	9		20	SBE		1987	Minimum competency test is a requirement for graduation.	
Honors--General	4	3	3	3	1.5	2	2 in same for. lang.; 2 fine/ visual/perform- ing arts	20.5					
Honors--Voc.Ed.	4	3	3	3	1.5	2	4 in same voc. ed. program	20.5					
Texas (3) High School Grad. Requirements	4	2.5	3	2	2	7	.5 economics/ free enterprise	21	SBE	9/84	1988	1.5 units of physical ed. and .5 health ed. for both programs. Advanced high school honors pro- gram requires 5 units of the 22 be in honors classes. State only issues one diploma. Minimum com- petency test is graduation requirement.	
Advanced High School Program/ Advanced High School Honors Program	4	2.5	3	3	1.5	2	.5 economics/ free enterprise 2 foreign lang. 1 computer sci. 1 fine arts	22					
Utah	3	3	2	2	2	9.5	1.5 arts, 1 voc. education	24	SBE	11/86	1988	.5 of electives is to be devoted to computer science if computer literacy isn't gained in related coursework. SBE makes specific course recommendations for use of electives for students plan- ning college entry or tech./voc. fields.	
Vermont (1)	4	3	-----5-----		1.5		1 arts	14.5	SBE and Leg	1986	1989		
Virginia (3) Standard	4	3	2	2	2	6	1 additional math or science; 1 fine or practical arts	21	SBE	6/87	1989	Competency test is required for all students. For regular diploma the additional math or science may be fulfilled by an appropri- ate voc. ed. course or ROTC. "B" or better average earns a SBE Seal on the diploma. Advanced studies students must have lab in each science class; the math sequence must include earth sci., biology, chemistry and physics. A "B" or better average and com- pletion of at least one advanced placement course or one college level course for credit earns a Governor's Seal on the diploma.	
Advanced Studies	4	3	3	3	2	4	3 foreign lang. 1 fine or practical arts	23					
Washington	3	2.5	2	2	2	5.5	1 occupational ed.; 1 fine/ visual or per- forming arts	19	SBE	1985	1991		
West Virginia	4	3	2	2	2	7	1 applied arts fine or per- forming arts or second lang.	21	SBE	1985	1989	State has approved, and policies reflect, an advanced studies certificate, Certificate of Academic Excellence, which has not yet been implemented.	

Minimum High School Graduation Course Requirements
Page Six

State	(Numbers Refer to Years of Instruction)								Enacted by:	Date of Enactment	Effective for Grad. Class of:	Notes
	English/Lang. Arts	Social Studies	Mathematics	Science	PE/Health	Electives	Other	Total				
Wisconsin	4	3	2	2	2			13	Leg	Spring 1984	1989	Electives are the option of the local districts but the state recommends that districts require a total of 22 units with the additional ones emphasizing voc. ed., foreign language and fine arts. Local districts may require a competency test for graduation. State also requires that all Gr. 7-12 students be participating in a class or in a board approved activity each period of the day.
Wyoming (Accreditation Requirements)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(2)				18				Requirements in effect a number of years. Local boards determine remaining requirements to reach the minimum of 18 total units. In parenthesis are the required offerings by the state for school accreditation.

NOTES:

*SBE = State Board of Education Leg = Legislature SDE = State Department of Education AP = Advanced Placement

**A more detailed analysis of state minimum competency testing requirements is available from the Education Commission of the States' Clearinghouse.

- (1) Arkansas and Vermont have both combined the math and science requirements in an effort to allow more flexibility for both vocational education students and for smaller or more rural districts.
- (2) Florida students in vocational programs may substitute certain sequences of vocational courses to satisfy up to two of the required credits in each of the areas of English, math and science.
- (3) Florida, Iowa, Minnesota, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia allow students in the junior and senior classes to receive dual credits for college courses.
- (4) Idaho and New Mexico have available state level minimum competency tests which the districts have the option to use. If students pass the test, a special proficiency endorsement is included in their high school diploma.
- (5) Illinois school boards may excuse pupils in 11th and 12th grades from physical education for: (a) participation in interscholastic athletics; or (b) enrollment in an academic class required for admission to college or to meet graduation requirements. Pupils in Grades 9-12 may elect to take a State Board of Education-developed consumer education proficiency test. If passed, pupils will be excused from this requirement.
- (6) South Carolina students who earn one unit in science and six or more in a specific occupational service area will fulfill the science requirements for a standard diploma. Certain vocational programs may count prevocational education as one of the six required units.

SUMMARY OF MINIMUM HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOR A STANDARD DIPLOMA IN THE 50 STATES AND D.C.
AS OF SEPTEMBER 1987

Total Required Units

No. of States	Require	No. of States	Require	No. of States	Require	No. of States	Require
2	24.0	8	21.0	2	19.0	1	14.5
2	23.0	1	20.5	1	18.5	2	13.0
1	22.5	13	20.0	3	18.0	5	Have No Mandate
3	22.0	1	19.75	1	17.0		
1	21.5	1	19.5	3	16.0		
							Average Required 19.7

Curricular Requirements - Core Courses

	No. of States	Require		No. of States	Require
English/Language Arts	39	4.0	Social Studies	1	4.0
	7	3.0		2	3.5
	5	Have No Mandate		24	3.0
	2	recommend 4.0		3	2.5
Mathematics	11	3.0	14	2.0	
	2	2.0 or 3.0	1	2.0 or 1.5	
	31	2.0	2	1.5	
	2	1.0	1	1.0	
	5	Have No Mandate	1	0.5	
	1	recommends 2.0	2	Have No Mandate or recommendation	
Science	1	recommends 3.0	Physical Education/Health	1	4.5
	3	3.0		1	4.0
	2	2.0 or 3.0		1	2.5
	36	2.0		9	2.0
	5	1.0		9	1.5
	5	Have No Mandate		1	1.25
2	recommend 2.0	18		1.0	
		9		Have No Mandate	
		1		.5 Health only	
		1		1.0 PF only	

Curricular Requirements - Other/Enrichment Courses

	No. of States	Require		No. of States	Require
Foreign Language	1 (4)*	1.0	Career Exploration/Guidance	3	0.5
Computer Science**	4	0.5	Home Economics Areas	2	0.5
	(1)	(2.0)	Consumer Education	1	0.5
	(2)	(1.0)		1	0.25
Fine/Performing Arts	1	1.5	Reading	1	0.5
	7 (8)	1.0	Speech	(1)	(1.0)
	3	0.5		1 (1)	0.5
Practical Arts/Voc. Ed.	(1)	(2.0)	ROTC	(2)	(1.0)
	5 (9)	1.0			
	1	0.5			
U.S. History	2	1.0			
World History/Cultures	1	1.0			

Curricular Requirements - Miscellaneous Student Options

One state shows a math unit may be fulfilled by computer science.
One state allows a unit for an added mathematics, science or social studies class, or for vocational education.
One state has a unit to be applied to additional work in math or science or for ROTC.
One state allows a unit to be devoted to ROTC, fine arts, vocational education or computer studies.
One state allows 3 units to be from 2 choices in foreign language, fine or practical arts options.

In addition to the standard diploma, 16 states have established advanced coursework and diplomas for those students preparing for college and enhancements to those concentrating on a particular vocation. One additional state has this in the works.

*Figures set off in parentheses indicate states/units in cases of the curricular discipline being listed as a clear choice for students.

**Four states indicate that a student must obtain computer literacy prior to high school graduation.

Compiled by: ECS Clearinghouse

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APPENDIX B

STATES REQUIRING COMPETENCY TESTING
AS A PREREQUISITE
FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

State	Grad. Class	Test Name	State Dev.	Subjects Tested	Grade Level First Given	Pass Rate	Pass Rate for Sub Groups
Alabama	1985	Ala. HS Grad. Examination	X	Reading, Math, & Lang. Arts	11	98.1% by fourth opportunity	
Florida	1983	State Stud. Assessment Test II	X	Reading, Writing & Math	10	Read. & Writing-86% Math-81%	Black 72% (Read./Writ.) White 91.1% (Read./Writ.) Hispanic 78% (Read./Writ.) 62% (Math) 87% (Math) 72%
Georgia	1985 (Read. & Math) 1990 (Add Writ.)	Ga. Basic Skills Test	X	Reading, Math & Writing	10	Reading-90% Math-80%	
Hawaii	1983	Hawaii State Test of Essen. Competencies	X	Reading, Writing, Math, Oral Comm. & Function & Life Skills	9	70-80% 9th Graders 99% by Sr. yr.	
Maryland	1984 (Read. & Math) 1989 (Add Writ.)	Maryland Functional Reading Test; Maryland Funct. Math Test; Maryland Test. of Land Test. of Citizenship Skills; Maryland Writing Test	X	Math, Reading, Writing, Citizenship	9	Reading-92% Math-66% Writing-67% Citizen.-73%	

STATES REQUIRING COMPETENCY TESTING
AS A PREREQUISITE
FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

State	Grad. Class	Test Name	State Dev.	Subjects Tested	Grade Level First Given	Pass Rate	Pass Rate for Sub Groups
Nevada	1982	Nevada High School Prof. Exam	X	Math, Writing & Read.	11	Math-90% Writing-95%-97% Reading-95%	
New Jersey	1988	High School Proficiency Test	X	Math, Reading, and Writing	9	Reading-91% Math-77% Writing-85.9%	
New York	1979	Regents Competency Test	X	Math, Reading & Writing	9 - Math 11 - Reading & Writing		
North Carolina	1980	N. Carolina Competency Test	X	Reading, Math, & Writing	10	Reading-94% Math-91% Writing-91%	Reading: Male - 92.7 Female - 96 Black - 88.3 White 97 Writing Objective: Male - 84.4 Female - 92.9 Black - 78.1 White - 93.3 Writing Essay: Male - 88.7 Female - 93.3 Black - 84.7 White - 93.7 Math: Male - 89 Female - 92.1 Black - 82.2 White - 94.1
Tennessee	1983	Tenn. Prof. Test	X	Math & Lang. Arts	9		

**STATES REQUIRING COMPETENCY TESTING
AS A PREREQUISITE
FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION**

State	Grad. Class	Test Name	State Dev.	Subjects Tested	Grade Level First Given	Pass Rate	Pass Rate for Sub Groups
Texas	1987	Texas Ed. Assessment of Minimum Skills	X	Math and English (Reading, Writing, Language Arts)	11	Math-92% Language Arts-94% Both-88%	October Adm. - Math Black - 72% Hispanic - 82% White - 94% Male - 88% Female - 88% Language Arts Black - 81% Hispanic - 84% White - 96% Male - 89% Female - 93%
Virginia	1981	Virginia Minimum Competency Test	X	Reading & Math	10	Passed Both-96.6% Reading-97.8% Math-97.8%	Passed Both Male - 95.7% Female - 97.5% Black - 93.4% White - 97.7% Other - 93.0%





