

# Redefining Washington State High School Graduation Requirements

## Current Washington Graduation Requirements

To qualify for graduation from a public high school in Washington, students must satisfy minimum course credit requirements, earn a certificate of academic achievement (CAA) by meeting standard on required assessments or a certificate of individual achievement (CIA), complete a high school and beyond plan (HSBP), and satisfy any graduation requirements adopted by the local school district.

Minimum course credit requirements for students in the graduating class of 2018 obligate students to complete 20 credits in specified subject areas. Unless an extension waiver has been granted by the State Board of Education (SBE) to a requesting district, students in the graduating class of 2019 and subsequent classes will be required to complete 24 credits in specified subject areas.

Regarding assessments, beginning with the graduating class of 2019, graduation requirements obligate students to meet the state standard on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment in the English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Beginning with the class of 2021, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) assessment will also be required for graduation.

The legislature has established numerous objective alternative assessment option for earning a CAA for students who have taken an assessment required for graduation at least once. These include:

- Grade comparison;
- High enough scores on SAT or ACT;
- High enough scores on Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate exams;
- Beginning 2018-19, high enough score on an assessment approved by OSPI for a locally determined course;
- Establishing an expedited appeal process authorizing OSPI to waive requirements for CAAs and CIAs for qualifying students who have not met standard on ELA assessments, mathematics assessments, or both; and
- New options for demonstrating student achievement of state standards, including completing dual credit courses and locally determined courses with qualifying assessment.

While these requirements are intended to ensure our graduates are prepared for life, the testing requirements are more closely connected with 4-year college admission standards. Linking the passage of an exam to graduation in essence acts as an exit barrier for students, preventing them from progressing toward future successes in life.

## **Proposal for Aligning HS Testing with College and Career Pathway Preparedness and Credit Qualification System**

An analysis of testing in some European and Asian countries indicates that their testing system serves a vastly different purpose. Rather than acting as a barrier, their testing supports placement for entry in their learning progression based upon age and grade level. While the “tracking” of students in these systems would not be acceptable in a US system, there may be an opportunity to utilize a variety of tests in a similar philosophy of pathway entrance that will allow for student/family choice and more accurately communicate career and college readiness for these pathways while eliminating the exit barrier from high school.

This proposed system would cease the use of the current SBAC 10th grade exit exam as a requirement for graduation. A study would be initiated to evaluate replacing the 10th grade SBAC with an 11th grade SAT or ACT for ESSA compliance. Students will be provided with a portfolio of optional “entrance exams or pathway competency completion” for student next steps (the current alternative student graduation assessment would remain in place as applicable). The initial pathway tests would be aligned with future career/education pathways as follows with additional tests or pathway competency requirements being submitted by local communities and approved by OSPI:

- 1. 4-year college - State-Funded option for 11th and 12th Grades: SAT, ACT**  
To meet expected ESSA requirements, Washington would study the viability of submitting a revised application to switch from the SBAC in 10th grade to either the SAT or ACT in 11th grade. This a current alternative testing option.
- 2. 2-year college or technical program - ALEKS, College-in-the-High-School Course completion (e.g. English 101, Math 107)**  
Provide a road map for 9-12 to align course competencies in ELA, Math and Science to 13-14 courses so that if a district-adopted curriculum at 9-12 is truly aligned to what is offered in 100 and 200 level community college courses, credit for HS and CC could be simultaneously granted. This would in essence provide “free college” that truly is not an expense to any institution beyond the K-12 initial investment.
- 3. High Tech/Manufacturing Pathway Endorsement - STEM/High Tech Literacy Exam - .**  
(To be developed in conjunction with CTE and High Tech. Business and encompass portions of the upcoming NGSS High School Science Exam)

The test would potentially include literacy measures in ELA, mathematics, science, engineering processes and the use of technology. This could be aligned with internship and apprenticeship programs for personal pathway credit substitutions or waivers.

Could use SAT/ACT lower cut score combined with NGSS Science exam.

4. **A. Construction Trades - Trade Skills Aptitude Exam (Based on basic mastery of reading, writing and applied algebra)**

Minimum skills set required for a living wage job and accepted by all trade programs for admission. This could be aligned with internship and apprenticeship programs for personal pathway credit substitutions or waivers.

**B. Military - Using the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)** AFQT cut score for the Army and Marines of 31 to indicate basic competency skills. AFQT encompasses Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Math Knowledge (MK), and Verbal Composite (VE) x 2. Verbal Composite score is a combination of Word Knowledge and Paragraph Comprehension scores.

5. **Alternative Student Graduation Assessment** - Continue with the use of WA-AIM as appropriate.

Tests for options 2-4a would be available beginning at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The military exam expires in 2 years so it won't be provided until 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Students can take one or more tests annually and can retest in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

Student graduation would be based on completion of Core 24 requirements. Districts would be accountable for both the student credit minimum and ensuring every student passes at least one of the state options listed above or local pathway requirements as approved by OSPI, unless student progress is measured through the WA-AIM.

## **Career Pathway Completion Credit Process**

For students who have: (1) successfully completed one or more of the ALEKS, STEM, ASVAB or trade skills pathway option exams and (2) have a student HSBP that aligns with the pathway proficiency test, the district will have the option of granting up to two (2.0) high school equivalency credits. Additional pathway options may be submitted to OSPI for approval by individual districts to align with their local community career options. Once approved by OSPI, these pathways will be available to all districts. This will allow students more flexibility to participate in internship/work experience directly aligned with their pathways. Industry certifications (i.e. CNA, Welding, Pharmacy Tech) would qualify for an additional 0.5 credits.

## **District Accountability and Equity**

Districts would report to the state graduation percentages for on-time (4-year) and extended (more than 4 year) based upon above standards. District would also report the number of graduates successfully passing each type of assessment (for students with multiple successful assessments, the highest academic level would be reported). The graduation data would be correlated with student demographic data to enable reporting by subgroups. Districts would be expected to set goals relative to; 1) Overall graduation rates, 2) Percentages of graduates completing each type of assessment, and 3) addressing any disproportionalities between subgroup populations identified within each of the first two measures.

**Sample Accountability Matrix (all numbers are just examples and are TBD):**

Standard High School	All	White	Black	Hispanic	Multiple	Etc.	F&R	SpEd	ELL
Overall 4 yr Graduation Min. Target = 90%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%
4-Yr College Ready Min. Target = 50%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%
2-Yr College Ready Min. Target (2Yr+4Yr) = 65%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%
STEM Certified Min. Target (2Yr+4Yr+STEM) = 80%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%
Trades/Military Certified	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%	XX%

*Students would be counted only in their highest area of successful completion.*

**Fiscal Notes:**

- Currently the SBAC is estimated at \$30 per student for both Math and Reading.
- The SAT is presently \$60 per student including the essay portion (with waivers available).
- The ACT is presently \$62.50 per student including the writing portion (with waivers available).
- At ~85,000 students per grade level, the testing cost increase for the mandatory ESSA compliance would be ~\$2.7M.
- STEM Literacy test development:
- 10th grade optional testing:
- 11th grade additional testing:
- 12th grade additional testing:
- Increased ratio of career guidance counseling:

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