

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

The 2009 legislature created a working group to develop recommendations for high school assessments as part of Minnesota's K-12 educational accountability system. The working group forwarded its recommendations to the education commissioner. This bill contains the recommendations of the working group, the commissioner, and legislators for establishing high school assessments that indicate students' college and career readiness.

Section

1 Statewide testing. (b) Postpones by one school year the time by which the revised math standards and the corresponding assessments must be aligned.

2 High school assessments. (a) Notwithstanding other law, directs the education commissioner to establish high school assessments for students entering grade 8 in the 2010-2011 school year and later that provide information on students' college and career readiness and meet federal accountability requirements, consistent with this subdivision.

(b) Directs the commissioner to establish and administer a high school reading and writing exam at the end of grade 10. Requires the exam to: align with revised academic content standards; produce independent scores for each content area; include multiple choice and open-ended reading items; be designed for computer administration and scoring so that students' exams scores are available within three school days beginning in the second year a computerized test is administered, among other design characteristics; allow for remediation and frequent retests; use achievement level descriptors that define students' college and career readiness; require general education students to achieve passing scores as a condition of graduating; require general education students who twice do not pass to participate in a locally-developed remediation plan; include a limited state-level student appeals process; and allow alternatives for student transfers from other states, students with disabilities, and ELL students, and other alternatives recommended by the assessment advisory committee

that are subsequently authorized by law.

Requires all general education students to receive a passing score in both reading and writing to graduate from high school, consistent with paragraph (e). Defines a score below passing to mean that there is a high likelihood that the student does not have the requisite reading and writing skills to succeed in postsecondary education or the workplace. Directs the commissioner to set the passing score based on the recommendations of both K-12 and postsecondary educators and employers and community leaders and a statistical relationship between two years of students' exam results and other indicators of college and career readiness that the commissioner develops in consultation with the assessment advisory committee.

(c) Directs the commissioner to establish statewide end-of-course exams in high school algebra and biology. Requires the exams to: align with revised academic content standards; include multiple choice and open-ended items that assess knowledge and skills in the state's academic content standards; be designed for computer administration and scoring so that students' exams scores are available within three school days beginning in the second year a computerized test is administered, among other design characteristics; be administered at regular intervals that align with the most common Minnesota high school schedules; generate exam achievement levels; use achievement level descriptors that define students' college and career readiness; comprise 25 percent of students' overall course grade except that a school that is highly misaligned for two school years must make the exam results equivalent to 50 percent of the student's grade in either algebra or biology, as applicable; require students who do not pass a high school algebra or biology course to (i) retake the course or complete a credit-recovery class, (ii) decide whether or not to retake the end-of-course assessment, and (iii) decide which exam score counts as 25 percent of the course grade, or 50 percent if the school has been highly misaligned for two consecutive school years; and allow alternatives for student transfers from other states, students with disabilities, and ELL students, and other alternatives recommended by the assessment advisory committee that are subsequently authorized by law; use three consecutive school years of research and analysis through the 2014-2015 school year to calculate and report an alignment index that compares students' grades and end-of-course exam scores; require highly misaligned schools to report the misalignment to parents of enrolled students; and use staff development funds to address the misalignment in schools that are highly misaligned for two consecutive school years.

Requires a highly misaligned school to count a student's algebra or biology exam as the equivalent of 50 percent of the student's overall grade until the time the school is no longer identified as highly misaligned for two subsequent school years.

(d) Makes the requirements of the subdivision applicable to public school students, including charter school students, who enter 8th grade in the 2010-2011 school year and later. Allows the commissioner to establish a transition period for students entering the 8th grade in the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years using GRAD requirements or through a staggered implementation of this subdivision. Allows the commissioner to seek the legislature's authority to adjust this time line if federal or other circumstances warrant.

(e) As a condition of fully implementing this subdivision and enabling school districts to provide intervention and support to struggling students and improve instruction for all students, requires the commissioner to provide all school districts with (i) benchmark

assessments that are aligned with the high school reading and writing assessment and algebra and biology end-of-course exams and (ii) an item bank available to teachers for creating formative assessments to help student prepare for the high school reading and writing assessment and algebra and biology end-of-course exams. Requires that the benchmark assessments be available to school districts for two full school years before students are required to achieve a passing score on the reading and writing exam as a condition of graduating from high school.

(f) Directs the commissioner to expand the assessment advisory committee to include assessment experts and practitioners from secondary and post secondary education systems and other stakeholders to monitor the implementation of and student outcomes and state support available to school districts under this subdivision. Directs the committee to report annually by February 15 to the commissioner and the legislature. Precludes committee members from receiving any payment for their committee service.

(g) Directs the commissioner to solicit requests for proposal in contracting for at least two independent studies at two-year intervals to evaluate the implementation of the requirements under this subdivision and the availability and efficacy of the resources to support and improve student outcomes based on student achievement data under this subdivision. Directs the commissioner to submit the results of the first study to the legislature by 2/15/15 and the results of the second study by 2/15/17.

(h) Prohibits the commissioner from developing additional end-of-course exams in geometry, chemistry, or physics until specifically authorized to do so.

(i) Requires school districts and charter schools to indicate on a student's transcript the student's level of college and career readiness in reading, writing, algebra, and biology after the levels have been established through a professionally recognized methodology.

Makes this section effective immediately.

3 Assessment advisory committee; recommendations. (a) Directs the assessment advisory committee to develop recommendations for alternative methods by which students meet the reading and writing exam requirement. Directs the advisory committee to consider CLEP, the ACT, and the SAT, among other alternatives.

(b) Directs the assessment advisory committee to develop recommendations for alternative methods by which students satisfy the high school algebra and biology requirements. Directs the advisory committee to consider CLEP, the ACT, the SAT, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams, and credit-bearing college algebra and biology courses under the post secondary enrollment options or concurrent enrollment program where students receive a grade of 'C' or better, among other alternatives.

(c) Allows the assessment advisory committee to develop recommendations on integrating universal design principles to improve students' access to learning and assessments, better understand what students know and can do, provide more cost-effective assessments, and provide educators with more valid inferences about students' achievement levels.

(d) Directs the assessment advisory committee, in order to fully implement the high school assessment system under this section, to develop recommendations for: the administrative structure, criteria, and processes for implementing the state-level appeals process;

calculating the alignment index; and defining “misaligned” and “highly misaligned” and under what circumstances misalignments occur.

(e) Directs the assessment advisory committee by 2/15/11 to submit its recommendations to the education commissioner and the legislature.

(f) Prohibits the commissioner from implementing any element recommended by the assessment advisory committee related to the high school assessment system under this section without first receiving specific legislative authority to do so.

Makes this section immediately effective.