

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

In response to the large number of students in jeopardy of not graduating from high school because of their inability to pass the 11th grade math MCA or GRAD test, the 2009 Legislature passed a five-year exception to the requirement that all students pass the 11th grade math MCA or GRAD test in order to graduate. Under the exception, students who do not pass an 11th grade math test may receive a high school diploma if they: complete with a passing score or grade all required state and local coursework and credits; participate in district-prescribed math remediation; and participate in two GRAD retests or pass the math GRAD test, whichever comes first. This bill proposes to end the exception in the 2012-2013 school year instead of the 2013-2014 school year.

In addition, 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 some recommendations of the working group, the commissioner, and legislators for establishing high school assessments that indicate students' college and career readiness. However, contrary to the working group recommendations, this bill directs the commissioner to set the passing scores on the assessments, among other changes.

1 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 five 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 in reading and writing that define students' college and career readiness; require general education students to achieve passing scores in reading and writing as a condition of graduating; require general

education students who 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.

(c) Requires all general education students to receive a passing score in both reading and writing to graduate from high school, consistent with paragraphs (b) and (e). Directs the commissioner to establish the passing score.

(d) 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 five school days beginning in the second year a computerized test is administered; 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; require students as a condition of graduating, to achieve passing scores in algebra and biology.

(e) Makes the requirements of the subdivision applicable to public school students, including charter school students, who enter 8th grade in the 2012-2013 school year and later. Allows the commissioner to establish a transition period for students entering the 8th grade in the 2012-2013 or 2013-2014 school years using GRAD requirements or through a staggered implementation of this subdivision. Requires any interim passing score in reading or writing to be comparable to those required for the GRAD tests. Allows the commissioner to seek the legislature's authority to adjust this time line if federal or other circumstances warrant.

(f) 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.

(g) 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.

(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.

2 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, or Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams.

(c) 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.

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

Makes this section immediately effective.