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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair  
2015 - 2016 Regular

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**Bill No:** SB 172  
**Author:** Liu  
**Version:** April 6, 2015  
**Urgency:** No  
**Consultant:** Lynn Lorber  
**Hearing Date:** April 15, 2015  
**Fiscal:** Yes

**Subject:** Pupil testing: high school exit examination: suspension

### SUMMARY

This bill suspends the administration of the high school exit examination, and the requirement that students pass this exam as a condition of graduation from high school, during the 2016-17 through 2018-19 school years, or when the high school exit exam is no longer available.

### BACKGROUND

Current law:

- 1) Required the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop, and the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt, a high school exit examination in English language arts and mathematics in accordance with the academic content standards adopted by the SBE. (Education Code § 60850)
- 2) Requires pupils to successfully pass the high school exit exam as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation, in addition to completing state and local graduation requirements. (Education Code § 60851, 51225.3 and 51224.5)
- 3) Established the Academic Content Standards Commission for the purpose of developing the California Common Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics, and required the State Board of Education to reject or adopt those standards by August 2, 2010. (EC § 60605.8)
- 4) Revamped 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)
- 5) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), by March 1, 2016, to submit to the State Board of Education, 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. The SPI is required to consult with specified

stakeholders, and make recommendations regarding assessments including the grade level, content, and type of assessment. (EC § 60640(c))

## ANALYSIS

This bill suspends the administration of the high school exit exam, and the requirement that students pass this exam as a condition of graduation from high school, during the 2016-17 through 2018-19 school years, or when the high school exit exam is no longer available. Specifically, this bill:

1. Notwithstanding the requirement that students pass the high school exit exam (exit exam) as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation or a condition of graduation from high school, and suspends the administration of and requirement to pass the exit exam for the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 school years, or when the exit exam is no longer available.
2. Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to convene an advisory panel to provide recommendations to the SPI on the continuation of the high school exit exam, and on alternative pathways to satisfy the high school graduation requirements.
3. Requires the recommendations of this advisory panel to be included in the currently-required report by the SPI on the expansion of the State's assessment system, which is due to the State Board of Education, appropriate legislative policy and fiscal committees, and the Director of Finance by March 1, 2016.
4. Requires the advisory panel to consist of, but not be limited to:
  - A. Secondary teachers.
  - B. School administrators.
  - C. School board members.
  - D. Parents.
  - E. The student member of the State Board of Education.
  - F. Measurement experts.
  - G. Individuals with expertise in assessing English learners and students with disabilities.

## STAFF COMMENTS

1. ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, "Passing the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) was added as a requirement for high school graduation beginning with the Class of 2006. California has revamped

the State's assessment system by transitioning to assessments that are aligned to the common core standards and eliminating outdated assessments. The

California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) has not been updated for alignment to the common core standards and is therefore outdated as the exam is aligned to standards that are no longer in place.”

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 has 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 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>

Current law requires students, as a condition of graduating from high school, to successfully complete specified coursework, any locally-imposed graduation requirements, and pass the high school exit exam. This bill suspends 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 adopted the California Common Core Standards 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 State Board of Education 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 common core standards. 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 common core standards 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 common core standards.

4. **Contract issues.** According to the California Department of Education (CDE), the contract for the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) will expire on October 31, 2015. Pursuant to this contract, the last administration of the CAHSEE will be in July 2015. The CDE maintains that the Department of General Services is prohibiting the CDE from extending the contract for the CAHSEE, and instead is requiring the CDE to issue a Request for Proposal. This process can be time consuming; even if initiated immediately, a new contract will not be in place to ensure administration of the CAHSEE in July and possibly October and later in 2015.

Absent any action, the CAHSEE will not be administered to students beginning July 2015, yet the requirement to pass the exit exam remains. This bill suspends the requirement to pass the exit exam during specified school years, or when the exit exam is no longer available.

5. **Why suspend?** This bill suspends the administration of the high school exit exam, and the requirement that students pass this exam as a condition of graduation from high school. According to the author, this bill does not eliminate the high school exit exam, specifically requires 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 should be carefully considered by the workgroup established by this bill.
6. **Used for federal accountability.** The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires States that participate in Title I (provides funding to schools to educate low-income students) to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) criteria. The required AYP indicators (at the school, local educational agency and State levels) for California's 2014 AYP reports are all of the following:

- A. Participation rate - requires a 95% participation rate on the statewide assessments in order to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
- B. Annual Measurable Objectives, also known as percent proficient - requires that 100% of students perform at the proficient or above level on statewide assessments in English language arts and mathematics by 2014.
- C. Graduation rate - requires the State to use the graduation rate as an additional indicator for all schools and local educational agencies with grade 12 students.

California currently reports California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) data as part of AYP for purposes of calculating participation rates and percent proficient. Four years of enrollment and exit data are used to calculate the graduation rate for schools and local educational agencies. Absent the availability of CAHSEE data, the State may report data from the State Board-adopted assessments that are aligned to the common core. The absence of CAHSEE data will not compromise the State's ability to meet federal accountability requirements.

7. ***Related and Prior legislation.***

*RELATED LEGISLATION*

AB 812 (Weber, 2015) requires the California Department of Education, by September 1, 2017, to develop an assessment tool to determine the proficiency level of pupils of limited English proficiency identified through a survey process. AB 812 requires, beginning with the 2018–19 school year, the assessment to be conducted upon initial enrollment, in order to provide information to determine if the pupil is a pupil of limited English proficiency, and annually thereafter. AB 812 is pending in the Assembly Education Committee.

*PRIOR LEGISLATION*

AB 484 (Bonilla, Ch. 489, 2013) among other things, eliminated the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program, and instead established the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, which includes assessments that are aligned to the common core standards. AB 484 did not affect the high school exit exam statutes.

SB 267 (Pavley, Ch. 479, 2014) extended the implementation date on the use of alternative means for an eligible pupil with a disability to demonstrate academic achievement rather than passing the high school exit exam, thereby extending the exemption from the requirement to pass the exit exam.

**SUPPORT**

EdVoice  
Riverside County Superintendent of Schools  
San Diego Unified School District  
San Francisco Unified School District  
SIATech  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson

**OPPOSITION**

None received.

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