
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: AB 1176
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Version: April 18, 2017
Urgency: No
Consultant: Lynn Lorber

Hearing Date: June 14, 2017
Fiscal: Yes

Subject: High school equivalency tests

SUMMARY

This bill eliminates the existing one hour per schoolday limit on a general educational development test preparation program for people confined to a hospital or correctional facility, and updates terminology from “general educational development” to “high school equivalency.”

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Provides that a California high school equivalency certificate is deemed to be a high school diploma for the purpose of meeting the requirements of employment by all state and local public agencies in California. (Education Code § 51425)
- 2) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to issue a California high school equivalency certificate and an official score report to any person who has not completed high school and who meets the following requirements:
 - a) Is a resident of California or member of armed services assigned to duty in California.
 - b) Has taken all or a portion of a general educational development test that has been approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) and that is administered by a testing center approved by the California Department of Education, with a score determined by SBE to be equal to the standard of performance expected from high school graduates.
 - c) Meets one of the following:
 - i) Is at least 18 years old.
 - ii) Would have graduated from high school had he or she remained in school and followed the usual course of study toward graduation.
 - iii) Is at least 17 years of age, has accumulated fewer than 100 units of high school credit, and is confined to a state or county hospital or to an institution maintained by a state or county correctional agency.

- iv) Is at least 17 years of age, has accumulated fewer than 100 units of high school credit prior to enrollment in a specified academic program, and has successfully completed the academic program offered by a dropout recovery high school, as specified. (EC § 51420)
- 3) Authorizes the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to provide for the administration of the general educational development test to people confined to state or county hospitals or to institutions maintained by state or county correctional agencies. (EC 54123)
- 4) Authorizes the SPI to grant a waiver to a county office of education to provide a general educational development test preparation program, of no more than one hour per schoolday, as part of any other instructional program during the regular schoolday to a person who is at least 17 years of age, has accumulated insufficient units of high school credit to graduate from high school by 18 years of age, and is confined to a state or county hospital or to an institution maintained by a state or county correction agency. (EC § 54123)
- 5) Requires the county board of education to adopt and enforce the adopted course of study, authorizes the county board to adopt and enforce a course of study that enhances instruction in mathematics and English language arts for student attending juvenile court schools, and states legislative intent that students in juvenile court schools have a rigorous curriculum that includes a course of study preparing them for high school graduation and career entry and fulfilling the requirements for admission to the University of California and the California State University. (EC § 48645.3)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Eliminates the existing one hour per schoolday limit on a high school equivalency test preparation program for people confined to a hospital or correctional facility who are at least 17 years of age and have accumulated insufficient units of high school credit to graduate from high school by age 18.
- 2) Deletes reference to a “general educational development test” and instead references a “high school equivalency test.”

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “Currently, the time allotted to education for youth in detention facilities is focused on instruction for the high school diploma. However, a significant number of youth who are 17 years of age and not on track to graduate high school by the age of 18 may have little chance of obtaining a high school diploma due to insufficient credits. For such youth it would be beneficial to pursue a high school equivalency credential, but the existing one hour limitation on General Educational Development test preparation

per school day has hindered these youth from doing so.”

- 2) **One hour limit.** Existing law requires juvenile court schools to provide a course of study leading to a high school diploma. A minimum day program for juvenile court schools is 240 minutes. Existing law authorizes county offices of education that have been granted a waiver from the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to provide up to one hour per schoolday of preparation for the high school equivalency test to students in juvenile court schools. This bill eliminates the one hour per schoolday limitation. The one hour limitation was added to statute to address concerns that juvenile court schools would shift the focus from high school diplomas to high school equivalency. This bill does not change the requirement for juvenile court schools to provide a full course of study, nor does it eliminate the requirement for a county office of education to obtain a waiver from the SPI to provide a high school equivalency test preparation program.

Existing law requires, to be eligible to take the high school equivalency test, a person to be at least 17 years of age and have accumulated fewer than 100 units of high school credit (the minimum units needed to meet state high school graduation requirements is 130 units). It appears unlikely that this bill would lead students in juvenile court schools who are 17 years of age and have fewer than 100 units to abandon coursework leading to a high school diploma in favor of pursuing a high school equivalency certificate. Students who are under the age of 18 and who have passed the high school equivalency test must have the consent of the person who has the right to make educational decisions for that student in order to disenroll from school upon passage of the test.

- 3) **Updating terminology.** This bill changes references in the Education Code from “general educational development” to “high school equivalency” to reflect the existence of more than one test. In prior years, only one test was approved by California, the General Educational Development (GED), and the name of that test became synonymous with a high school equivalency certificate. California has approved the use of three high school equivalency tests: the GED, High School Equivalency Test (HiSET), and Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC).
- 4) **Fiscal impact.** According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill would impose no additional state costs.
- 5) **Related legislation.** AB 1124 (Cervantes) authorizes the education rights holder of a student in a juvenile court school to voluntarily defer the issuance of a high school diploma so that a student may take additional coursework beyond the minimum state requirements for high school graduation. AB 1124 is pending in this Committee.

SUPPORT

Alliance for Boys and Men of Color
California Catholic Conference
Each One Reach One
JobTrain

Social Justice Learning Institute
OPPOSITION

None received

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