

Date of Hearing: July 1, 2015

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Patrick O'Donnell, Chair

SB 172 (Liu) – As Amended April 6, 2015

SENATE VOTE: 25-14

SUBJECT: Pupil testing: high school exit examination: suspension

SUMMARY: Suspends the requirement to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) as a condition of receiving a high school diploma and requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to make recommendations regarding the continuation of the CAHSEE and alternative pathways to satisfying high school graduation requirements. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Suspends the CAHSEE as a condition of receiving a high school diploma for the 2016-17 through the 2018-19 school years, inclusive, or when it is no longer available.
- 2) Requires the SPI to convene an advisory panel consisting of, but not necessarily limited to, secondary teachers, school administrators, school board members, parents, the student member of the state board, measurement experts, and individuals with expertise in assessing English learners and pupils with disabilities to provide recommendations on the continuation of the CAHSEE and on alternative pathways to satisfy the high school graduation requirements.
- 3) Adds these recommendations to recommendations the SPI is required to make to the State Board of Education (SBE) regarding the expansion of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) by March 1, 2016.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CAHSEE, which assesses pupils in English language arts and mathematics and which pupils must pass as a condition of receiving a high school diploma.
- 2) Establishes the CAASPP, which replaced the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program (STAR) and which consists of the following components:
 - a) A consortium summative assessment in English language arts and mathematics for grades 3 to 8, inclusive, and grade 11 that measures content standards adopted by the state board;
 - b) Science grade level assessments in grades 5, 8, and 10;
 - c) The California Alternate Performance Assessment in grades 2 to 11, inclusive, in English language arts and mathematics and science in grades 5, 8, and 10;
 - d) The Early Assessment Program; and
 - e) A primary language assessment aligned to the English language arts standards, if a local educational agency chooses to administer one.

- 3) Requires the SPI to make recommendations to the SBE regarding expanding the CAASPP to include additional assessments.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, "The suspension of the high school exit examination results in estimated savings of up to mid tens of millions in Proposition 98 General Fund and Federal fund savings over a multi-year period. CDE estimates that this bill will result in one-time costs between \$123,000 and \$200,000 to convene an advisory panel, depending on the number of panel members. The recommendations that derive from this panel could create a potentially significant cost pressure to implement them.

COMMENTS:

Background. The CAHSEE assesses pupils in the areas of English language arts and mathematics. It was established by SB 2X (O'Connell, Chapter 1, Statutes of 1999). SB 2X was part of a package of school reform bills that established new curriculum content standards, a new statewide assessment program, and related professional development and instructional programs. The requirement to pass the exam as a condition of receiving a high school diploma was originally to take effect with the class of 2004. However, the State Board of Education (SBE) determined that a high failure rate in the pilot year was due to the fact that the new, standards-based instruction had not been in place long enough to give pupils an adequate amount of time to prepare for the exam. Accordingly the SBE voted to defer the requirement to the class of 2006.

The CAHSEE is evaluated annually by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO). The most recent annual report (November 24, 2014) covers the class of 2014. The report notes that the pass rate has increased from year to year, and in 2014 it was 97.2% among all pupils (this includes pupils who had to take the test more than once before they passed it). By ethnicity, the pass rate ranged from 96.1% for Latino/Hispanic pupils to 99.3% for white pupils. The pass rate for students with disabilities was 67.0%. The highest subgroup pass rate was 99.7% for English learners who had been reclassified as fluent English.

New standards. The CAHSEE is aligned to the content standards for English language arts and mathematics that were adopted pursuant to the 1999 education reform package of bills. In 2010 the SBE voted to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The adoption of the CCSS led to the development of new statewide assessments that are aligned to the new standards. However, the CAHSEE is still aligned to the old standards. This misalignment is discussed in the 2014 HumRRO biennial report (January 31, 2014, pages 228-229):

Of the approximately 22,000 ELA and mathematics items in the entire CAHSEE item bank, only about 16,000 (73%) were initially considered to be associated with California content standards that could be cross-walked to CCSS, according to ETS. HumRRO observed review meetings ETS held to evaluate the 16,000 items for alignment at the item-to-CCSS level. Approximately half or more of the items were judged not aligned when evaluated directly to a CCSS standard, and an additional number of mathematics items were judged to align to a CCSS standard at an earlier grade than the California content standard did. These results indicate that the CAHSEE item bank would need to be substantially revised (e.g., replacing or modifying a significant number of items) to align the CAHSEE to the CCSS rather than to the previous California Content Standards.

Impact of the CAHSEE. HumRRO reports that the CAHSEE has resulted in "greater alignment of instruction to the state's content standards and improved student learning,...to a large extent." However, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) concluded that the CAHSEE "had no positive effects on students' academic skill," and has led to "a large negative impact on graduation rates for students in the bottom quartile of achievement, and that this impact was especially large for minority students and for girls" (Sean Reardon and Michal Kurlaender, "Effects of the California High School Exit Exam on Student Persistence, Achievement, and Graduation," August 2009). A more recent report from the National Bureau of Economic Research came to a similar conclusion: "We find relatively modest effects of high school exit exams except on incarceration. Exams assessing academic skills below the high school level have little effect. However, more challenging standards-based exams reduce graduation and increase incarceration rates" (Olesya Baker and Kevin Lang, "The Effect of High School Exit Exams on Graduation, Employment, Wages and Incarceration," June 2013).

This bill suspends the CAHSEE requirement for the three-year period beginning in 2016-17, or when the exam is no longer available. The exam was last administered in May 2015 and, because the contract with Educational Testing Service (ETS—the exam contractor) has expired, will not be administered again. Accordingly, the exam is no longer available for class of 2015 test takers who failed the May administration and cannot retake it. Then intent, then, is to suspend the CAHSEE requirement beginning with those members of the class of 2015 who have not passed it. However, the language may not be clear enough to achieve this goal. Accordingly, **staff recommends** that the bill be amended to explicitly begin the suspension with the 2014-15 school year (i.e., the class of 2015). In addition, **staff recommends** the bill be amended to correct references to the other school years, to provide that the suspension ends with the 2017-18 school year, and not the 2018-19 school year. With these amendments, the suspension will begin with the class of 2015 and end with the class of 2018.

In addition, **this bill** requires the SPI to convene an advisory panel to provide recommendations on the continuation of the high school exit exam and on alternative pathways to satisfy high school graduations requirements and to submit the recommendations to the SBE by March 1, 2016.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California School Boards Association
Bay Area Council
Business Council of San Joaquin County
East Bay Economic Development Agency
California State PTA
California Teachers Association
East Bay Leadership Council
EdVoice
Inland Empire Economic Partnership
Joint Venture Silicon Valley
Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation

North Bay Leadership Council
Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
Orange County Business Council
Riverside County Superintendent of Schools
San Diego Chamber of Commerce
San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation
San Diego Unified School District
San Francisco Chamber of Commerce
San Francisco Unified School District
San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce
Santa Clara County Office of Education
School Employers Association of California
SIATech
Silicon Valley Leadership Group
Small School Districts' Association
Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson

Opposition

Public Advocates
San Bernardino City Unified School District
One individual

Analysis Prepared by: Rick Pratt / ED. / (916) 319-2087