

## Information on Testing and Exit Exams

### *Past work of the Board*

- January 2015. The Board adopted a position statement on assessments. This is the current position of record. It provides guidance to OSPI to perform the technical work to help the Board identify graduation scores on the Smarter Balanced assessments and alternatives.
  - Position statement on assessments:  
[http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/Jan/ExhibitA\\_PositionStatementonAssessments.pdf](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/Jan/ExhibitA_PositionStatementonAssessments.pdf)
- August 2015. The Board adopted graduation scores on the Smarter Balanced Assessments. The memo contains a summary of the Board's work on assessments up until then, as well as a discussion of the context for setting the graduation scores.
  - Board packet info:  
[http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/August/01\\_GradScoresMemo.pdf](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/August/01_GradScoresMemo.pdf)
- November, 2015. The Board engaged in a discussion of assessments and exit exams, as part of the discussion of the Board's legislative priorities.
  - Board packet info:  
[http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/Nov/03\\_Assessments.pdf](http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/Nov/03_Assessments.pdf)
  - Staff presentation:  
<https://prezi.com/8las8tzffy71/assessment-system/>

### *Annotated Bibliography*

What does the research say about the relationship between high school exit exams and student achievement, graduation rates, and postsecondary outcomes?

Summary: There is little evidence that exit exams have a positive effect on student achievement or that they have a significant impact on graduation rates. There is evidence that students who barely fail an exit exam have worse postsecondary outcomes than students who barely pass, and that negative effects of exit exams, or repeated test-taking to pass an exit exam are larger for black students and English language learners.

Below are citations and key findings of the studies reviewed. Sources were identified through the Education Northwest Ask-A-REL service.

**Black, S. E., Cortes, K. E., & Lincove, J. A. (2016). Efficacy versus equity: What happens when states tinker with college admissions in a race-blind era? *Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis, 38(2), 336–363.*** This study found that adding SAT/ACT or high school exit exam criteria to a rank-based admissions policy significantly decreases enrollment among minorities and other groups, while inducing only minimal gains in college GPA and four-year graduation rates.

**Caves, K., & Balestra, S. (2014). *The impact of high school exit exams on graduation rates and achievement.*** The authors found that introducing a high school exit exam has an overall positive effect

on graduation rates, but found no effects for achievement, possibly due to the lack of meaningful cross-state achievement data in the time period studied.

**Clark, D., & See, E. (2011). The impact of tougher education standards: Evidence from Florida. *Economics of Education Review*, 30(6), 1123–1135.** This paper investigates the impacts of an increase in the exit exam standard in Florida. The results show that this increase did not correlate with reductions in high school graduation rates.

**Hemelt, S. W., & Marcotte, D. E. (2013). High school exit exams and dropout in an era of increased accountability. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(2), 323–349.** This study found that exit exams increase dropout rates for students in grade 12, with especially large effects for African American students. Dropout effects are larger in states that do not provide alternate pathways to receive a diploma or alternative credentials for students that cannot pass exit exams.

**Holme, J. J., Richards, M. P., Jimerson, J. B., & Cohen, R. W. (2010). Assessing the effects of high school exit examinations. *Review of Educational Research*, 80(4), 476–526.** This study found that minimum competency exams are not associated with any achievement gains or losses. This paper includes a review of the literature on achievement and exit exams.

**Hylsop, A. (2014). *The case against exit exams*.** This review reiterates the research that indicates the expected outcome of increasing achievement has not been met—student achievement did not improve and, on average, at-risk students had no improvement in achievement and decreased graduation rates.

**Jürges, H., Schneider, K., Senkbeil, M., & Carstensen, C. H. (2012). Assessment drives learning: The effect of central exit exams on curricular knowledge and mathematical literacy. *Economics of Education Review*, 31(1), 56–65.** This study found that exit exams improve curriculum-based knowledge but do not affect mathematical literacy. Students, although showing a better performance, are less intrinsically motivated in school.

**Kruger, L. J., Li, C., Kimble, E., Ruah, R., Stoianov, D., & Krishnan, K. (2016). Impact of repeatedly failing a high school exit exam: Voices of English language learners. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, 48(3), 463-483.** In interviews, English language learners in their twenties perceived more negative effects than benefits of failing a high school exit exams, although they also identified some individual and environmental protective factors that helped them persist in attempting to pass exit exams.

**McIntosh, S. (with Kober, N.). (2012). *State high school exit exams: A policy in transition*.** The authors conclude that there is very little, if any, evidence to suggest any effects of exit exams on student achievement.

**Papay, J. P., Murnane, R. J., & Willett, J. B. (2014). High-school exit examinations and the schooling decisions of teenagers: Evidence from regression-discontinuity approaches. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 7(1), 1–27.** This study finds that barely failing an exit examination, for students on the margin of passing, reduces the probability of college attendance after the test.

**Reardon, S. F., Arshan, N., Atteberry, A., & Kurlaender, M. (2010). Effects of failing a high school exit exam on course taking, achievement, persistence, and graduation. *Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis*, 32(4), 498–520.** This analysis found no evidence of any significant or sizeable effect of failing

the exam on high school course taking, achievement, persistence, or graduation for students with test scores near the exit exam passing score.

**Rodrigues, J.M., & Arellano, L. (2016). The impact of high-stakes testing on Latina/o students' college aspirations. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 15*(2), 113-135.** This study explores the influence high-stakes testing has on Latina/o student aspirations and subsequent college enrollment. The findings show a strong correlation between the math and English Language Arts exams, and that each subsequent attempt of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) yields lower average scores.

**Traynor, A., & Chapman, A. A. (2015). Impeded attainment? The role of state exit examination-alternative route policy combinations. *Teachers College Record, 117*(9), 1-34.** This study found little empirical evidence that alternative route policies blunt the negative effects of exit exam requirements on diploma attainment in the general student population.