



The State Board of Education's Activities and Role in the State Assessment System

Introduction

The Role of the State Board of Education in the State Assessment System

This section of the report summarizes the activities of the State Board of Education (SBE) concerning the state assessment system in 2020 and actions of the Board anticipated for 2021.

Statute directs SBE to provide consultation to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) in the development and maintenance of the statewide academic assessment system in reading, writing, mathematics, and science ([RCW 28A.655.070\(3\)\(a\)](#)). The Board also identifies the scores students must achieve to demonstrate meeting standard on statewide assessments, and to demonstrate career and college readiness using the SAT and ACT ([RCW 28A.305.130\(4\)\(b\)\(i\)](#)). Prior to the Class of 2020 students were required to earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA) or a Certificate of Individual Achievement (CIA) as part of the graduation requirements. To earn one of those certificates students were required to meet a minimum score on the statewide assessments in ELA and mathematics or earn a score determined to be equivalent by the Board on the SAT or ACT, or meet one of the alternatives for CIA. Students (in the Classes of 2014 to 2020) could also apply for an Expedited Assessment Appeal (EAA) waiver that allowed the assessment requirement to be waived. Students qualified for the waiver by meeting one of several eligibility criteria, and by demonstrating the skills and knowledge to meet the assessment standards, as determined locally.

Graduation Pathway Options and 2019 Graduation Requirement Legislation

In 2019, legislation ([E2SHB 1599](#)) eliminated the Certificate of Academic Achievement beginning with the Class of 2020 and eliminated the Certificate of Individual Achievement beginning with the Class of 2022. Elimination of the CAA and CIA means that state high school assessments will no longer be used as exit exams required for high school graduation.

E2SHB 1599 replaced exit exams with graduation pathway options. Graduation pathway options include most previous alternatives and two new graduation pathways: a military pathway (ASVAB, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) and a Career and

Technical Education (CTE) pathway. The Board was directed by E2SHB 1599 to write rules to implement graduation pathways and set the scores needed to meet the pathway requirement for some of the pathways involving assessments. The Board did not change scores for assessments previously used as exit exams: Smarter Balanced tests, the SAT, and the ACT. Since the military pathway was new, the Board established a score for the ASVAB test for use as the graduation pathway option.

Because of these changes, including the introduction of graduation pathway options, the role of SBE in the assessment system is shifting. The Board will continue to provide consultation to OSPI concerning the state assessment system, including identifying the scores needed to meet standard on state assessments. In addition, the Board will work with OSPI to support assessments associated with graduation pathway options.

Table 1: Graduation Pathway Options

(More information on Pathways, including the scores needed to meet the pathway options involving assessments may be found on SBE’s [Graduation Pathway Options webpage](#).)

Pathway	Course-based	Assessment Score Identified by SBE	Assessment Score in Statute
Dual Credit Courses	✓	n/a	n/a
AP/IB/Cambridge Courses	✓	n/a	n/a
Transition Course	✓	n/a	n/a
CTE Sequence*	✓	n/a	n/a
State Assessment	n/a	✓	n/a
SAT/ACT	n/a	✓	n/a
ASVAB*	n/a	✓	n/a
AP/IB/Cambridge Tests	n/a	n/a	✓

*CTE (Career and Technical Education) and ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) are “stand-alone” pathways. In the other pathways, students must meet the standard in both English language arts and math; combinations of pathways may be used.

Table 1 lists the graduation pathway options and shows which are course-based and which are associated with assessments. The SBE is responsible for setting the scores for English language arts and math on three of the pathways. With the implementation of E2SHB 1599, the Board decided to maintain the scores that were previously used for graduation on the statewide assessment (Smarter Balanced) and assessment alternatives (SAT and ACT). For the use of the ASVAB as a graduation pathway option, the Board identified in rule that the score students need to achieve is the lowest score on the AFQT (Armed Forces Qualification Test, a portion of the ASVAB that assesses English and math) necessary for enlistment in a branch of the military. Since the military may change scores at any time, the Board committed to identifying the score needed and posting it

by the beginning of every school year, as well as checking the score and updating it if needed in the spring. Students may meet the score posted at the time they take the test, or any score posted until they turn 21.

In addition to writing rules on pathways, E2SHB 1599 directed SBE to staff a [Mastery-based Learning Work Group](#). Work on mastery-based learning relates to the assessment system because state assessments may be used for students to demonstrate mastery of math, science, or English learning standards. [New rules](#) adopted by the Board in September 2020 specifies that state assessments in English language arts, math, and science may be used for students to earn mastery-based credit. E2SHB 1599 also directed SBE to collect information on the implementation of pathways, including surveying stakeholders about additional pathways, modifications to existing pathways, and barriers to implementing pathways.

Graduation Pathway Options in 2020

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, schools closed and test administrations were canceled in spring 2020. Completion of graduation pathway options was disrupted for students who had not yet met this graduation requirement. E2SHB 1599 specified that the Expedited Assessment Appeal waiver (EAA) was available to students in the Class of 2020, and a significant number of students took advantage of this waiver. According to data presented by Dr. Deb Came in an OSPI/SBE joint webinar ([Spring 2020: Grades, Graduation Pathways, and Waivers](#)), 8,981 students used the EAA for math, English, or both. E2SHB extended the EAA through the Class of 2020, so the waiver will not be available for students in the Class of 2021 and beyond.

The most common way that students meet a graduation pathway option requirement is through the state Smarter Balanced assessments, which students generally take in 10th grade. Most 10th graders in spring 2020 were not able to take the state assessment. These students will need to make up the test and take it as 11th graders in the 2020-2021 school year or later. While students sit for a test they miss in-class instruction—so students who have already missed in-class instruction as a result of school closures will also have to miss some hours of instruction to make-up a state test. As with many aspects of the pandemic, the effects on students will linger far beyond the period when schools closed, and impacts students at all grade levels, not just graduating seniors.

So far in fall 2020, test administration for graduation pathway option tests have not returned to normal (see Table 2). It is not yet been determined how the Smarter Balanced tests will be administered in spring 2021; OSPI and its vendor are exploring options in case in-person administration is not possible. In addition, SAT and ACT tests have not been widely available across the state. Some testing centers have been able to administer SAT and ACT, but most have not.

ASVAB administration available in schools relies on schools being open, so few, if any schools have been able to hold ASVAB testing yet in the 2020-2021 school year. Students who plan on joining the military may take the ASVAB through their local Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS), but this option is only appropriate for students who are seriously planning on the military after high school. Students who are still exploring options, including the military, are better served by schools that take advantage of the military's Career Exploration Program (CEP). The program includes in-school administration of the ASVAB, as well as career exploration services. However, CEP is currently designed for in-person testing and services.

The military also offers a Pre-screening, internet-delivered Computer Adaptive Test (PiCAT), which may yield ASVAB scores. PiCAT scores must be verified with an in-person, proctored verification test at a MEPS. Once a PiCAT ASVAB AFQT (Armed Forces Qualification Test) verified-score is obtained, students may use this score for meeting their graduation pathway option. The use of the PiCAT for obtaining an ASVAB AFQT score to meet a graduation pathway option is appropriate for students who are planning on joining the military following high school.

Table 2: Spring 2020 Administration of Graduation Pathway Option Assessments

Graduation Pathway Option Assessment	Administration in Spring 2020	Comments
State Assessment	All state assessments were cancelled as of March 13 for the remainder of the school year.	WA-AIM retakes were available in fall 2020, but very few have been administered so far.
SAT/ACT	Spring 2020 administrations of the tests were cancelled.	Available in fall 2020, but left to testing centers to decide whether to administer.
ASVAB	Most schools closed before the ASVAB was administered through the Career Exploration Program	
AP/IB/Cambridge Tests	Converted to remote administration with a modified test.	Institutions of higher education accepting tests and scores as they have previously.

Activities of the Board in 2020

Beginning in March, with the closure of schools, the Board’s activities included action focused on addressing the effects of the pandemic on education. Prior to the end of session, the Board received authorization from the Legislature to adopt emergency rules. The rules provided flexibility to districts to waive some credit graduation requirements allowing qualified Class of 2020 students to graduate.

Table 3: SBE’s Work Related to the Assessment System During 2020

Meeting	Activity	Links
January 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board discussion about the high school diploma and graduation pathway options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBE Graduation Pathway Options Interim Report
March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on graduation pathway options and mastery-based learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBE staff HS Diploma Requirements and Pathways Presentation
March 2020 Special Board meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board worked with partners to develop emergency waiver program and review supports for graduating seniors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memo staff memo on emergency rule-making OSPI presentation on Supporting Graduating Seniors
April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board adoption of emergency rules regarding emergency credit waiver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBE presentation on emergency rules
May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation from consultant on pathway research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBE consultant pathway presentation
June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SBE held a work session on pandemic effects and possible policy responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBE meeting packet
July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of draft graduation requirement rules and graduation pathway year 1 report submitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduation Pathway Option Year 1 Report
September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of graduation requirement rules that includes a provision for use of the state assessment for competency credit and discussion of legislative priorities, that includes support for Board authority emergency waiver of graduation requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduation requirement rules
November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of legislative priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBE legislative platform

Activities of the Board for 2021

In 2020-2021, the Board will promote its [Legislative Platform](#), which includes support for mastery-based learning that focuses on closing opportunity and resulting achievement gaps.

In addition, the Board may examine graduation pathway options assessments and scores. Table 4 lists the assessments used in graduation pathway options, and when the scores were identified by the Board and most recently reviewed. All the scores except for the score on the ASVAB were identified at least several years before graduation pathway options became graduation requirements, and for a different purpose.

Table 4: Graduation Score-setting and Review of Scores for Graduation Pathway Option Tests

Test	Date of score-setting or review	Comments
State Assessment—ELA	August 2015, reviewed January 2018	The exit exam scores on the state assessments were set based on an “equal impact” on students as previous exit exams (the High School Proficiency Exam in Reading and Writing and End-of-Course exams in math). Reviewed for the change to a 10 th grade test in 2018.
State Assessment—Math	August 2015, reviewed January 2018	The exit exam scores on the state assessments were set based on an “equal impact” on students as previous exit exams (the High School Proficiency Exam in Reading and Writing and End-of-Course exams in math). Reviewed for change to 10 th grade test in 2018.
State Assessment—WA-AIM ELA	August 2015	The exit exam scores on the state assessments were set based on an “equal impact” on students as previous exit exams (WAAS-Portfolio).

Test	Date of score-setting or review	Comments
State Assessment—WA-AIM Math	August 2015	The exit exam scores on the state assessments were set based on an “equal impact” on students as previous exit exams (WAAS-Portfolio).
SAT—Reading and Writing	August 2016, Reviewed January 2018	Established based on the State Assessment graduation scores for the Smarter Balanced test. Reviewed in January 2018 because of a change in the SAT reading and writing format.
SAT—Math	August 2016	Established based on the State Assessment graduation scores for the Smarter Balanced test.
ACT—Reading and Writing	August 2016	Established based on the State Assessment graduation scores for the Smarter Balanced test.
ACT—Math	August 2016	Established based on the State Assessment graduation scores for the Smarter Balanced test.
ASVAB	November 2019	Established in rule as the score needed to serve in a branch of the military. SBE posts the minimum score at least annually by September 1.

In July 2011, Common Core State Learning Standards were adopted for Washington. The Smarter Balanced assessments, aligned to the Common Core Standards, were first administered to students in the spring of 2015. During a transition period from 2015 to 2018, multiple assessments were accepted to meet the assessment graduation requirement: the Smarter Balanced assessments, as well as previous exit exams, and the ACT and SAT. In January 2015 the State Board of Education approved a [position statement](#) for setting scores for high school graduation in preparation for the Smarter Balanced and WA-AIM assessments becoming state exit exams. The position statement described an approach to setting scores. The Board:

Intends to set initial minimum scores for graduation on the high school SBAC that bridges past statewide performance on exit exams to the initial statewide performance of students on the SBAC assessments. This approach will begin the process of moving toward the more rigorous SBAC college- and career-ready level by setting initial high school proficiency scores that would impact students in the next few years approximately equally to how students have been impacted by exit exams during the past few years. These initial minimum scores would be re-evaluated over the following years, as new standards are implemented and as more students gain the skills necessary to be SBAC College and Career Ready.

The first class that used the Smarter Balanced assessment, along with WA-AIM, exclusively, without access to previous state exit exams, was the Class of 2019. Students in that class also had access to the Expedited Appeal Option. Then in 2019, the exit exam requirement was eliminated and replaced by graduation pathway options for the Class of 2020.

The SBE identified the current graduation scores on the state Smarter Balanced and WA-AIM tests, as well as the SAT and ACT tests, as initial scores as the state transitioned to learning standards that were new at the time. The purpose for the score on these tests were to use these tests as exit exams. In 2021-2022, the Board may reexamine these assessments and the scores students must meet to fulfill their graduation pathway option requirement. Perhaps adjustments to the scores would bring the assessment system into better alignment with the state's goals for graduation pathway options as ways students demonstrate their readiness for careers and education after high school.