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# CSAI Report

## States' Assessment Requirements for High School Graduation

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Which assessments are states requiring students to take,  
or take and pass, for high school graduation?

July 2016



The work reported herein was supported by grant number #S283B050022A between the U.S. Department of Education and WestEd with a subcontract to the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST). The findings and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of CRESST, WestEd, or the U.S. Department of Education.



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# A Review of States' Assessment Requirements for High School Graduation

In the past year, a number of states have eliminated the requirements for high school exit or graduation examinations and retroactively issued diplomas to students who had completed all other graduation requirements but had not passed the required examinations. On the other hand, some states have begun to require students to pass a civics test as a condition for high school graduation. The Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation (CSAI) recently conducted a scan of states' current assessment requirements for high school graduation, reviewing websites maintained by state departments of education and government agencies. This report provides a summary of states'<sup>1</sup> assessment requirements as a condition for high school graduation.

## State Assessments Required

As of the 2015–16 school year, 29 states do not require students to take and pass an assessment in order to graduate from high school. On the other hand, 24 states have an assessment requirement of some sort in place. Of the 24, ten states mandate that students earn a passing score or achieve proficiency on state assessments:

- Florida—grade 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test in reading, and Algebra 1 end-of-course assessment
- Indiana—Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress–Plus end-of-course assessments in Algebra 1 and English 10
- Massachusetts—grade 10 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science and technology/engineering assessments
- Mississippi—Subject Area Testing Program, 2nd Edition (SATP2), assessments in Algebra 1, Biology 1, U.S. History, and English 2<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, the term “states” refers to the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and eight U.S. territories. Information was not available for six states (American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Republic of the Marshall Islands); thus, this update discusses findings for 53 states ( $n = 53$ ).

<sup>2</sup> The SATP2 Algebra 1 and English 2 assessments were replaced with the Mississippi Assessment Program (MAP) assessments; thus it is unclear if students will be required to take the SATP2 or new MAP assessments.

- New York—Regents examinations in mathematics, science, social studies, and ELA, and a Pathway Assessment
- Ohio—Ohio Graduation Tests in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies
- Oklahoma—state end-of-instruction assessments in Algebra 1, English 2, and two of the following: Algebra 2, Biology 1, English 3, Geometry, and U.S. History
- Texas—state end-of-course assessments in English 1 and 2, Algebra 1, Biology, and U.S. History
- U.S. Virgin Islands—High School Competency Exam, which includes a writing component<sup>3</sup>
- Virginia—Standards of Learning (SOL) in English, mathematics, lab science, history and social sciences, in addition to other student-selected SOL tests in areas that may include computer science, technology, career and technical education, and economics

Note that Florida and Texas allow students to use an alternative assessment (e.g., a college and career readiness [CCR] assessment) as a substitute for state assessments. Specifically, students in Florida may use the SAT, ACT, and Postsecondary Education Readiness Test, while Texas students may use the Texas Success Initiative college preparatory end-of-course exam. As of June 2016, Oklahoma no longer requires students to take and pass the state end-of-instruction assessments in order to graduate from high school.<sup>4</sup>

## Multiple Assessments Required

Several states ( $n = 6$ ) require students to use a combination of state and other assessments to meet graduation eligibility:

- Idaho—students must pass state grade 10 assessments and take a CCR test (SAT, ACT, or Compass)<sup>5</sup>
- Louisiana—students must pass state end-of-course assessments and a civics assessment
- Maryland—students must pass state High School Assessments and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments
- Nevada—students must pass state assessments and take a CCR test (ACT)
- New Mexico—students must pass state and PARCC assessments
- Washington—students must pass state High School Proficiency Examinations and Smarter Balanced assessments

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<sup>3</sup> This information may not be current and may thus be inaccurate; students in the U.S. Virgin Islands are taking the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) assessments in English language arts and mathematics, so it is unclear if they will still be required to take the High School Competency Exam for graduation.

<sup>4</sup> The number of states with an assessment requirement for high school graduation is now 23.

<sup>5</sup> Note that the ISAT was replaced by Smarter Balanced, so it is unclear if students will be required to pass the ISAT or Smarter Balanced assessment.

Note that New Mexico allows students to use CCR and other alternative assessments (e.g., Advanced Placement [AP], PSAT, SAT, ACT, International Baccalaureate [IB], end-of-course examinations) as substitutes for state and PARCC assessments.

Oregon is the only state that requires students to pass Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium assessments; however, it allows students to use banked scores from previous state assessments or scores from CCR assessments to meet this requirement.

Three states provide students with several options to fulfill this graduation requirement. New Jersey allows students to pass either PARCC assessments or a CCR assessment.<sup>6</sup> Minnesota allows students to pass state or locally determined tests or take a CCR assessment to graduate from high school. However, beginning with the class of 2017, Minnesota will no longer require a graduation assessment. In Pennsylvania, districts have the authority to decide how students will meet this assessment requirement for graduation. Students can achieve proficiency on the state end-of-course Keystone Exams, include their Keystone Exam scores in the calculation of their course grades (worth 33%), take and pass locally selected assessments, and/or take and pass AP or IB examinations. Additionally, if students did not pass the Keystone Exams after two attempts, they could complete a project-based alternative to demonstrate proficiency.

## Civics Assessments Required

Five states (Louisiana, South Carolina, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming) are currently administering and requiring students to pass a civics test, while two states (Arizona and North Dakota) that do not currently have assessment requirements will begin to administer and require students to pass a civics test in the 2016–17 school year. The civics test for all of these states, with the exception of South Carolina and Wyoming, is based on questions found in the United States Immigration and Naturalization examination, which is given to individuals seeking citizenship. South Carolina's civics test is based on the principles of the United States Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Federalist papers, and American institutions and ideals, while Wyoming's test focuses on the principles of the constitutions of the United States and Wyoming.

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<sup>6</sup> Students, who do not demonstrate proficiency either through the PARCC or a substitute competency test in ELA and/or mathematics, can satisfy the criteria of the New Jersey Department of Education Portfolio Appeal to meet assessment graduation requirement.

## Future Assessments Required

Seven states (Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Missouri, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and Vermont) that have not previously required a graduation assessment have now mandated such assessments, with implementation dates in the relatively near future. For example, Missouri now requires students who enter grade 9 after July 2017 to pass a civics exam that is based on the United States Immigration and Naturalization Examination. Additionally, beginning with the class of 2021, Colorado will require students to earn a minimum score on a CCR assessment (e.g., ACT, Compass, WorkKeys, SAT, AP, or IB) in the subject areas of English and mathematics. In Vermont, beginning with the class of 2020, students must demonstrate proficiency in all of the following content areas in order to graduate: literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, physical and health education, arts, and transferable skills (e.g., communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, inquiry, problem solving, and use of technology). Local school boards are responsible for creating their own proficiency tests.

## Conclusion

A review of the use of assessments as a condition for high school graduation yields insight into state priorities. Slightly more than half of the states ( $n = 23$ ) are currently using an assessment to determine whether students are eligible to earn a high school diploma. Seven states will be joining this group of states in mandating the use of an assessment in the near future. For the twenty-three states that currently mandate an assessment, assessment requirements vary. A few states administer a civics test as part of graduation requirements. Several states mandate the use of only state assessments, while other states require a combination of assessments (e.g., PARCC, Smarter Balanced, commercially developed assessments). Some states provide flexibility in meeting this graduation requirement by allowing students to use alternative assessments as substitutes.

The Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation obtained the information in this report from websites maintained by state and territory departments of education and government agencies; thus, the accuracy of this report is commensurate with the accuracy of those sources. The reported data are intended to be used as a general summation of states' current assessment requirements for graduation, and not as a definitive report on any individual state or territory.

Table 1: High School Graduation Requirements—Assessments

State	Assessment Requirements
Alabama	No graduation assessment required.
Alaska	No graduation assessment required.
American Samoa	No information provided on assessment requirements.
Arizona	No graduation assessment required.  Beginning with the class of 2017, students are required to pass a civics test, based on the United States Immigration and Naturalization examination.
Arkansas	No graduation assessment required.
California	No graduation assessment required.
Colorado	No graduation assessment required.  Beginning with the class of 2021, students are required to earn a minimum score on a college- and career-readiness (CCR) assessment (e.g., ACT, Compass, WorkKeys, SAT, advanced placement, International Baccalaureate) in the subject areas of English and mathematics.
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	No information provided on assessment requirements.
Connecticut	No graduation assessment required.  Beginning with the class of 2020, students must “satisfactorily complete” end-of-school-year examinations in Algebra 1, Geometry, Biology, American History, and Grade 10 English.
Delaware	No graduation assessment required.
District of Columbia	No graduation assessment required.
Federated States of Micronesia	No information provided on assessment requirements.
Florida	Assessment required.  For the class of 2015–16, students are required to pass state assessments—the Grade 10 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in reading and the Algebra 1 end-of-course (EOC) assessment. Beginning with the class of 2016–17, students are required to pass the Grade 10 Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) in English language arts and Algebra 1 EOC. Students can use CCR assessments (i.e., ACT, SAT, Postsecondary Education Readiness Test) as substitute. Note that after spring 2015, there will be a new math test: FSA Algebra 1 EOC.
Georgia	No graduation assessment required.

State	Assessment Requirements
Guam	No information provided on assessment requirements.
Hawaii	No graduation assessment required.
Idaho	Assessment required.  Students are required to pass state assessments—grade 10 Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT)—in reading, math, and language usage, and take the SAT, ACT, or Compass examination in 11 <sup>th</sup> grade. Note that ISAT was replaced by Smarter Balanced.
Illinois	No graduation assessment required.
Indiana	Assessment required.  Students are required to pass state assessments—the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+) end-of-course assessments (ECAs)—in Algebra 1 and English 10. Beginning in 2016–17, the ISTEP+ Grade 10 Assessment in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics will become the graduation exam; the ECAs will be given to students as retests for the last time in 2018–19. The class of 2019 will be required to take and pass the ISTEP+ Grade 10 Assessment.
Iowa	No graduation assessment required.
Kansas	No graduation assessment required.
Kentucky	No graduation assessment required.
Louisiana	Assessment required.  Students are required to pass a civics test, based on the United States Immigration and Naturalization examination, and three state assessments, one in each category: Algebra 1 or Geometry, English 2 or 3, and Biology or U.S. History.
Maine	No graduation assessment required.
Maryland	Assessment required.  Students are required to pass course and assessments (state High School Assessments and PARCC) in English 10, Algebra 1, Biology, and Government.
Massachusetts	Assessment required.  Students are required to pass the state grade 10 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) ELA, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering assessments.
Michigan	No graduation assessment required.



State	Assessment Requirements
<b>Minnesota</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to take a college and career readiness (CCR) test (i.e., ACT plus Writing, WorkKeys, Compass, or Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) or pass/achieve proficiency on state tests in writing, reading, and mathematics. Note that this requirement ends with the class of 2015–16.</p>
<b>Mississippi</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass state assessments in Algebra 1, Biology 1, U.S. History, and English 2.</p>
<b>Missouri</b>	<p>Students who enter grade 9 after July 2017 (class of 2021) will be required to take and pass a 100-question civics exam based on the United States Immigration and Naturalization Examination.</p>
<b>Montana</b>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p>
<b>Nebraska</b>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p>
<b>Nevada</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to take the ACT and pass state assessments—the Nevada High School Proficiency Exams (HSPEs)—in reading, math, and science (class of 2016). For the classes of 2017 and 2018, students are required to take four end-of-course (EOC) examinations and the ACT. Beginning with the classes of 2019, students are required to take the ACT and pass all four EOC exams. The EOC exams are in English language arts (ELA) 1 and 2, Math 1 with Algebra 1 focus and Math 2 with geometry focus, and Integrated Math 1 and 2.</p>
<b>New Hampshire</b>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p>
<b>New Jersey</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass PARCC or CCR assessments (i.e., SAT, ACT, PSAT, ACT Aspire, ASVAB, and Accuplacer) or meet criteria of the New Jersey Department of Education Portfolio Appeal.</p>
<b>New Mexico</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass PARCC and state assessments in reading, math, science, social studies, and writing. Students can use CCR/alternative assessments (i.e., Advanced Placement, PSAT, SAT, ACT, Accuplacer, Compass, International Baccalaureate, ACT Plan, and end-of-course examinations) as a substitute.</p>

State	Assessment Requirements
<p><b>New York</b></p>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass state (Regents) examinations—one each in math, science, social studies, and English language arts, and a Pathway Assessment.</p>
<p><b>North Carolina</b></p>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p>
<p><b>North Dakota</b></p>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p> <p>Beginning with the class of 2016–17, students are required to pass a civics test, based on the United States Immigration and Naturalization examination.</p>
<p><b>Ohio</b></p>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass state assessments—Ohio Graduation Tests—in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. This requirement will end with the class of 2017. Beginning with the class of 2018, students must earn a passing score using 7 end-of-course (EOC) examinations; earn points through workforce credentials or pass career readiness test; or earn passing scores on college admission test. Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate scores may be substituted for EOC scores.</p>
<p><b>Oklahoma</b></p>	<p>No graduation assessment required (effective July 1, 2016).</p> <p>In the 2015–16 school year, students were required to pass four of seven end-of-instruction assessments: Algebra 1, English 2, and two of the following: Algebra 2, Biology 1, English 3, Geometry, and U.S. History. However, in June 2016, Oklahoma passed House Bill 3218, which eliminated the assessment requirement. The class of 2017 and beyond will no longer have to take and pass the state assessments in order to graduate from high school.</p>
<p><b>Oregon</b></p>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass the Smarter Balanced assessments, specifically earn certain points in reading, mathematics, and writing. Note that students could use banked scores from old state assessments (i.e., Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) and use college and career readiness tests (e.g., advanced placement (AP), SAT, Asset, Compass, WorkKeys) as substitute for state assessments.</p>

State	Assessment Requirements
<p><b>Pennsylvania</b></p>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students must demonstrate proficiency in each main subject area as determined by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keystone Exams (either passing the exams or counting exam scores, worth at least 33 percent, in course grade);</li> <li>• Locally developed, independently validated assessments (that are as rigorous as the Keystone Exams); and/or</li> <li>• Advanced placement or International Baccalaureate exams.</li> </ul> <p>Keystone exams are available in 10 core subjects/courses: Algebra 1 and 2, Geometry, Biology, Chemistry, English Composition, Literature, Civics and Government, U.S. History, and World History. Keystone Exams can replace locally developed final exams in these courses. Students may retake a Keystone Exam to raise their score; and, if a student has not achieved proficiency after two attempts, he/she can complete a project-based alternative to demonstrate his/her knowledge in the subject area.</p>
<p><b>Puerto Rico</b></p>	<p>No information provided on assessment requirements.</p>
<p><b>Republic of the Marshall Islands</b></p>	<p>No information provided on assessment requirements.</p>
<p><b>Republic of Palau</b></p>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p>
<p><b>Rhode Island</b></p>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p> <p>Beginning with the class of 2020, students are required to pass state assessments in six core areas: ELA, math, science, social studies, arts, and technology, and complete 2 performance assessments or diploma assessments (e.g., exhibitions, portfolios, comprehensive course assessments). Prior to 2020 but no earlier than 2017, districts may choose to include state assessments or other standardized assessments in addition to the 2 performance-based assessments.</p>
<p><b>South Carolina</b></p>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass a civics test, which is an end-of-course classroom examination given within the required U.S. History and Constitution course or another course.</p>
<p><b>South Dakota</b></p>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p>
<p><b>Tennessee</b></p>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p>

State	Assessment Requirements
<b>Texas</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass state end-of-course assessments in English 1 and 2, Algebra 1, Biology, and U.S. History; however, students may still receive diploma through an individual graduation committee determination. Additionally, students may use the Texas Success Initiative end-of-course assessment, administered in college preparatory courses, to meet test requirement for Algebra 1 and English 2.</p>
<b>Utah</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass a civics test, based on the United States Immigration and Naturalization examination.</p>
<b>U.S. Virgin Islands</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass the state assessment—High School Competency Exam—that includes a writing component. Note that this information may not be current.</p>
<b>Vermont</b>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p> <p>Beginning with the class of 2020, course requirements must include “demonstration of proficiency as means of determining progress and graduation” in all content areas: literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, physical and health education, arts, and transferable skills (e.g., communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, inquiry, problem solving, and use of technology). Local school boards are charged with the responsibility to create their own proficiency tests.</p>
<b>Virginia</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass state assessments—Standards of Learning (SOL). Students must earn a certain number of credits on English, math, lab science, history and social sciences, and additional student-selected tests.</p>
<b>Washington</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass the state High School Proficiency Examinations and Smarter Balanced assessments in English language arts and mathematics. Note that beginning with the class of 2017, students are required to pass the biology end-of-course examination.</p>
<b>West Virginia</b>	<p>No graduation assessment required.</p>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<p>Assessment required.</p> <p>Students are required to pass a civics test, based on the United States Immigration and Naturalization examination.</p>

State	Assessment Requirements
Wyoming	Assessment required.  Students are required to pass a civics test on the principles of the constitution of the state of Wyoming and the United States.