CENTER ON EDUCATION POLICY CEP

Exit Exams POLICY BRIEF 2

High School Exit Exams

1 2 3

STATE HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMS:

Growth in High School Exit Exams Levels Off But Minority Students Affected Disproportionately

In August 2006, the Center on Education Policy released its fifth annual report on state exit exams. This policy brief, one of a series, highlights a finding from the report, *State High School Exit Exams: A Challenging Year*. To learn more about the Center's work or to download the entire report, please visit the Center's Web site at www.cep-dc.org.

Center on Education Policy ▪ January 2007

For more on state high school exit exams, read the Center's latest report on exit exams, *State High School Exit Exams: A Challenging Year*, and other reports available on our Web site at www.cep-dc.org.

CENTER ON EDUCATION POLICY CEP

Center on Education Policy
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 522
Washington, D.C. 20036

tel: 202.822.8065
fax: 202.822.6008

e: cep-dc@cep-dc.org
w: www.cep-dc.org

STATE HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMS: Growth in High School Exit Exams Levels Off But Minority Students Affected Disproportionately

Growth in the number of states adopting new exit exam requirements seems to have leveled off. Still, exit exams are a force in education currently affecting two-thirds of the nation's high school students.

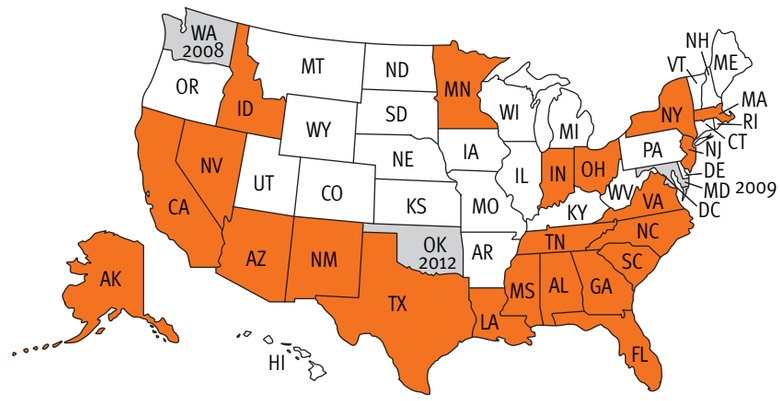
The figure to the right shows the 22 states that required students to pass exams to receive a high school diploma in 2006—3 more states than in 2005 and 4 more than in 2002. One state, Utah, decided in 2006 not to withhold diplomas from students who failed the state competency test.

By 2012, another three states plan to withhold diplomas based on students' exam performance. Washington State's exit exam mandate takes effect for the class of 2008. Maryland stopped using the Maryland Functional Test as its exit exam in 2004 and will not resume withholding diplomas until 2009, when students will be required to pass the Maryland High School Assessment to graduate. Oklahoma adopted a new exit exam requirement in 2005 and will begin withholding diplomas for the first time for the class of 2012.

As displayed in the table to the right, 65% of the nation's public high school students attend school in the 22 states with current exit exams. By 2012, an estimated 71% of public high school students will attend school in the 25 states with planned exit exams.

However, students of color are somewhat more likely than other students to be required to pass an exit exam. In 2006, 76% of the nation's minority high school students were enrolled in public school in the 22 states with current exit exams—a share that is projected to increase to 81% of minority high school students by 2012.

States with Mandatory Exit Exams



States with mandatory exit exams in 2006:

AL, AK, AZ, CA, FL, GA, ID, IN, LA, MA, MN, MS, NV, NJ, NM, NY, NC, OH, SC, TN, TX, VA (22 states)

States phasing in exit exams by 2012 but not yet withholding diplomas:

MD (2009), OK (2012), WA (2008) (3 states)

States with no mandatory exit exam:

AR, CO, CT, DE, DC, HI, IL, IA, KS, KY, ME, MI, MO, MT, NE, NH, ND, OR, PA, RI, SD, UT, VT, WV, WI, WY (25 states and DC)

Figure reads: Alabama has a mandatory exit exam in 2006 and is withholding diplomas from students based on exam performance. Maryland is phasing in a new mandatory exit exam and plans to begin withholding diplomas based on this exam in 2009. Arkansas does not have an exit exam, nor does it plan to implement one.

Source: Center on Education Policy, exit exam survey of state departments of education, June 2006.

Percentage of the Nation's Public High School Students Enrolled in School in States with Exit Exams, by Race/Ethnicity

Student Group	2006 (22 states)	2012 Projected (25 states)
All students	65%	71%
White	58%	63%
Latino	84%	84%
African American	72%	78%
Asian/Pacific Islander	72%	79%
American Indian/Native Alaskan	53%	76%
All minority students (Latino, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Native Alaskan)	76%	81%

Table reads: In 2006, 72% of the nation's African American public school students in grades 9-12 were enrolled in school in states with exit exams; in 2012, 78% of African American public school students in grades 9-12 will be enrolled in school in states with exit exams.

Source: Calculations by the Center on Education Policy, based on data from Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2003.