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.
STATE HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMS: States Continue Trend Toward Higher-Level Exit Exams, More Subjects Tested

Generally, states have moved toward more rigorous exams by including higher-level content in their tests and testing additional subjects. Between 2002 and 2006, the number of states administering minimum competency exams (MCE), which generally focus on basic skills below the high school level, fell from 10 to 3. During the same period, the number of states administering standards-based exams (SBE), which are generally aligned with high-school-level standards, rose from 7 to 15, while the number administering end-of-course exams (EOC), which assess the content of specific high school courses, increased from 2 to 4. By 2012, only 2 states plan to continue administering minimum competency exams. All states with mandatory exit exams assess students in English language arts and mathematics, but more states are adding tests in science and social studies. Between 2006 and 2012, the number of states assessing science is expected to rise from 11 to 19 and the number assessing social studies from 9 to 13.

**Table reads:** Alabama currently administers the Alabama High School Graduation Exam, 3rd Edition for which consequences began for the class of 2001. The exam assesses reading, language, math, and science, and is considered by the state to be a standards-based exam aligned to 11th-grade standards.

* These states have had earlier versions of their exams. The year listed reflects the first year diplomas were withheld based on the test currently administered by each state.

**For most graduating seniors in South Carolina and Mississippi, 2006 was the first year that diplomas were withheld based on the current exam; prior to 2006, students had to pass the earlier versions of the exams. Note: ELA = English language arts**

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