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REPORT OF THE  
NEW JERSEY STATE COMMITTEE  
ON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

December 27, 1977

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State of New Jersey  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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December 27, 1977

Dr. Fred G. Burke  
Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Education  
225 West State Street  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Dr. Burke:

The Committee on High School Graduation Requirements is pleased to submit the attached report of its findings and recommendations to you and the State Board of Education.

We believe this report presents the best approach to a complex issue and in addition to enhancing the value of the high school diploma, provides for the improvement of education in New Jersey. It represents over 1,500 hours of effort on the part of committee members, devoted to thorough research, careful evaluation of the issues, and the interplay of our diverse views and experiences.

We hope you and the State Board of Education will share our findings with the state's educators, through educational associations and groups, and through the local school districts which are ultimately responsible for the education of our children and include their responses in your consideration of our recommendations.

Finally, we would like to commend you and the members of the State Board of Education for your deliberate approach to the issue of statewide high school graduation requirements and thank you for the opportunity to provide our counsel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ronald H. Lewis".

Ronald Lewis  
Chairman

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## PREFACE

Some months ago, there was an article in the New York Times Magazine that described the multitude of ways that things can and often do go wrong with efforts to improve the human condition. One of the anecdotes told by the author described the unanticipated consequence of building the Aswan Dam in Egypt. Heralded when it was constructed as a solution to Egypt's energy problems, the dam also cut off the annual flooding of the Nile Valley. The result was a deterioration of the soil in this important agricultural region followed by an increase in the demand for fertilizers among Egypt's farmers. The production of the fertilizer has come to consume more energy than that produced by the dam.

Whether or not it is true, the story makes the significant point that caution should be the rule when we undertake to tamper with natural phenomena. This rule also should be applied to proposals to change fundamental social institutions, such as the public schools. Educators often have been accused of following fads without adequately considering the consequences of their actions. In recent years there has been a deluge of proposals intended to improve public education and all too frequently implementation was not preceded by a careful analysis of the probable

consequences of the proposed actions. During our deliberations over the issue of requirements for high school graduation we have attempted to keep this concern with unanticipated consequences in the foreground, being aware that our recommendations could affect the lives of thousands of students and educators in New Jersey. We have sought to formulate recommendations that would enhance the effectiveness of the schools without diminishing the quality of the services.

How one feels about this approach may depend on one's historical perspective. It is becoming commonplace for Americans to hear or read about the failures or inadequacies of the schools that they generously have supported with tax dollars. Almost daily the news media offer stories of declining test scores, semi-literate graduates, school closings, or research purporting to demonstrate that schools do not or cannot make much difference in the lives of our children. Dissatisfaction with public education has grown for over a decade, and, as a consequence, over a hundred accountability laws have been enacted by the states since 1963. These laws seem to be in response to four related but qualitatively different problems: the need to ensure equal opportunities for all children; the need to ensure adequate preparation in the basic skills; the need to control rapidly rising costs; and the desire to enhance the value of the high school diploma. Indeed, it was out of such concerns that this Committee was created and asked

to prepare this report.

Neither critics in the news media, however, nor legislators anxious to ensure quality education have provided in our view an adequate account of the problems of the schools. Like much current social criticism, their views have lacked historical perspective and an adequate data base. For decades the public schools have provided and continue to provide the vast majority of youth with an excellent foundation for adult life. They have fostered the creativity and diversity that make this society a unique experiment among nations. They have coped with the socialization of millions of immigrants and have shouldered the burdens of racial and social integration often neglected by other sectors of the society. They have successfully pursued the social goal of increased educational attainment for all Americans; the proportion of youth who graduated from high school rose from 29% in 1930 to 59% in 1950 to 75% in 1970.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the schools met the challenges of rapid expansion during the 1950's and 1960's precipitated by the post war baby boom and now they are making the adjustment to stable or declining enrollments. Finally, the most significant achievement of the schools is the development of talent - we only need to look at our own communities for a moment

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas F. Green "Minimal Educational Standards - A Systemic Perspective" Paper presented at the Education Commission of the States/National Institute of Education Workshop on Minimal Competency Testing. October, 1977, p. 4.

to become aware of the magnitude of this achievement. In sum, the public schools have been and remain a success in terms of their general social goals.

Why do we now seem to be facing problems of institutional stagnation and ineffectiveness in public education? Have the schools changed that much? Is the historical record misleading? It may be argued that our current problems are a logical extension of the successes described above. Since the beginning of this century, it has been the mission of the schools to increase the level of educational attainment of the American public. This goal was supported because it brought both social benefits in the form of better citizens and more highly trained workers; benefits to individuals in the form of upward mobility. As levels of educational attainment increase, however, the benefits associated with particular credentials decrease. In a society in which only ten or twenty percent of the population has a high school diploma, it is a significant advantage to hold one but there is no severe handicap for those who do not. In a society in which seventy percent of all youth attain the diploma, it is of less value to those who receive it because it no longer distinguishes them from their peers. However, those who fail to attain the diploma begin adult life with an enormous handicap.

Thus, dropping out of school became a problem in the 1950's because it became a serious disadvantage to fail

to attain a high school diploma.

The social value of the diploma has declined as a direct consequence of the increase in educational attainment achieved during the past three decades. This change in the meaning of the diploma would have occurred regardless of any change in the educational standards used to award the diploma. It is not clear whether educational standards have declined in the recent past or simply changed as a consequence of reform of curricula. The observed decline in standardized test scores during the past fifteen years, the changes in course requirements during the same period, and the emphasis on social promotion at all grade levels lend credence to arguments that standards have fallen but the evidence is far from conclusive.

The minimum competency testing movement that seems to be sweeping the nation is an attempt to restore the social value of the diploma and to enhance its educational value through the simple device of linking the credential directly to a measure of achievement. Advocates of state-wide minimal competency testing claim that the tests will ensure that all high school graduates possess the essential skills and that schools, teachers, and students will make greater efforts to reach the required levels of achievement. These claims assume that effective modes of instruction are available but are not now being utilized in the schools and that the presence of an examination as a barrier to graduation will have positive effects on student motivation. Not only

are these assumptions debatable, but the side effects of minimal competency testing on educational policy, the locus of educational decision-making, and curricula are being ignored.

This Committee has attempted to maintain a historical perspective on the current definitions of the problems of public education. For if one assumed that the quality of public education was in general state of decline, one might recommend a course of drastic action, but if one assumed that the problem is a change in the demands on the schools from increasing rates of graduation to an emphasis upon raising the levels of achievement, one may propose a somewhat different course. This Committee has taken the latter perspective.

We are not suggesting that the schools need no improvements; clearly they do. We are simply taking note that the enthusiasm for minimum competency testing as such may have more to do with enhancing the value of a credential as a device to match individuals with careers than it does with improving instruction. This Committee has sought a path that would achieve both goals: a more valuable diploma and improved instruction. We do not believe that these goals are mutually exclusive, but they are not one and the same.

Working toward the improvement of learning requires a more subtle and complex strategy than implementing statewide high school examinations. It means maintaining a close

proximity between the classroom and the locus of decision-making; between parents and policy-makers. In sum, it means local control over curricula and standards of achievement, and it means a state strategy that protects and enhances the ability of local communities to shape their own educational policies. Indeed, it is in the interest of state government to promote and support good management locally, for state government cannot efficiently and effectively manage the public schools. Schools are fragile institutions; they require commitment and dedication. And professional educators required to implement a curriculum rigorously defined by the state are less likely to manifest that commitment. Moreover, education remains more an art than a science, and there is no single instructional prescription that can be shown to be best for all students.

Nevertheless, we are conscious of the fact that it is time to re-examine the changes in curriculum that have occurred in the past twenty years and to re-examine our standards and procedures for ensuring the attainment of these standards. There are students who fail to learn, teachers who fail to teach, administrators who fail to provide direction. In considering a response to these problems we have tried to be clear about means and ends, and we see no simple technical solution to the problem of inadequate levels of achievement. We are confident, however, that our recommendations set a direction which will lead to educational improvement, and do so with a minimum of unanticipated consequences, and which will reinforce the good features of the present school system.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to express our gratitude to the Commissioner of Education, Dr. Fred G. Burke, for the opportunity to offer our collective counsel, and to the staff of the State Department of Education, Thomas B. Corcoran, Robin M. Brandin, and Peter Walling, who provided exceptionally competent and conscientious assistance throughout. We also must thank all of those within New Jersey and outside who gave freely of their expertise and experience - particularly those New Jersey school personnel who took time away from their budget preparations and other duties to respond to our survey. We also wish to thank the secretaries at the State Department of Education - Roberta Hodanish, Bette Maccaroni, Kathy Paul and Joan Scarlata, who prepared sub-committee reports, distributed materials, and enabled us to make unreasonable deadlines.

Finally, a word about ourselves: like all committees, we had to learn to work together. We began in an atmosphere of some tension but this was overcome as we came to understand the diversity of our backgrounds and perspectives. This report is a product of the natural interplay of diverse interests and is itself evidence that the elements of the educational community can work together to meet new and difficult challenges. We have argued and debated and spent long hours on a difficult issue. Collectively we have contributed nearly fifteen hundred hours

to the development of the recommendations contained in this report. We feel that the effort was worthwhile and hope that we have been able to make a significant contribution to the maintenance of a strong and effective system of public schools in New Jersey.

The New Jersey State Committee  
on High School Graduation  
Requirements

December 13, 1977

MEMBERS OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Chairperson: Dr. Ronald Lewis, Superintendent,  
Plainfield Public Schools

Ms. Elizabeth Ames  
Warren Hills Regional and Franklin  
School Boards

Dr. Virginia Brinson  
Superintendent, Middlesex Borough  
Public Schools

Ms. Frances Carnochan  
Guidance Counselor, Trenton High  
School

Dr. Elric A. Cicchetti  
Principal, Mercer County Vocational  
School - Assunpink Center

Ms. Grace Counsellor  
Teacher, Salem High School

Mr. Warren Cummings  
Retired Teacher and Past President  
of N.J.E.A.

Ms. Ellen Davis  
Teacher, Bruner Elementary School,  
Westfield

Mr. Paul Dexter  
Student, New Academic High School,  
Jersey City

Mr. Agapito Diaz  
Deputy Director, Puerto Rican  
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Dr. Jack Eisenstein  
Superintendent, Atlantic City  
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Mr. Tyrone Gillespe  
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Ms. Adriene Groves  
Teacher, Memorial High School,  
North Bergen

Dr. Glenn Grube  
Principal, Bergenfield  
High School

Ms. Barbara Harris  
President, Newark Teachers  
Association

Mr. Paul Hirschy  
Guidance Counselor, Pleasantville  
High School

Mr. Roy Holland  
Principal, Glassboro High School

Dr. Mary Kievit  
Acting Dean, Rutgers Graduate  
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Ms. Patricia Lagunas  
Reading Resource Teacher,  
Hillsborough Middle School

Mr. Bernard McBride  
Student, Mainland Regional  
High School, Linwood

Mr. Joseph Moore  
Director, New Jersey Education  
Reform Project, Newark

Mr. Kenneth Sperling  
Director of Organization and  
Career Development, Warner  
Lambert Corporation

Ms. Carolyn Wolsiefer  
Student, Hunterdon Central  
Regional High School

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### The Committee on High School Graduation

Requirements recommends that the State Board of Education adopt policies which ensure the following:

1. Current curricular requirements mandated by the State for graduation shall be changed to require that all students receive and pass:
  - A. Four years of English or equivalent credits in communication skills.
  - B. Two years of Math or equivalent credits in computational skills and in applied mathematics.
  - C. Two years of American History and democratic practices, including political, economic and social problems and conditions confronting contemporary adults. Appropriate attention shall be given to the role of women and racial and ethnic minorities.
  - D. One year of natural science.
  - E. Physical Education, health and safety as currently required by administrative code.

Current state requirements of ninety-two credits for graduation from a four year high school and sixty-nine credits from a three year high school should be maintained and a student's course of study should strike a reasonable balance between set requirements and study based on the choice of individual students. Program offerings should be planned to protect the student's opportunity to engage in special types of programs, such as vocational and occupational programs to participate in Plan B as defined in administrative code. Districts also should be encouraged to maintain elective offerings to meet all of the state goals for education.

2. In addition to curricular and credit requirements, every student should be required to demonstrate proficiency in the following areas before being awarded a diploma:

A. Communication Skills - student should demonstrate the ability to:

1. Use basic reading, writing, speaking and listening skills;
2. Gather, organize, analyze and process information;
3. Solve problems and utilize problem-solving procedures.

B. Computational Skills - student should demonstrate the ability to:

1. Use basic mathematics skills;
2. Utilize problem-solving operations.

C. Work and Consumption Skills - student should demonstrate an understanding of:

1. The collection and use of information helpful in selecting and pursuing a career;
2. Consumer economics;
3. Legal matters associated with consumerism;
4. The use of community resources.

D. Self-Maintenance Skills - student should demonstrate an understanding of:

1. Basic principles of physical and mental health;
2. Skills necessary to establish individuality and to maintain interdependence with others;
3. The role of aesthetic expression.

E. Citizenship Skills/Civics - student should demonstrate an understanding of:

1. The duties and responsibilities of being a citizen;

2. Principles of government and of the free-enterprise system;
3. Conservation of human and natural resources.
3. The State Department of Education should require every school district which awards a high school diploma to develop a plan to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate proficiency in the above areas, to be included along with curricular offerings, as part of the district's educational plan and submitted to the State Department of Education for approval. This plan should show what courses are available to meet curriculum requirements, how students will be assessed for proficiency in each of the above areas, and what the standards will be for graduation. Assessment as used herein is intended to include, but not be limited to, the procedures defined in NJAC 6:8-3.4 and in Chapter IV of this report and refers to procedures for the verification of proficiency in the skill areas listed above.
4. Curricular offerings of local districts, in grades K through 12, must give adequate, though certainly not exclusive, attention to all proficiency requirements recommended above to ensure the students progress toward proficiency levels. No assessment procedure shall be adopted as a requirement for graduation unless the district curriculum provides the opportunity to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills, and so demonstrates in its educational plan.
5. The choice of assessment techniques and instruments and the development of standards shall be the responsibility of local districts. These must be developed according to guidelines provided by the State Department of Education. In order to insure some degree of consistency throughout the state, the statewide minimum standards in basic skills shall be taken into consideration by local districts.
6. Local assessment plans should identify alternative procedures for students to demonstrate proficiencies which do not rely on standardized paper-and-pencil tests. The results of no single assessment instrument should be a bar to graduation; localities must provide alternative means for assessing proficiencies required for a diploma. The validity and reliability of these alternatives must have been demonstrated previously or be documented by the district.

7. Assessment for proficiency required for graduation must begin no later than the ninth grade and students must have frequent opportunities to meet those requirements prior to completing the twelfth grade. Further, a student who has demonstrated proficiency in any area should be exempted from further formal assessment for minimal proficiency in that area before graduation.
8. Sufficient lead time must be given to local school districts to plan and implement additional requirements for high school graduation. Not less than one full academic year shall be given to implement changes in curriculum requirements, and not less than two academic years should be given to implement the proficiency requirements. New curriculum and proficiency requirements should commence with the class which is in the ninth grade at the time of implementation.
9. Students must be assessed at appropriate intervals throughout their education in those areas in which proficiency will be required for graduation and provided appropriate remediation which will assist them to attain proficiencies. The results of these periodic assessments should provide feedback for local curriculum and instruction, which should be subsequently revised to reflect the needs of students.
10. Local districts should be encouraged to develop promotion standards to bring students toward proficiencies required for graduation at an appropriate pace.
11. The local school district must provide information about educational options to all students who fail to satisfy proficiency requirements by the end of the twelfth grade.

Districts should be encouraged to set up a special procedure for the review of cases of students who have met all credit, curriculum, and attendance requirements, but have not met all of the proficiency requirements.

12. Students who have not met proficiency requirements and elect not to continue in high school must be provided with a transcript which documents their proficiency levels and the courses completed. The State Department of Education and local districts should publicize the availability of transcripts and the documentation they provide. The State Department should make alternative transcript formats and documentation procedures available to local districts upon request.
13. Representatives of shared-time vocational schools should be included in the planning of the high school graduation requirements for sending school districts.
14. The State Department of Education must provide local districts with support and assistance in developing assessment plans. Specifically, the State Department should provide guidelines for the development of the plans, technical assistance in their design and implementation, and financial and technical resources, including a test item bank, to assist districts in developing reliable and valid assessment instruments and procedures.
15. A state advisory body should be created (teachers, administrators, students, school board members and representatives from institutions of higher education and appropriate associations and groups) to assist the State Department of Education with the development of an implementation plan for the recommended statewide high school graduation requirements. In particular, this group should review and monitor the implementation of state guidelines.
16. The State Department must develop a public information program to prepare students, parents and others for the recommended graduation requirements and to explain the role and the limitations of assessment procedures.
17. Appropriate changes must be made in the budget caps law and budget review process to enable local districts to accommodate increased costs of assessment and remediation without compromising the availability of current offerings.

18. The State Department of Education should undertake efforts to monitor, describe and analyze the effects of any proficiency assessment program with regard to drop-out rates, patterns of retention in grade, changes in grade point averages, rates of classification as learning disabled, changes in curriculum, post-school experiences of students and other effects reported by local school districts.
19. The State Department of Education must set up a process to determine the consequences of applying the recommended proficiency requirements to bi-lingual students or of exempting them from such requirements.
20. The State Department of Education should encourage non-public schools to adopt high school graduation requirements similar to those of public schools.
21. Classified students should not be required to meet those proficiency requirements which are not consistent with their needs and abilities. They should be awarded a diploma upon successful completion of their special programs of instruction.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Issue

The need to re-examine and to tighten the standards for graduation from high school has captured the attention of a wide variety of groups throughout the nation. The news media have given frequent coverage to this issue through reports on declining test scores, minimal competency testing, new standards for promotion, and so on. A February issue of Time magazine was entitled, "The Devalued Diploma" and a September issue of Newsweek carried a feature article on the "plight of urban high schools." Several television documentaries also have dealt with the theme of standards in the public schools.

Opinion polls during recent years have repeatedly found that the vast majority of Americans feel that schools should place greater emphasis upon the basic skills and that a considerable majority of the public favor a graduation examination of some type as a prerequisite for a high school diploma. An Eagleton Institute poll conducted in July, 1977 reported that 58% of the New Jersey residents polled favored a state examination for high school graduation. However, that same poll revealed that 66% of adults with children in the public schools gave positive ratings to their local schools.<sup>1</sup> Thus, while the state's citizens generally are

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<sup>1</sup>Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, Press Release, July 17, 1977, p. 1-2.

concerned about the value of the diploma and about media reports of inadequacies in the educational system, parents seem to reach somewhat different conclusions about the schools and teaching staff serving their own children.

Yet more than personal experience underlies the widespread belief that the value of the high school diploma is declining. Employers, college admissions offices, and graduates themselves are finding the diploma less and less meaningful as an indication of any level of competency. Their conclusions tend to be supported by a variety of quantitative and qualitative data:

- Scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) have fallen from a mean of 473 on the verbal section in 1965 to a mean of 434 in 1975; and from a mean of 496 on the mathematics section in 1965 to a mean of 472 in 1975.
- The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 1975 reported a decline in science knowledge among American students between 1969 and 1975 equivalent to a half-year loss in learning.
- NAEP also has reported in a nationwide survey of 17 year old students and young adults that "many consumers are not prepared to shop wisely because of their inability to use fundamental math principles such as figuring with fractions or working percents."
- As many as 23 million Americans may be functionally illiterate, according to a study sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education. The study conducted at the University of Texas at Austin, found that 19.8% of American adults lack the skills and knowledge to function effectively and another 33.9% are only marginally competent in five knowledge areas (occupational, consumer, economics, government and law, health and community resources) and in three skill areas (communication, computation and problem solving).

- Comparative surveys of writing skills in 1970 and 1974 show 13 and 17 year old youth to be using a more limited vocabulary and writing in a shorter, more "primer-like" style in 1974 than in 1970.
- The American College Testing Program also has reported a decline in the average scores of students applying for college admission.
- The Association of American Publishers revised its textbook study guide for college freshmen in 1975, gearing the reading level down to the ninth grade.
- The New Jersey State Department of Higher Education, like many other State systems, has found it necessary to adopt basic skills examinations for all freshmen in order to determine their deficiencies and needs for remedial assistance.

The issue addressed by this report, however, is not whether there has been a decline in the quality of public education, but whether prescribing more specific statewide requirements for graduation will serve some useful social and educational purpose. The two issues are related politically and perhaps there is some causal linkage between them, but it is the question of educational improvement that is addressed herein rather than the ill-defined problem of declining test scores.

#### The Origin of the Committee

The Committee on High School Graduation Requirements was established by the State Board of Education in January of 1977 and charged with examining the desirability of altering current statewide requirements for high school graduation. The creation of this Committee was in direct

response to both Legislative and State House interest in the development of a statewide examination in the basic skills as a graduation requirement.

The 26 members represent a broad spectrum of the educational community of New Jersey, including administrators, teachers, students, and community leaders from throughout the state. They were selected by Commissioner Fred G. Burke from nominations submitted by State Department of Education senior staff, county superintendents, and professional organizations in education.

The mission of the Committee was to consider the following:

1. Whether graduation requirements currently mandated by the state should be reconsidered and revised.
2. What appropriate criteria for graduation might be.
3. How those criteria could be assessed.
4. What time, personnel, financial resources would be required to implement any recommendations for new requirements for graduation.
5. What would be the consequences of implementing additional statewide requirements including implications for students who do not meet mandated requirements.

In a letter to Dr. Ronald Lewis, Superintendent of Schools in Plainfield, inviting him to serve as Chairperson, Commissioner Burke expressed his view of the Committee's charge:

*"As you well know, public education has come under increasing criticism for its apparent failure to provide everyone with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that are believed to be prerequisites to a productive and satisfying adult life. Accountability, back to basics, and proficiency testing are the code-words of the reform movement that seems to be sweeping the nation. However inadequate the analysis or the solutions offered by these critics and reformers, they have struck a responsive chord with the public because they are responding to real deficiencies in public education. I share their concern for improved results, for less rhetoric and better performance on the part of the educational profession.*

*The Committee which you are asked to lead is charged with determining whether the setting of new standards for graduation, either on a local or a statewide basis, will bring about such improvements and at what cost and with what consequence for students, schools, and their communities. With the assistance of Department staff, the Committee has been asked to review the policies and programs of other states and their impact; analyze the costs and consequences for New Jersey of the major policy options and then make its recommendations to the State Board of Education in January, 1978..."*

The Committee was divided into four working subcommittees, which functioned in tandem to address portions of the overall mission. Each subcommittee submitted a report to the full Committee for review, revision and endorsement; these reports became working documents for the use of subsequent subcommittees and were the basis for the analysis section of this report. The four subcommittees were:

- The Sub-Committee on Policy Issues and Options charged with making recommendations on possible criteria for high school graduation;
- The Sub-Committee on Assessment Strategies charged with recommending assessment strategies and, where appropriate, standards or procedures for setting standards;

- The Sub-Committee on Impact Analysis charged with developing an impact statement for the criteria and assessment strategies recommended by the two previous Sub-Committees;
- The Sub-Committee on Implementation Strategies charged with considering implementation strategies.

The primary charge to the whole Committee was to make recommendations regarding changes in state-mandated criteria for graduation from high school. The Committee felt that the formulation of such recommendations should be based upon a thorough analysis of their probable impact on the state, local schools, and students and upon consideration of implementation problems and options.

#### The Committee's Approach to the Issue

In addressing the issue of requirements for high school graduation, the Committee reviewed the rapidly growing body of literature on the subject, carefully considered the experiences of other states and school districts that have adopted proficiency requirements and assessed their relevance to the specific circumstances of New Jersey, sought out expert opinion, and debated the merits of the available alternatives. Careful consideration of the views of all parties affected by changes in graduation requirements including educators, students and the public ensured that no hasty decisions would be made that might ultimately have unanticipated negative consequences. The Committee did not seek simple politically attractive solutions,

but concerned itself with the more difficult issue of relating the means of changing graduation requirements to the ends of improved learning.

The research and analysis itself was conducted by subcommittees. The work of each subcommittee built upon the findings of the others. Subcommittee members reviewed findings of past reports and recommended changes based on their own findings. Each report was reviewed in turn by the full Committee.

The method of research was basically the same for all four subcommittees. Members reviewed research data and literature on the skills required for adult roles, the criteria for high school graduation, assessment procedures, competency-based testing and the implementation of proficiency requirements (a bibliography is included in Appendix A). The experience of other states was reviewed extensively through documents and personal communications; the Subcommittees on Impact and Implementation conducted telephone interviews of educators at the state and local levels in states which have already instituted new high school graduation requirements including proficiency testing. Educators in New Jersey with expertise in assessment and in secondary education were also interviewed.

In order to ascertain the need for changing existing graduation requirements, analyze the impact of additional state requirements for high school graduation and draw some conclusions regarding implementation strategies,

a survey was conducted of all New Jersey school districts with high schools. This survey determined the nature of existing locally-developed graduation criteria - including both curricular and proficiency requirements. A report on the survey data is found in Appendix C and a copy of the survey instrument in Appendix D. Discussion of the data is included in Chapter Two of this report.

After reviewing research findings, each subcommittee analyzed and considered alternative approaches, recommending those options that they felt would be the most effective and the most feasible. Recommendations were based not only on research findings, but also on the Committee members' assessment of the needs and views of educators, students and citizens in New Jersey as well as their own experiences with the public schools.

CHAPTER II

SHOULD GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS BE CHANGED?

The Source of the Question

The question of graduation requirements is clearly a matter of public concern in New Jersey. A few years ago it was not an issue at all. Why? Has something in the educational system changed or gone wrong in recent years? Why does the issue arise now? If more specific or rigorous requirements for graduation are posed as a solution, what problem or problems are they intended to solve? And if indeed these problems are solved or ameliorated, what new problems may be created by the new policies?

While the Committee did not undertake research on the antecedents of the issue, its investigations did identify some issues that may have contributed to the current demands for changes in graduation requirements. It is important to understand these issues because they affect the ways in which individuals and groups define the problem and, therefore, the parameters of an acceptable solution.

The five issues identified as having contributed significantly to the development of the current concern are:

1. The decline in test scores;
2. Evidence of inadequate preparation in the basic skills;
3. The rise in unemployment among youth;
4. A perceived decline in the value of the diploma;

5. The social goal of equal opportunity.

### The Decline in Test Scores

Every year for the past fourteen years the average scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT) have declined. Similar patterns have occurred with other widely used standardized tests, but the SATs have received the most attention. The SATs are not a basic skills test but a test of problem-solving, reasoning, and verbal abilities, designed to assist with college admissions. Is this decline in scores significant? Experts seem to feel that it is, and they also seem to be in agreement that the decline is not a consequence of any deficiency in the test itself. A panel assembled by the College Entrance Examination Board which publishes the test identified two sets of factors which have contributed to the decline in SAT scores: changes over time in the composition of the group of students taking the test and other more pervasive influences in the schools and in the society.<sup>2</sup> The first factor, which accounts statistically for over half of the decline, refers to the increase in numbers of lower achieving students taking the tests during the past decade as colleges expand their enrollments and lower their admissions criteria.

The second set of factors identified by the panel included:

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<sup>2</sup>"On Further Examination" Report of the Advisory Panel on one Scholastic Aptitude Test Score Decline. New York: CEEB, 1977, p. 45-49.

1. The reduction of required courses for graduation and the expansion of the elective system in high schools;
2. A diminished seriousness of purpose in the learning process, reflected by the lowering of standards, social promotion, toleration of increased absenteeism, reduced homework, and grade inflation;
3. The impact on homework and other modes of learning of the amount of time devoted to watching television;
4. Changes in the family and the support it provides for learning;
5. The social disruptions of the past decade which have distracted youth;
6. A decline in the motivation of youth.

In its concluding comments, the panel summarized the influence of these factors as follows:

*This second set of factors contributing to the SAT score decline can be summarized only in broad terms and with full recognition of two related qualifications. First, any attempt to isolate developments in the schools from those in the society at large turns out to reflect principally the inclination to institutionalize blame for whatever is going wrong; the formal part of the learning process cannot be separated from its societal context. Second, to the extent these causal factors are understood at present, they are inextricably interwoven with each other; any pointing to one development or another as if it were the, or even a, cause of the decline is invariably misleading.*

*As already noted, we think that two-thirds to three quarters of the score decline from 1963 to 1970 and about a quarter of the decline since 1970 were caused by complex interacting factors relating to the changing membership in the population tested. Overall this suggests that about half of the decline is properly traced to these factors.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup>op. cit., p. 46.

Graduation requirements and standards were perceived as only a minor contributing factor to the decline in test scores.

Evidence of Inadequate Preparation in the Basic Skills

The public perception of the basic skills issue has been influenced by frequent media reports of cases of individuals with inadequate basic skills preparation, on the one hand, and by the results of state and national assessment programs on the other. In the former case, stories of semiliterate graduates, poorly prepared college freshmen, and disgruntled employers receive heavy coverage, but their meaning is difficult to interpret. Individual cases, such as those cited in malpractice suits, are simply individual cases and cannot be taken to represent a general condition. If colleges anxious to increase enrollments or eager to perform a useful service to society take in all who apply, they should not be surprised they are forced to provide remediation.

Data from statewide assessment programs in New Jersey and elsewhere have had a profound effect on the public's confidence in the schools due to the large number of students who seem to fall below the minimum standards set by the various states. The results of the New Jersey Educational Assessment Program (EAP) for 1976 are shown in Table I.

Results such as these cause considerable concern among citizens. However, the data cannot be used to document trends because the Educational Assessment Program

TABLE I

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ABOVE 65% MINIMUM STANDARD,  
1976 EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM<sup>4</sup>

GRADE LEVEL	AREA	ABOVE STATEWIDE MINIMUM STANDARD	BELOW STATEWIDE MINIMUM STANDARD
FOUR	Reading	90.4%	9.6%
	Mathematics	72.1%	27.9%
SEVEN	Reading	74.2%	25.8%
	Mathematics	60.4%	39.6%
TEN	Reading	77.0%	23.0%
	Mathematics	74.0%	26.0%

<sup>4</sup>Taken from Stephen L. Koffler, "New Jersey Statewide Minimum Standards: Results From The Program's First Year" Occasional Papers in Education. Trenton, New Jersey, New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Research, Planning and Evaluation, March, 1977.

is relatively new, beginning in 1972, and because changes in the test prohibit longitudinal analysis even over the five year period in which the test has been administered. Nor are the results from a single year such as 1976 easily interpreted because the EAP test was not a basic skills test and the standard used was not linked to other indicators of achievement.

#### The Rise in Unemployment Among Youth

As the most densely populated and urbanized state in the country, New Jersey as a whole is affected by problems which confront most states only in discrete urban centers. High rates of unemployment among youth are a particularly critical and potentially explosive problem. These percentages translate into tens of thousands of human beings. According to statistics compiled by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry for 1976, 22.3% of New Jersey youth between the ages of 16 and 19 were unemployed, which is more than 3% greater than the national average. Although unemployment statistics were not available on black and hispanic youth in New Jersey most recent reports indicated the rate is nearly twice that of the white population.

These alarming rates of unemployment are due more to economic problems than to educational inadequacies.<sup>5</sup> Due, among other things, to the increase in the population of young people as a result of the baby boom and to the increased participation of women in the labor force, the economy has not been able to generate enough new jobs to employ all new

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<sup>5</sup> Eli Ginzberg "The Job Problem" Scientific American, Volume 237, Number Five. (November, 1977), pp. 43-51.

entrants into the labor market. Nevertheless, the public looks to the schools for solutions, and an interest in career education, life skills, better counselling and so on has accompanied the concern about high unemployment rates among youth. Certainly schools can do a better job of preparing youth for work, but this is unlikely to reduce unemployment. In good times employers hire everyone; in hard times they screen out the least desirable workers or those most easily rejected, and this often includes adolescents and young workers.

#### A Perceived Decline in the Value of the Diploma

The issue of the value of the high school diploma is more profound than changes in SAT scores or evidence of inadequate preparation in the basic skills. It represents, in part, the logical consequence of attaining the goal of universal secondary education. In 1920, 16.8% of all youth graduated from high school; by 1950, the figure had reached 59% and there was discussion of a new social problem - drop-outs.<sup>6</sup> Now the percentage of high school graduates in each age cohort is over 75% nationally, and may exceed 80% in New Jersey, and it has stabilized. Since distribution of social goods, such as job opportunities, college entrance, etc. has been linked to educational attainment, social justice has demanded increased access to these credentials.

In a recent critique of the minimum competency testing movement, Thomas F. Green noted that when only a minority attained the credential there were significant

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<sup>6</sup>Thomas F. Green, op. cit., p. 4.

benefits associated with having it but not having it did not pose serious disadvantages to the rest of the population. Now the diploma has less social value because most people attain it and it is less useful to employers and others who screen individuals for social roles such as jobs. However, not attaining a diploma has become an enormous liability for the minority of individuals who "drop out". Ironically, Green argues, our current problems are the consequence of our success. He views minimum competency testing as an effort to restore meaning to the diploma by linking it to levels of achievement. This would permit the diploma to be used once again to sort out individuals for jobs and college admissions. <sup>7</sup>

#### The Social Goal of Equal Opportunity

Equal opportunity once meant equal access to educational services. In recent years it has been redefined as equal or similar results. One manifestation of this philosophy is the effort to guarantee some minimum level of competence through testing and remediation programs. Ironically the development of specific standards for graduation may deny diplomas to many youth in the short run in the hope of forcing an improvement of educational services in the long run.

The problems of equal opportunity are political problems associated with the distribution and use of resources. It seems unlikely that they will be resolved

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<sup>7</sup>Thomas F. Green, op. cit., p. 4 ff.

by mandating standards that punish those who are victims of an unfair allocation of resources. The problem of low academic achievement is qualitatively different from the problem of equal opportunity. It is more a technical problem of ends and means than a political problem. In a paper developed for the National Institute of Education, Arthur Wise contends that many educational policies of the 1970's share a set of assumptions:

- A limited set of goals must be identified for schools;
- The goals must be put in a form which permits assessment of their attainment;
- Tests must be devised to assess performance;
- Supplemental instruction must be provided for children who arrive at school less well prepared than others.<sup>8</sup>

Wise contends that these assumptions ignore the process of education - how instruction affects the child - and assume better results will be attained simply if schools and teachers are held accountable. The laws assume there is a science and technology of education that is not being utilized and that once it is used the learning problems will be solved. This assumption is not realistic in Wise's view because education remains more a craft than a science. To illustrate his point, one need only note the recent National Institute of Education study of reading curricula in which the researchers concluded that phonics works better for

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<sup>8</sup>"A Critique of Minimal Competency Testing", paper prepared for The Educational Adequacy Program, Basic Skills Group, NIE, September, 1977.

disadvantaged children in the early grades but, regardless of the curriculum used in the elementary school, disadvantaged children fall further behind in the subsequent grades.<sup>9</sup> If this study represents the state of the art, it is clear that we have far to go before we have a science of education to guide our selection of instructional strategies.

#### Current Graduation Requirements in New Jersey

The current state requirements for graduation from high school are:

1. A minimum of 92 credits for a four year high school and 69 credits for a three year high school;
2. The statutory requirements for two years of American History, a course in health and safety, and physical education in every year of attendance;
3. State Board of Education approval of locally established graduation requirements on the basis of either course credits, program completion of course credits and program completion and State Board of Education approval of all courses offered;
4. The provision for credit to be awarded for curricular activities other than courses (Plan B).

The Committee authorized a survey of all districts with high schools to determine the character and scope of local board of education requirements for high school graduation. This survey was conducted by Streit Associates of Highland Park, New Jersey in November, 1977.\*\* Questionnaires were developed and mailed to 275 school districts including

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<sup>9</sup> The Washington Post, November 30, 1977, p. 21.

\*\* The report prepared by Streit Associates is found in Appendix C. The sample of 148 districts discussed in that report differs from the sample discussed in the text of this report because additional responses were included after Streit Associates prepared their report.

all those with academic, comprehensive and vocational high schools.\*

Due to the deadlines set for the Committee's report, districts were given only two weeks to return the questionnaire. Nevertheless, 184 districts responded. The respondents included almost 67% of the districts surveyed and 65% of the State's academic and comprehensive high schools. Table II shows the response rate by county for both districts and high schools. Table III shows the response rate for District Factor Groups (DFG) which are categories developed by the State Department of Education based upon socio-economic indicators.\*\* The survey data include a reasonably representative sample of respondents. Fifty percent or more of the districts responded in 20 of the 21 counties and the four major DFG categories were well represented. In addition, 17 of the 28 urban aid districts responded to the survey.

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\*The instrument and other materials included in the mailing are found in Appendix D.

\*\* District Factor Groupings are based upon a ranking process using socio-economic variables. All districts with student enrollments exceeding 300 were ranked on 1970 Census Data for eight variables:

1. Level of education of adults;
2. Occupational status;
3. Mobility;
4. Density;
5. Urbanization;
6. Income;
7. Unemployment;
8. Poverty.

Based on these ranking, districts were divided into ten District Factor Groups, A to J, with roughly equivalent numbers of school districts in each group. District Factor Group A contains districts with lowest socio-economic status; Group J contains those with the highest. Districts with a student enrollment of less than 300 are grouped in District Factor Group Z. Vocational-Technical schools have been placed in a separate Group V.

Table II

Response to the High School Graduation Requirements  
Survey By County

County	Number of Districts with High Schools	Number of Districts Responding	Total Number of High Schools*	Number of High Schools Responding
Atlantic	7	6	8	7
Bergen	43	30	51	34
Burlington	16	11	21	14
Camden	14	10	19	12
Cape May	5	3	5	3
Cumberland	5	3	7	5
Essex	18	13	35	30
Gloucester	14	10	14	10
Hudson	10	6	17	7
Hunterdon	4	1	5	1
Mercer	9	6	11	6
Middlesex	22	16	30	22
Monmouth	20	13	24	16
Morris	18	10	24	13
Ocean	10	6	14	6
Passaic	11	9	13	11
Salem	6	3	7	3
Somerset	13	8	15	9
Sussex	9	6	9	6
Union	15	9	20	9
Warren	6	5	6	5
Total	275	184 (66.9%)	355	229 (64.5%)

\*Includes County Vocational Schools and incomplete high schools, but excludes evening high schools and evening vocational-technical schools.

TABLE III

PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICTS WITH HIGH SCHOOLS  
RESPONDING BY DISTRICT FACTOR GROUP

DISTRICT FACTOR GROUPS	PERCENTAGE RESPONDING TO SURVEY
A	72.4%
BCD	71.2%
EFG	67.1%
HIJ	61.9%
V	28.6%
Z	100.0%

TABLE IV

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDING DISTRICTS WITH SPECIFIC  
SUBJECT AREA REQUIREMENTS (N=184)\*

SUBJECT AREA	YEARS REQUIRED				
	0	1	2	3	4
English				2.7	96.2
Social Studies			73.9	20.7	4.3
Mathematics	20.1	53.3	25.0		
Science	32.6	52.7	13.0		

\* Rows do not add up to 100% due to non-responses to this item in the survey.

The results of the survey provide a description of current graduation requirements in New Jersey. Tables IV and V show the breakdown of curricular requirements and promotion and proficiency requirements. Table IV reveals that in 20% of the districts who responded to the survey, a student can graduate with no credits in mathematics and that in over 30% there is no science requirement. How often this occurs cannot be determined from the data, but presumably such events do take place and the fact that they do supports the public view that standards are too low. It is noticeable that the requirements in the humanities, English and social studies are more extensive than those in mathematics and science. It should be noted that a handful of districts set additional requirements in art, music, industrial arts or community experience.

Table V reveals the recent growth of interest in setting proficiency requirements. Only 12 of the responding districts had proficiency requirements and these varied from standardized tests to locally developed instruments. In about a third of the cases promotion requirements to enter the high school were cited by respondents but typically, this meant possession of an eighth grade diploma. A small minority cited specific course requirements for entry into the ninth grade. Similarly, the requirements for promotion within the high school were typically expressed in terms of course completion or credit hours accumulated.

Changes that have occurred since the implementation of the Public School Education Act of 1975 (T & E) are shown

TABLE V

PROFICIENCY AND PROMOTION REQUIREMENTS  
IN RESPONDING DISTRICTS (N=184)

	PERCENT RESPONDING	
	YES	NO
Proficiency Requirements for Graduation (N=172)	6.5	93.5
Considering Proficiency Requirements	14.5	85.5
Promotion Requirements in High School	58.8	40.2
Minimum Requirements for Entering High School	33.7	66.3

TABLE VI

CHANGES MADE BY RESPONDING DISTRICTS  
SINCE JULY, 1976

	PERCENT RESPONDING	
	YES	NO
Changed Graduation Requirements	29.3	70.7
Changed Curriculum Requirements	50.5	49.5
Changed Promotion Requirements	19.0	81.0
Changed Performance Standards	32.6	67.4

TABLE VII

OPINION OF RESPONDENTS ON USE OF PROFICIENCY TESTS AS  
 A GRADUATION REQUIREMENT AND TYPE OF TESTS  
 PREFERRED BY AFFIRMATIVE RESPONDENTS (N=177)

PERCENT IN SUPPORT OF PROFICIENCY TESTING						PERCENT OPPOSED
TOTAL IN FAVOR	TYPE OF TEST PREFERRED BY THOSE IN FAVOR (N=101)*					
	State prepared and mandated test	State prepared test in local use	Locally selected standard- ized test	Locally developed	Other	
57.1	28.7	17.8	24.8	33.7	8.9	42.9

\*Percentage may not equal 100.0 because some respondents indicated more than one option.

TABLE VIII

OPINION OF RESPONDENTS ON THE USE OF  
PROFICIENCY TESTS AS A GRADUATION REQUIREMENT BY  
DFG CATEGORIES (N=177)

DFG CATEGORIES	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE IN FAVOR OF USE OF PROFICIENCY TESTS	PERCENTAGE OPPOSED USE OF TESTS
A	20	70.0%	30.0%
BCD	52	61.5%	38.5%
EFG	48	62.5%	37.5%
HIJ	50	42.0%	58.0%
V	5	60.0%	40.0%
Z	2	50.0%	50.0%
TOTAL	177	57.1%	42.9%

in Table VI. The data indicates considerable concern with the issues of promotion and graduation and presumably the introduction of more vigorous standards.

Finally Tables VII and VIII indicate the opinions of the respondents toward the use of a minimum score on a proficiency test as a graduation requirement. A substantial majority of the respondents are in favor of such a procedure. Almost three-quarters of those in favor of proficiency testing prefer a locally administered test and one-third of this group would prefer a locally developed test. There is a relationship between the opinion about proficiency testing and the affluence of the responding district. Table VIII shows that support for testing declines as the socio-economic status of the district rises. It is noteworthy that representatives of school districts most likely to be affected by proficiency testing are the most supportive of such standards for graduation.

### Conclusion

The set of concerns that gave rise to a re-examination of the requirements for graduation from high school are legitimate even if frequently exaggerated and misinterpreted. Furthermore, the survey results reveal that course requirements for graduation vary considerably across the state and in a minority of cases seem to be less extensive than would be desirable. A few districts have set proficiency standards and there is evidence of a shift in that direction since the passage of the T & E legislation.

It is our conclusion based on this data that changes are needed and that those changes should follow the course already set out in the Public School Education Act of 1975.

CHAPTER III

CRITERIA FOR GRADUATION: A REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES

At present the only statewide requirements for graduation from high school in New Jersey are:

1. A minimum of 92 credits for a four year high school and 69 credits for a three year high school;
2. Statutory requirements for two years of American History, a course in health and safety, and physical education in every year of attendance;
3. State Board of Education approval of locally established graduation requirements on the basis of either course credits, program completion of course credits and program completion and State Board approval of all courses offered;
4. The provision for credit to be awarded for curricular activities other than courses (Plan B).

These statewide requirements for graduation are minimal and, as other states have introduced new requirements in the past two or three years, the Committee felt there was much to be learned from a careful examination of policies and practices elsewhere. This section reviews the curriculum and proficiency requirements in the other states. Five selected states are discussed in brief because they represent differing approaches to the issue of minimum competence.

Curricular Requirements in Other States

Current information on the curriculum requirements of other states was not available. However, the Committee was fortunate to attain data on the requirements in all fifty states, gathered by the Educational Research Service

in 1974 and published by The National Association of Secondary School Principals.<sup>10</sup> Although the data is three years old, it does provide an overall perspective on curricular requirements for graduation.

Table IX provides a summary of the key course requirements for graduation in four year high schools. It is worth noting that in 1974 the majority of the states required three or four years of English, one year of mathematics, one year of science, two or more years of social science and history, and one or more years of physical education and health. A handful of states had additional curricular requirements such as a foreign language, career education, a guidance course, or consumer education. Although changes have occurred in graduation requirements since 1974, it is unlikely that the basic configuration outlined in Table IX has been altered.

The number of course units required in 1974 varied widely; for the forty states with specific requirements, the median number of units required was seventeen. A few states specified the electives that must be offered and the nature of the choices to be made by students. A number of states specified alternative plans for students in work-study programs or pursuing a course of independent study.

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<sup>10</sup> "State Mandated Graduation Requirements (as of March 1974)". Unpublished paper prepared by ERS, Arlington, Va., 1974. This data is also published in a special task force report prepared for the National Association of Secondary School Principals entitled "Graduation Requirements" (Reston, Va., NASSP, 1975).

TABLE IX

A Summary of Statewide Curricular Requirements for High School Graduation in Six Content Areas for the Fifty States - March 1974 <sup>11</sup>

Content Areas	Units (Years) Required								
	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3	4	5
English/Language Arts	10		1		1		17	20	1
Mathematics	14		28		7		1		
Science	13		29		7				
Science/ Mathematics			1						
Social Studies/ History	4	1	8	4	20	4	8	1	
Physical Education and Health	14		17	5	5	1	2	6	

<sup>11</sup> Educational Research Service, op. cit. The data presented applies to four year high schools only.

In 1974 there were only five states with no state-wide curricular requirements and a handful of states, including New Jersey, that required only American history, physical education, and health. At the other end of the continuum, there were a few states that specified almost the entire high school program leaving little discretion to local districts or students. From the review of other materials, it seems likely that the changes since 1974 have been in the direction of increased state requirements.

#### Proficiency Requirements in Other States

Competency-based or performance-based education is not a new idea; the public schools in Denver, Colorado, for example, have used examinations in language, reading, spelling, and arithmetic as a graduation requirement since 1959 and apparently have achieved better educational results as a consequence of the testing program. A 1976 publication of the National Association of Secondary School Principals identified eighteen local districts across the nation (including West Milford, New Jersey) and one state (Arizona) that had implemented proficiency testing as a graduation requirement.<sup>12</sup> The idea now seems to be sweeping the country. A summary of state activity on minimal competency testing provided by the Education Commission of the States in July, 1977, revealed that fifteen states had adopted some type of proficiency standards for graduation

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<sup>12</sup> "Discussion Guide: Graduation Requirements". Prepared by NASSP for Workshop on Graduation Requirements, April 25-28, 1976, Denver, Colorado.

from high school.\* Six states had already implemented programs; three of these (Florida, New York, and Vermont) were setting standards at the state level, three states (Arizona, California, and Oregon) required local districts to set standards. Table X summarizes this state level activity.

All of these actions are recent; Oregon apparently was the first state to adopt competency requirements for graduation (1973), but Arizona was the first state to actually implement a program. As the more detailed descriptions provided below indicate, there is as yet little evidence upon which to judge the effects of these new state policies and practices.

Several patterns are emerging which are worth noting. First, the actions of most states in the area of proficiency testing are concerned only with the basic skills, usually defined as reading and computation. Only a few states, such as, Maryland, New York, and Oregon, are working with a broader definition of learning outcomes. Second, in most states the standards focus on minimums and seem to be more useful as indicators of failure than of success. Third, the states that have taken action on high school graduation are split evenly between those pursuing a statewide testing strategy and those that are providing guidelines and assistance for local district assessment policies. Fourth, the enthusiasm to introduce proficiency testing as a graduation requirement

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The complete summary prepared by the Education Commission of the States is found in Appendix F.

Table X <sup>13</sup>

Minimal Competency Testing: A Summary

	<u>Legislation</u>	<u>State Board Action</u>	<u>Failed in 1977</u>
Competency Testing as a part of graduation	California, Florida, Nevada	Arizona, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Maryland, New Mexico, New York, or Virginia	Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Delaware
Early graduation by testing	Florida, California		Arizona
Credit by Examination	Florida	Alaska	
Promotion by Examination	Florida, Maryland, Virginia		Nevada
Assessment of Minimum's Not for Graduation	Louisiana, New Jersey, Nebraska, Washington	Oklahoma, Michigan, New Hampshire, Nebraska, Maine, New Mexico, Rhode Island	Pennsylvania

<sup>13</sup>Table taken from Frank B. Womer, "Requirements for Graduation: Who's Done What and Why?" Paper presented at Minimum Requirements for Graduation Conference, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, October, 1977

may be cooling somewhat as other states observe the experience of those who have already taken action; the last eight states that have considered policies of this type have had proposals rejected by their legislatures or state boards of education.

Major issues remain to be addressed. The setting of standards always involves a subjective element, but to date there has been little effort to link the standards empirically to the competency requirements of adult life. Judgments will remain significant in the setting of standards but they should be judgments informed by relevant data. The impact of proficiency requirements on the high school curriculum is also a major concern. There is a consensus that remediation of basic skills is not and ought not to be the primary role of the high school, yet the tests are leading to an expanded remedial role. Finally, these policies assume that proficiency testing will assure development of literacy and life skills for high school graduates; this assumption probably will not hold without new resources, staff training, and program development activities.

#### Five Approaches to Proficiency Requirements

##### Arizona

The first state to implement a statewide proficiency requirement was Arizona. Beginning in 1976, all school districts were to require students to demonstrate an ability to read at a ninth grade level of proficiency before graduating from high school. Students also have to demonstrate the

ability to read, write, and compute at the sixth grade level to be promoted from the eighth grade into high school. The local district determines the assessment procedures and the standard. The provision of remediation is also an area of local discretion. Arizona is now reviewing those procedures and considering changes.

### Oregon

If the program in Arizona is the most simple and direct, the one in Oregon is the most complex. In 1972, the State Board of Education adopted a policy that graduation requirements must be based on the attainment of minimum competencies in personal development, social responsibility, and career development, and credits attained through a broad range of required and elective courses which may be satisfied by experiences outside of the classroom or through equivalency examinations. There is no state testing program; instead state assistance and monitoring are provided to each local district as it develops its own implementation plan.

The present law represents a simplification of the plan originally approved in 1972. The new law contains reference to skills necessary for life roles but has reduced the total number of minimum competencies required by the state to the following ten areas:

1. read, write, speak, listen
2. analyze
3. compute

4. use basic scientific and technological processes
5. develop and maintain a healthy mind and body
6. be an informed citizen in the community, state and nation
7. be an informed citizen in interaction with environment
8. be an informed citizen on streets and highways
9. be an informed consumer of goods and services
10. function within an occupation or continue education leading to a career.

Within each area of competency local districts are to define specific competencies that they wish to examine to determine whether students are equipped to function in the society in which they live. This process of formulating competency statements is presently underway. Only the first three competency areas, which include to read, write, speak, listen, analyze and compute must be demonstrated for graduation in 1978. The others have been delayed until 1981.

The competencies themselves represent general life skills and are not measurable as such. To translate these statements into measurable form, local districts must formulate specific performance indicators for each competency. These performance indicators will be the basis for certification of the attainment of competencies. The certificate process may include standardized tests as well as classroom assessment by teachers and assessment of off-campus activities. The process of certification of competencies is totally a local matter and will not require the approval of the state. In addition to minimum competencies, however, each district

must require completion of 21 units of credit for graduation.

To assure that students will achieve minimum competencies as well as the broader educational goals of the district, Oregon also has initiated a system of assessment of basic skills and needs identification. By 1979, each district must assess reading, writing and computing. The assessment of these areas must use "valid measurement procedures" but does not require standardized tests. The assessments will be used for needs identification and program development and improvement.

There has been public criticism of the program in Oregon and a recent legislative staff report has called for reexamination of the program and for a further delay in implementing the remaining competencies. The report cites lack of understanding among educators, lack of empirical evidence that the program will improve instruction, inordinate demands on staff time, negative effects on transfer students, and potential malpractice suits among the reasons for reconsidering the program.<sup>14</sup>

### Florida

In 1976, the Florida legislature enacted an accountability law that has resulted in:

- 1) statewide testing in basic skills in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11, and establishment of state minimum standards;
- 2) local districts establishing pupil promotion and graduation requirements in basic skills;

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<sup>14</sup>The Sunday Oregonian, Portland, Oregon, November 20, 1977. p.1.

- 3) a state test of functional literacy given in the 11th and 12th grades as one requirement for high school graduation.

Local school districts are required to establish standards for graduation by school year 1978-79. These standards must include mastery of basic skills and satisfactory performance of functional literacy as determined by the state test. A minimum number of credits is to be set by the local district. The 11th grade state assessment test in basic skills and functional literacy is to be the basis for the determination of these standards. Remediation must be provided for those students who are unable to meet these standards. For those students who do not meet the minimum standards, a certificate of attendance will be awarded. Districts may also award differentiated diplomas based on varying achievement levels of competency.

The Florida test of functional literacy must be passed in one of three tries. If it is not, the student has four options: 1) accept a certificate of attendance, 2) take the GED, 3) attend night school, or 4) drop out. The test was administered for the first time to the eleventh grade in October 1977, and about one-third failed to pass. The failure rate for minority students was over twice as great as that for white students.

The reactions to the Florida program seem to be positive. Local educators report that parents, teachers, and students are positive about the test and that motivation seems to be higher as a consequence. Some cite higher attendance, better classroom discipline, and more emphasis

on basics as direct effects of the test. However, others express concern about the validity of the test itself, and are worried about lawsuits on the grounds of cultural bias. In addition, no special provisions have been made for bilingual or special education students. In sum, although initial reactions among educators were negative, this attitude is changing and local districts are responding to the test with curricular and instructional innovations.

New York<sup>15</sup>

The State Board of Regents in May 1976 established as a basic requirement for graduating from high school, the passing of basic competency tests in reading and mathematics. Starting with the graduation class of 1979, New York already has two other programs that relate in some way to minimum competency standards. It grants a special academic diploma, known as the Regents Diploma, based on the passing of certain subject area achievement tests. Also, since 1969, the Pupil Evaluation Program has been used to evaluate student performance in the basic skill areas.

The new Basic Competency Tests that are used to establish the minimum competencies necessary to graduate are in the areas of mathematics and reading. The tests are criterion-referenced tests and are designed to measure the basic adult skills that are considered necessary to function adequately in modern society. These two tests were piloted

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<sup>15</sup> This description of the New York program is adapted from Robert W. Noonan's "Statewide Minimum Pupil Proficiency Standards: A Survey of the States". Draft, Rutgers University, 1977.

in 1975 and were given on a regular basis for the first time in 1976-77. The tests are given initially in the ninth grade so that students will be given the opportunity to receive remediation if they fail the test. Provision will be made for retesting, and schools will be expected to develop appropriate programs for students who do not pass the tests the first time.

Additional tests are being developed in the areas of: 1) Civics and Citizenship, 2) Practical Science and Health, and 3) Writing Skills. These tests were piloted in the fall of 1976. If these tests are found to be appropriate, they will become part of the graduation requirements effective in June 1980.

. The Minimum Competency Examinations, along with the passing of certain courses provides the basis for the granting of a "local diploma." Students who meet additional course requirements and pass certain Regents Examinations in specific subject areas can be issued a diploma with Regents endorsement, a Regents diploma. There are some twenty-one separate subject area Regents Examinations. To earn the Regents diploma the student must pass the examinations in English and Social Studies as well as the examinations in their major area. Major areas include mathematics, science, foreign languages, and business. This diploma provides a basis for a differentiated diploma system and indicates high achievement rather than just attainment of minimum competencies.

New York's Board of Regents is also piloting a new

competency-based external high school diploma for adults in several counties in central New York. Completion requires passage of a battery of tests measuring performance of general competencies based on those developed by the Texas Adult Performance Level project. An open testing approach allows flexibility in timing and location, a variety of communications modes, discussion of the competencies to be demonstrated and continuing feedback on progress. In addition, individual competencies must be demonstrated through a record of experience indicating advanced occupational skills, preparation for post-secondary study, or specialized artistic, organizational, economic and civic skills.

### California

Assembly Bill 3408, the Hart Bill, which was enacted in September 1976, and Assembly Bill 65, enacted in September 1977, provide the statutory basis for proficiency standards in California. Taken together, these bills provide for the following requirements:

- 1) all boards of education responsible for high schools must adopt their own standards of proficiency in the basic skills by June 1978;
- 2) all boards of education responsible for elementary schools must adopt standards of proficiency in the basic skills by June 1979;
- 3) high school districts and elementary districts must coordinate their efforts and make the resulting standards available to the public. Parents, teaching staff and, at the high school level, students, must be involved in the process of setting standards;

- 4) beginning in 1978-79 for high schools and in 1979-80 for elementary schools, progress toward these standards must be assessed at least once in grades 4-6, once in grades 7-9, and twice in grades 10 and 11. Once the graduation standards are met, a student need not be reassessed;
- 5) conferences with the students and their parents must be held when sufficient progress is not demonstrated and appropriate remediation must be provided;
- 6) after June 1980, any student who has not met the local standards of proficiency shall not receive a diploma.<sup>16</sup>

The State Department of Education is providing technical assistance to local personnel through materials and workshops on proficiency assessment and is developing an item bank of test items that local districts can draw upon to develop their own tests. Assistance is also being provided in the design of remedial strategies.

Reaction to the proposed program is mixed. Many large districts were already moving in the direction of proficiency testing but small rural districts face enormous tasks to meet the new requirements. There is criticism of the variation in standards that is emerging across the state and some predict that realty values and private school enrollments will be affected by the standards set in some local districts. There is also concern about the requirement that the proficiency standards be met in English and legal challenges are anticipated from the bilingual community.

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<sup>16</sup> California State Department of Education, Technical Assistance Guide for Proficiency Assessment. Sacramento, California, October 1977, pp. 1-2.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMMITTEE'S ANALYSIS OF THE ALTERNATIVES

The Committee carried out its tasks through the work of four sub-committees that reported back to the full Committee. These four working groups addressed respectively the issues of the criteria for graduation, assessment strategies, the impact of alternative policies and practices, and implementation issues. The reports of these four sub-committees, as amended by the discussion in the full Committee, are summarized in this Chapter.

Criteria for High School Graduation

A student who receives a high school diploma should be expected to have attained a level of maturity, knowledge and ability which enables him or her to function as a self-sufficient, productive adult. It seems appropriate therefore, that students be required to demonstrate those qualities before receiving a diploma and that educators be required to provide the opportunities for students to attain the knowledge and skills that they must demonstrate. The achievement of proficiency is therefore a joint responsibility shared by teaching staff, students and parents alike.

Curriculum Requirements - The concerns being expressed publicly about the achievement levels of high school graduates emphasize communication and computational skills primarily and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the absence of competencies needed to function adequately in

adult roles in a democratic society. One means of addressing these concerns is to revise the existing state curricular requirements for graduation.

The Committee recommends that the current curricular requirements for graduation be altered to require that all students receive and pass:

1. Four years of English or equivalent credits in communication skills.
2. Two years of Math or equivalent credits in computational skills and in applied mathematics.
3. Two years of American History and democratic practices including political, economic and social problems and conditions confronting contemporary adults. Appropriate attention shall be given to the role of women and racial and ethnic minorities.
4. One year of natural science.
5. Physical Education, health and safety as currently required by administrative code.

Existing state curricular requirements of two years of American History and four years of physical education hardly afford a basis upon which to expect students to attain competence in the areas of communication and computational skills. Hence one recommended change places emphasis upon the basic skills of communication and computation.

Although proficiency in basic skills is essential it is not a sufficient foundation for students who must become productive workers, informed consumers, and effective citizens. The nature of the political, social, economic, and environmental problems confronting citizens in the state requires more than a knowledge of American History as a

basis for effective citizen participation in addressing these problems. It is, therefore, recommended that students be exposed to the knowledge and insights embodied in the natural and social sciences. The required two years of American History should give attention to political, social and economic issues of a democratic society, as well as to the role of women and racial and ethnic minorities. In addition, a year of instruction in the natural sciences should be required, through which students may acquire an understanding of scientific inquiry and an awareness of the scientific underpinnings of our economic system and an understanding of technology.

The Committee felt that any curricular requirements to be imposed on all students in the state must be carefully considered so that they provide maximum flexibility and protect students' opportunities to engage in special types of programs, including vocational and occupational programs. The Committee's recommendations, therefore, reflect a concern for retaining a reasonable balance between set requirements and study based on the choice of individual students. At the same time, students should be guaranteed that required courses of instruction provide them with the opportunity to acquire minimum, basic, functional skills. Required courses, especially in English and mathematics, must therefore, give thorough though certainly not exclusive, attention to basic communications and computational skills.

Proficiency Requirements - In addition to ensuring that students receive adequate exposure to the knowledge and skills that they need, the Committee feels that students should be required to demonstrate that they have achieved an adequate level of proficiency in skill areas that are clearly essential to success beyond the high school. All of these can be achieved through the above recommended curricular requirements, if given attention in the design of course content.

The areas identified as essential are basic communication and computational skills, skills needed for self-maintenance, the ability to function effectively as a worker and as a consumer and the ability to take on the responsibilities of a citizen and member of society. In essence, students need to acquire three kinds of proficiencies: the knowledge of and the ability to apply certain skills; an understanding of economic, legal and other factors with which they need to deal in the course of their everyday lives; an understanding of the social, political and economic context that determines how the society in which they live operates.

With these considerations, the Committee has identified the following proficiencies as minimum requirements for high school graduates:

A. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

1. Use basic reading, writing, speaking and listening skills;

2. Gather, organize and analyze and process information;
3. Solve problems and utilize problem-solving procedures.

B. COMPUTATIONAL SKILLS

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

1. Use basic mathematics skills;
2. Utilize problem-solving operations.

C. WORK AND CONSUMPTION SKILLS

Students should demonstrate an understanding of:

1. The collection and use of information helpful in selecting and pursuing a career;
2. Consumer economics;
3. Legal matters associated with consumerism;
4. The use of community resources.

D. SELF-MAINTENANCE SKILLS

Students should demonstrate an understanding of:

1. Basic principles of physical and mental health;
2. Skills necessary to maintain interdependence with others;
3. The role of aesthetic expression.

E. CITIZENSHIP SKILLS/CIVICS

Students should demonstrate an understanding of:

1. The duties and responsibilities of being a citizen;
2. Principles of government and of the free-enterprise system;
3. Conservation of human and natural resources.

Assessment Strategies and Standards

In determining what changes should be made in state-mandated requirements for high school graduation, the Committee attempted to identify those skills which might be universally needed by all students in the state. It was felt, however, that the citizens of New Jersey have a right to expect more than minimal competency from the state's public education system, recognizing that additional expectations depend upon a multiplicity of factors, including the needs, abilities and experiences of individual students and the communities in which they live - factors which are not easily or efficiently identified and defined at the state level. The most appropriate role for the state is one of providing parameters and guidelines within which local school districts can develop assessment programs to ensure that criteria for graduation are met.

Consequently, the Committee has made recommendations regarding curricular requirements for graduation, but feels that the specific course offerings within these curricular areas are not the purview of the state. Nevertheless, the content of courses in these mandated areas should reflect the needs of students identified at least partially through on-going assessment of the proficiencies of students by the local district and by the state minimum basic skills testing program.

The Committee's recommendations regarding both curricular requirements and proficiency requirements are

based on the premise that they be accompanied by regularly scheduled diagnostic assessment by local districts, with state guidance and technical assistance, in all appropriate skill proficiency areas during grades one through twelve. The outcomes of these assessments should be used by local school districts to revise curriculum and instruction in order to improve student progress toward the desired proficiency levels.

Proficiency Assessment - The Committee examined four alternative directions that state requirements regarding proficiencies for graduation might take:

1. Requiring no assessment;
2. Autonomous local assessment;
3. State assessment;
4. Local assessment under state guidelines.

The first option requiring no assessment was rejected as providing no means of determining whether students acquire the necessary skills.

Assessment procedures developed autonomously by local districts were judged to be inadequate because of the diversity and the range of assessment options available. Financial and human costs would be high due to false starts, poor selection of assessment procedures, confusion about responsibilities and other factors. There would be other ancillary costs incurred as realty values might be affected if significant differences in proficiency standards or graduation rates existed across districts.

The option of developing a state assessment

program for graduation was examined in depth. The experiences of a number of states which have implemented some form of statewide assessment were evaluated (See Chapter 3).

A state assessment program would be the least costly alternative, in terms of dollar outlays for the development of assessment instruments. A number of standardized test models are available and could be adapted. Costs could be further reduced if modified forms of the recently developed Minimum Basic Skills Tests were used for assessment in the communications and computational skills areas. On the other hand, test security problems and the need for retesting would increase the costs of administration considerably.

However, the indirect costs of a state test for graduation would be considerable. There would be significant impact on curriculum, not only in high schools, but also in elementary schools, which would have the added, and perhaps limiting, objective of preparing students to meet state assessment standards. Teachers might feel constrained to "teach to a test." Statewide standardized testing would offer no solution for the problems and needs of those students who while competent do not perform at their best on standardized tests.

Finally and most importantly, statewide standards for graduation would necessarily be no higher than could be tolerated by those districts serving the lowest achieving students. Thus, for the majority of districts, the state

standards would provide no incentive for improvement nor would they serve to enhance the motivation and efforts of students.

It was the judgement of the Committee that a statewide test for graduation would represent the antithesis of the Public School Education Act of 1975 which charges local districts with setting goals and encourages diversity of approach.

The Committee recognizes that the state now sets minimum standards in basic skills and that a state test is used to determine which students are in need of basic skills remediation. However, in the view of the Committee, this is a qualitatively different issue than setting standards to determine who should receive a high school diploma. The potential for harm to individuals is far greater in the latter case than in the former and, therefore, greater care must be exercised in setting standards and providing alternative means to verify proficiency. A statewide test might be a convenient and efficient way to determine the need for remediation, but it would have a severely constraining influence on the local management of schools and would sacrifice effectiveness in the verification of the skills of individual students for the efficiency of statewide administration.

Moreover, while the administration of statewide competency tests in communication and computational skills could provide for a degree of uniformity in educational standards among school districts in the state, this option

is not practical for the "life skills" in the other three proficiency areas. Instruments for testing career, consumer, and citizenship skills are available or under development, but the Committee believes that these skills should be assessed by techniques which do not rely solely on paper- and -pencil tests. These alternative assessment procedures which are discussed later in this section would be feasible only at the local level.

The fourth option, local assessment under state guidelines, allows for diversity of assessment procedures, but would provide a degree of consistency across the state. The critical components determining the effectiveness of this option would be the content of the State guidelines and the criteria for the approval of local assessment plans.

If state-developed or commercially available tests were used by local districts, the total cost of implementation may be only marginally greater than that of operating a statewide program. In any case, this option divides the financial burden of developing and administering assessment techniques and procedures between the state and local districts and is flexible enough to allow tailoring to local resources.

In addition to financial assistance, the state would have to provide technical assistance to local districts in selection and administration of assessment procedures, standard setting and reporting, as well as hire and/or train personnel to review and approve district plans.

The greatest advantage of this fourth option is its flexibility, both in terms of alternative assessment procedures which may be used and in terms of the effect of assessment on curriculum. If local districts are ultimately responsible for the selection or development of assessment procedures and standards of proficiency, these can be more effectively tied to the development of curricular offerings and remedial programs which allow students to progress toward proficiency.

Alternative Assessment Techniques - The Committee reviewed a number of alternative assessment techniques in relation to each proficiency area recommended. For each area, a number of alternative techniques have been identified as appropriate options. Table XI lists alternatives which can be developed at the state or at the local district level. It is likely that other equally suitable assessment procedures may be identified or created by local district personnel. It is the Committee's intention that students have a maximum number of options to satisfy graduation requirements. Hence, the options described here should not be viewed as the total range of options which could be used. A variety of assessment techniques should be used and exclusive reliance on paper-and-pencil tests should be avoided.

Furthermore, it is not the intention of the Committee that all of the assessment options be used by any single district; rather, that district personnel would select those most appropriate to their students, curriculum and resources. Self-maintenance, work and consumption and

citizenship skills, especially, do not lend themselves to assessment through uniform, standardized, paper- and -pencil tests. The use of a variety of assessment techniques also assures more accurate verification of the skills of all students. Maintaining the degree of flexibility considered desirable by the Committee is only feasible at the local district level.

Table XI

Alternative Assessment Procedures

- A. Testimony - The testimony method requires that a third-party observer, such as an employer, coach or employment supervisor, certify or attest to the fact that a student has completed a predefined set of activities.

Options which may be selected by local school districts include:

1. Documentation through surveys of parents, employers, teacher, community agency personnel;
2. Teacher reports;
3. Cumulative records;

- B. Committee Review - The committee review procedure involves three or more judges who evaluate student learning outcomes that are not readily measured by paper-and pencil tests and not easily observable. Committee review is designed for purposes of developing an instructional plan as well as for screening. The composition of the committee varies according to the skill area being assessed and the purpose of the assessment.

- C. Performance Assessment - The performance assessment method refers to a process in which the student is asked to carry out clearly defined tasks under a carefully specified set of conditions.

Options which may be selected by local school districts include:

1. State or locally developed skill inventories (selection of state developed procedures is completely optional);
2. Anecdotal and cumulative records;
3. Simulations and role playing;

- D. Product Assessment - Product assessment requires judges to evaluate a variety of student products, such as drawings, paintings, musical compositions, science projects, diaries or reports of travels, photographic essays, or handcraft items such as cabinets or bookcases.

Options which may be selected by local school districts include:

1. Assessment of work sample using local assessment forms and criteria;
2. Assessment of work sample using state-developed assessment forms;
3. Position paper providing local guidelines.

- E. Objective and Essay Examinations - The objective and essay examination assessment model employs a formal set of examinations and grading procedures to assess student competencies.

Options which may be selected by local school districts include:

1. Locally developed standardized, criterion-referenced and teacher-made tests;
2. Standardized tests purchased from independent test developers;
3. Optional state-developed tests for minimum basic skills assessment;
4. Test items selected from a state test item bank.

To ensure some degree of consistency across districts, however, it is essential that the State Department of Education assist with and monitor the development of assessment procedures. Furthermore, the potential consequences for individual students and local communities of assessment for graduation require that assessment instruments and procedures be valid and reliable.

Having weighed alternative approaches to proficiency assessment in light of these considerations, the Committee concluded that the most effective approach incorporates a combination of state and local responsibilities. The Committee

recommends that local assessment plans should be required by the state, developed locally with state guidelines and assistance, approved by the state, and interpreted locally with state monitoring.

This approach is consistent with the recently implemented educational reform program and with the provisions of Chapter 212 of the State laws of 1975. Section 6:8-4.2 of the Administrative Code for Chapter 212 states that *"the district board of education shall adopt policies and procedures for...high school graduation, pursuant to law and regulation, which shall be reasonably related to the achievement of district goals, objectives and pupil proficiency..."* Local development of assessment requirements and proficiency standards in addition to curriculum content to satisfy state criteria also allows a continual relationship between the proficiency required and the instruction provided to students in a community.

The Committee, therefore, recommends that high school graduation requirements be integrated with the system of thorough and efficient education and the local educational plans of school districts. The process for achieving a thorough and efficient system of education in the state is, in effect, a goal-setting and evaluation process which safeguards the local district prerogatives and, at the same time, provides for monitoring by the state.

The assessment plan recommended above represents a partnership between local school districts and the State Department of Education toward the graduation of capable and

proficient students. The burden ultimately lies on the local districts to educate the state's youth. The Committee believes that local districts also are responsible for assessing their students to ensure educational outcomes. It recommends that districts be required by the state to develop an assessment plan for graduates and to implement that plan. The plan is to identify all assessment techniques and procedures to be used to measure students' proficiencies in areas mandated by the state. Since proficiency levels can only be determined with specific knowledge of the learning outcomes sought and assessment procedures to be used, local districts should be also responsible for setting standards for graduation and including them in the assessment plan.

The role of the state will be to provide guidelines by which local assessment plans are developed and against which they will be approved, monitored and evaluated by the State Department of Education. It is also the responsibility of the State Department to provide assistance in the development of assessment plans and technical and financial assistance in their implementation.

Adequate funding and technical assistance must be provided by the state to develop reliable and valid assessment instruments and procedures. It is recommended that the State Department of Education develop a test item bank of validated test items in all proficiency areas for the optional use of local school districts.

Whether assessment instruments and procedures are developed at the state or at the local district level, the

Committee feels that they should give attention to the process skills such as ability to gather, organize, analyze, evaluate and synthesize information as instrumental to solving problems in all of the proficiency areas. Test items, when used in the assessment of communication and computational skills, might include context-related items which emphasize work and consumer skills. The selection and/or development of assessment techniques should contribute to identification of educational needs, certification of competency, identification of strengths and weakness in curricular offerings, and monitoring of individual student progress toward achieving proficiency.

Minimum standards of proficiency to be required in each area for graduation should be defined at levels consistent with those required for the majority of adults to function adequately in essential adult roles. Differential standards of proficiency must be set for students with diagnosed learning disabilities.

#### Implementation and Impact of Proposed Changes in High School Graduation Requirements

Curriculum Requirements - In order to determine the impact of proposed changes in statewide curriculum requirements, the Committee commissioned the survey of local districts conducted by Fred Streit Associates to determine what curriculum requirements they have imposed beyond those currently mandated by the state. Among those which responded, only three districts required less than the four years of English proposed by the Committee. The two year math and one year science requirements

seem to pose more serious problems.

The math requirement would seem to pose the greatest problem. Twenty percent of the districts that responded to the survey have no local math requirement and seventy-five percent require less than the two years recommended by the Committee. A number of education personnel in the state who were interviewed by the Committee indicated that the implementation of the proposed math requirement would be hindered by the shortage of certificated math teachers, which has been exacerbated by the recent expansion of state-mandated compensatory programs. Additional costs might be incurred in implementating a two-year math requirement and districts might attempt to avoid these cost increases by reducing elective course offerings, thereby reducing opportunities for the more talented students. If new math courses must be developed, there will be development, training and dissemination costs which should be absorbed by the state. The state also should hire math curriculum personnel to provide assistance to districts.

The proposed science requirement should be a less serious problem, but also may involve some additional personnel costs. About one third of those districts which responded to the Streit survey reported that they had no science requirement. It is difficult to determine, however, how many students presently do not take at least one year of science prior to graduation.

Since they do not represent a change in current provisions of the Administrative Code, the two years of American History and physical education, health and safety requirements recommended by the Committee pose no particular implementation problems. The Committee feels, however, that local districts should evaluate their course offerings in these areas to ascertain whether adequate attention is being given to political, economic and social issues confronting contemporary society.

It will be necessary to change the state Administrative Code to mandate these proposed new requirements and to amend the policies of local boards of education to be in compliance. At least one full budget cycle would be needed by local districts to implement any additional curricular requirements, to allow for budget and staff reallocations, course selection and scheduling procedures. Budget caps should be reviewed and revised for individual districts to accommodate increased costs.

Proficiency Requirements - The recommendations of the Committee for proficiency requirements for graduation are made on the premise that certain conditions can be met in their implementation.

First and foremost, assessment for graduation must begin no later than the ninth grade. In addition, these assessment procedures should be supported by regularly scheduled assessment for diagnostic purposes at appropriate intervals from grades one through twelve. Counselling and

remediation must be provided by local districts for students failing to meet graduation requirements by the beginning of the tenth grade.

Second, adequate lead time must be given to local districts to develop assessment plans for graduation. The Committee recommends a planning period of not less than two academic years prior to the first assessment for graduation in ninth grade. Sufficient lead time was mentioned as a major concern by local educators in other states which have implemented similar programs. Remedial programs that will be needed as a result of proficiency assessments will require a survey of available qualified teachers and provisions for training staff not now qualified. When terms and conditions of employment are affected, time for negotiation with local associations may be required.

Third, adequate funding must be provided by the state, both to develop reliable and valid assessment procedures and to provide remediation to students who do not meet proficiency requirements. To develop reliable and valid assessment procedures is a time-consuming and costly process. The import and potential consequences for individual students, local districts and communities is of such magnitude that anything less than reliable and valid procedures is not acceptable. Evidence of student achievement must come from reliable and valid measures to merit the serious analysis which would lead to costly curricular revisions.

The Committee considered the feasibility of proficiency testing in four of the five areas: communication

skills in reading and writing, math, work and consumption skills and citizenship skills. Other modes of assessment were not reviewed in the same manner only because of the difficulty of obtaining adequate data. In general, procedures other than standardized tests require more staff training, take longer to implement, require significant development work and may require changes in the organization and administration of high schools.

In some cases the alternative assessment procedures described in Table XI above may be more expensive because they are more labor intensive than standardized tests. However, in general they would build upon activities already carried out by teaching staff and represent a more systematic application of techniques already in use by many educators. The merit of these procedures stems in part from the involvement of teaching staff in the assessment process and the resulting coordination of close integration between assessment and instruction. Moreover, it is the judgement of the Committee that other forms of assessment as presented in Table XI have higher face validity and greater educational value than paper and pencil tests.

Assessment requirements in reading and math could be relatively easily met through the use of standardized tests. The state Minimum Basic Skills tests could be modified for use as proficiency examinations and a number of other instruments are available. Instruments for testing writing ability are available and others are being developed, but

in most cases they are costly to score. Local districts could use a teacher-based assessment system for writing skills. In the areas of work, consumer and citizenship skills, there are instruments which measure a student's information and performance tests that measure skill. Validity and reliability data on the latter have not been reviewed by this Committee. Again, the Committee feels that forms of assessment other than paper and pencil tests are superior because they have higher face validity, greater benefits to the students, and are more closely linked to instruction.

Proficiency tests in basic skills cost \$100 to \$200 per item to develop. Modification of available formats and items would reduce costs substantially. Estimates for the establishment of a test item bank range from \$50,000 to \$300,000 to develop and \$25,000 to \$50,000 annually to maintain, in addition to the costs of administering and scoring tests. However, an initial item bank based upon the State Assessment Program's Minimum Basic Skills Test could be developed for much less.

Since most local districts already conduct some form of assessment, administration of assessment procedures for graduation need not involve significant additional costs or staff needs. Additional costs may be incurred for record-keeping, preparation of reports, etc., and additional time would be required for guidance, counseling and testing resources. Inasmuch as the specific time requirements are not known, these costs cannot be given a dollar figure.

In addition to time and cost considerations in implementing proficiency requirements for graduation, the Committee examined their legal ramifications. The establishment of specific standards for graduation is likely to result in malpractice suits directed at local districts and boards or at the State Department and Board of Education, lawsuits challenging the standards and lawsuits charging discrimination. Newsweek magazine, in an October 3, 1977 article entitled "Sueing the Teacher", commented:

So far, the courts have been dismissed educational malpractice suits on the ground that blame for a child's inadequate skills cannot be firmly fixed. The judges have noted that the learning process is affected by so many factors beyond classroom control, such as parental influence and a student's own motivation and ability, that schools cannot take sole responsibility. But the current push to make minimum competency standards for graduation a matter of state law may force the courts to take parents' complaints more seriously. Once the law clearly specifies the skills needed for a high-school diploma, judges will have a more solid legal basis for determining whether a school has done its job and, if not, ordering redress for the students it has failed.

Other effects to consider are the possibilities that families with children who have not been able to meet proficiency levels in their home district might establish temporary residences in districts with lower standards or transfer their children to private or parochial schools which are exempt from the laws. The State Department of Education should encourage private and parochial schools in the state to establish graduation requirements similar to those adopted by public schools.

The most serious consideration, however, will be the numbers of students who do not meet proficiency requirements by the twelfth grade and the impact that they will have on the local district's policies and programs. The scope of this problem depends in large part on the standards that are set for graduation. The Committee feels that any policies or guidelines for setting standards should be subject to careful review by an advisory panel of local educators and by the appropriate associations and organizations prior to their release by the State Department of Education. Such policies or guidelines should be reviewed annually in light of their impact on students and the educational system. Furthermore, the Department of Education should undertake efforts to monitor and analyze the effects of proficiency requirements on such issues as drop-out rates, patterns of retention in grade, changes in grade point averages, changes in curricula, changes in proportions of students who do not graduate and their post-school experiences.

Inasmuch as achievement levels differ widely among districts, three possible outcomes may result from the establishment of proficiency standards which warrant careful monitoring:

1. The establishment of widely divergent standards, depending on the stringency of state guidelines;
2. Increases in numbers of students classified as learning disabled and thereby exempt from proficiency requirements;
3. Significant increases in numbers of students who do not receive a diploma.

In order to mitigate these negative effects, local districts should be encouraged to adopt promotion criteria that move students toward the proficiency levels required for graduation at an appropriate pace.

The Committee reviewed a number of other issues concerned with the implementation of its recommendations; many of which it could not resolve and which, therefore, need further study. These are presented below for the consideration of the State Department and Board of Education.

1. Special Populations - The Committee recommends that students with diagnosed learning disabilities be exempted from proficiency requirements. Consideration should also be given to how students with physical handicaps, such as deafness and blindness, should be handled.

Sufficient data was not available on bilingual students for the Committee to make a recommendation, but the State Department of Education should study the implications of including or exempting bilingual students from proficiency requirements and should give careful consideration, if they are to be included, to how they will be assessed. Impact studies should also be conducted for migrant students and highly mobile students, particularly in urban areas, who may be exposed to different graduation and promotion criteria.

The Committee recommends that students participating in full- and shared-time vocational technical programs meet the local proficiency requirements and that shared-time

vocational technical school personnel be included in the planning of proficiency standards and assessment procedures in sending districts.

2. Transfer Students - The Department of Education should consider what arrangements or special provisions must be made for students moving across district or state boundaries.

3. Relationship to General Education Diploma - The development of any local tests for graduation should take into account the level of difficulty of the General Education Diploma in order to avoid increased drop-outs.

4. Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality - Consideration must be given to issues such as the release of data on student performance. Should such data be used to rank students or treated as individual feedback? Should results be made available to parents?

State Advisory Body

The Committee recommends that a state advisory body be created to assist with the development of an implementation plan for the proposed high school graduation requirements, especially with regard to state guidelines for local assessment plans. This body should include teachers, administrators, students, school board members and representatives from institutions of higher education and appropriate associations and groups. The State Department of Education should develop a specific process for selecting members, defining the responsibilities of the body and

determining its tenure.

Public Information Program

The Committee feels that the timing of its recommendations is appropriate, provided that sufficient time is allowed for any program to be presented to, understood by and prepared for by schools and by the public. The direction outlined above provides for more meaningful criteria for high school graduation while, at the same time, safeguarding the flexibility of local education. When 65% of the public believes that all high school students should be required to pass a standardized examination in order to receive a high school diploma, the attitudes of laymen seem clear. This is illusory, however. At the same time, there is a strong and contradictory belief among many of the same people that schools and what goes on inside them should be locally controlled. It is recommended, therefore, that the State Department of Education develop a public information program to prepare the public, the educational community, parents and students for any changes in high school graduation requirements and to explain procedures for establishing proficiency standards and assessment using those standards.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the analysis summarized in previous chapters and our deliberations as a Committee, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Current curricular requirements mandated by the State for graduation shall be changed to require that all students receive and pass:
  - A. Four years of English or equivalent credits in communication skills.
  - B. Two years of Math or equivalent credits in computational skills and in applied mathematics.
  - C. Two years of American History and democratic practices, including political, economic and social problems and conditions confronting contemporary adults. Appropriate attention shall be given to the role of women and racial and ethnic minorities.
  - D. One year of natural science.
  - E. Physical Education, health and safety as currently required by administrative code.

Current state requirements of ninety-two credits for graduation from a four year high school and sixty-nine credits from a three year high school should be maintained and a student's course of study should strike a reasonable balance between set requirements and study based on the choice of individual students. Program offerings should be planned to protect the student's opportunity to engage in special types of programs, such as vocational and occupational programs to participate in Plan B as defined in administrative code. Districts also should be encouraged to maintain elective offerings to meet all of the state goals for education.

2. In addition to curricular and credit requirements, every student should be required to demonstrate proficiency in the following areas before being awarded a diploma:

A. Communication Skills - student should demonstrate the ability to:

1. Use basic reading, writing, speaking and listening skills;
2. Gather, organize, analyze and process information;
3. Solve problems and utilize problem-solving procedures.

B. Computational Skills - student should demonstrate the ability to:

1. Use basic mathematics skills;
2. Utilize problem-solving operations.

C. Work and Consumption Skills - student should demonstrate an understanding of:

1. The collection and use of information helpful in selecting and pursuing a career;
2. Consumer economics;
3. Legal matters associated with consumerism;
4. The use of community resources.

D. Self-Maintenance Skills - student should demonstrate an understanding of:

1. Basic principles of physical and mental health;
2. Skills necessary to establish individuality and to maintain interdependence with others;
3. The role of aesthetic expression.

E. Citizenship Skills/Civics - student should demonstrate an understanding of:

1. The duties and responsibilities of being a citizen;

2. Principles of government and of the free-enterprise system;
  3. Conservation of human and natural resources.
3. The State Department of Education should require every school district which awards a high school diploma to develop a plan to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate proficiency in the above areas, to be included along with curricular offerings, as part of the district's educational plan and submitted to the State Department of Education for approval. This plan should show what courses are available to meet curriculum requirements, how students will be assessed for proficiency in each of the above areas, and what the standards will be for graduation. Assessment as used herein is intended to include, but not be limited to, the procedures defined in NJAC 6:8-3.4 and in Chapter IV of this report and refers to procedures for the verification of proficiency in the skill areas listed above.
  4. Curricular offerings of local districts, in grades K through 12, must give adequate, though certainly not exclusive, attention to all proficiency requirements recommended above to ensure the students progress toward proficiency levels. No assessment procedure shall be adopted as a requirement for graduation unless the district curriculum provides the opportunity to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills, and so demonstrates in its educational plan.
  5. The choice of assessment techniques and instruments and the development of standards shall be the responsibility of local districts. These must be developed according to guidelines provided by the State Department of Education. In order to insure some degree of consistency throughout the state, the statewide minimum standards in basic skills shall be taken into consideration by local districts.
  6. Local assessment plans should identify alternative procedures for students to demonstrate proficiencies which do not rely on standardized paper-and-pencil tests. The results of no single assessment instrument should be a bar to graduation; localities must provide alternative means for assessing proficiencies required for a diploma. The validity and reliability of these alternatives must have been demonstrated previously or be documented by the district.

7. Assessment for proficiency required for graduation must begin no later than the ninth grade and students must have frequent opportunities to meet those requirements prior to completing the twelfth grade. Further, a student who has demonstrated proficiency in any area should be exempted from further formal assessment for minimal proficiency in that area before graduation.
8. Sufficient lead time must be given to local school districts to plan and implement additional requirements for high school graduation. Not less than one full academic year shall be given to implement changes in curriculum requirements, and not less than two academic years should be given to implement the proficiency requirements. New curriculum and proficiency requirements should commence with the class which is in the ninth grade at the time of implementation.
9. Students must be assessed at appropriate intervals throughout their education in those areas in which proficiency will be required for graduation and provided appropriate remediation which will assist them to attain proficiencies. The results of these periodic assessments should provide feedback for local curriculum and instruction, which should be subsequently revised to reflect the needs of students.
10. Local districts should be encouraged to develop promotion standards to bring students toward proficiencies required for graduation at an appropriate pace.
11. The local school district must provide information about educational options to all students who fail to satisfy proficiency requirements by the end of the twelfth grade.

Districts should be encouraged to set up a special procedure for the review of cases of students who have met all credit, curriculum, and attendance requirements, but have not met all of the proficiency requirements.

12. Students who have not met proficiency requirements and elect not to continue in high school must be provided with a transcript which documents their proficiency levels and the courses completed. The State Department of Education and local districts should publicize the availability of transcripts and the documentation they provide. The State Department should make alternative transcript formats and documentation procedures available to local districts upon request.
13. Representatives of shared-time vocational schools should be included in the planning of the high school graduation requirements for sending school districts.
14. The State Department of Education must provide local districts with support and assistance in developing assessment plans. Specifically, the State Department should provide guidelines for the development of the plans, technical assistance in their design and implementation, and financial and technical resources, including a test item bank, to assist districts in developing reliable and valid assessment instruments and procedures.
15. A state advisory body should be created (teachers, administrators, students, school board members and representatives from institutions of higher education and appropriate associations and groups) to assist the State Department of Education with the development of an implementation plan for the recommended statewide high school graduation requirements. In particular, this group should review and monitor the implementation of state guidelines.
16. The State Department must develop a public information program to prepare students, parents and others for the recommended graduation requirements and to explain the role and the limitations of assessment procedures.
17. Appropriate changes must be made in the budget caps law and budget review process to enable local districts to accommodate increased costs of assessment and remediation without compromising the availability of current offerings.

18. The State Department of Education should undertake efforts to monitor, describe and analyze the effects of any proficiency assessment program with regard to drop-out rates, patterns of retention in grade, changes in grade point averages, rates of classification as learning disabled, changes in curriculum, post-school experiences of students and other effects reported by local school districts.
19. The State Department of Education must set up a process to determine the consequences of applying the recommended proficiency requirements to bi-lingual students or of exempting them from such requirements.
20. The State Department of Education should encourage non-public schools to adopt high school graduation requirements similar to those of public schools.
21. Classified students should not be required to meet those proficiency requirements which are not consistent with their needs and abilities. They should be awarded a diploma upon successful completion of their special programs of instruction.

We do not contend that the above recommendations, if implemented, would result in dramatic increases in educational achievement in the short-run. We do believe, however, that these proposals are educationally sound, and that they would result in steady improvements in the effectiveness of the schools when taken in concert with the other reforms being implemented as a consequence of the Thorough and Efficient legislation. Moreover, these recommendations are consistent with that legislation in supporting local management and control of schools. The state needs creative and strong management at the local level. It cannot manage schools directly and must permit local communities the freedom of action they need to effectively manage their own affairs.

The feasibility of the above recommendations is attested to by the strong support found by the Streit Survey for an approach of this type. Although fifty-seven percent of the respondents favored some type of proficiency examination for graduation, nearly three-quarters of these individuals preferred a locally administered assessment process. With the proper time to design and implement assessment procedures and with guidance and assistance from the State Department of Education, local districts can meet the challenge of these proposals.

To those who will say that standards will vary, we concede that they are correct, but we are not distressed by diversity. State prepared guidelines, state approval of assessment plans, and the public knowledge of the standards set in surrounding districts will have an equalizing influence. Standards are choices that should be made by people close to the realities of the community and its classrooms. There should be room for change and experimentation as educators search for better ways of identifying and meeting the needs of our children.

We have searched for means that will achieve the desired improvements in educational achievement and restore the educational meaning of the high school diploma. We have discarded simpler strategies that would not serve both these ends and we believe that we have offered an approach that will attain them. We urge the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, New Jersey's

educators, and the public to consider these recommendations and the arguments offered in their support. Critical decisions affecting the lives of hundreds of thousands of youngsters will be made in the coming months and no one should be excluded from these deliberations.

APPENDIX A



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APPENDIX B



List of Individuals Contacted

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Warren Benedetto	Camden County Office NJ SDE
William Block	Essex County Office NJ SDE
Dr. Randy Broyles	Delaware Department of Education
Dr. John J. Casey	Middlesex County Office NJSDE
Dr. Paul Cawein	The National Institute of Education
Dr. Eleanor Elsner	Walculia County (Florida) Public Schools
Dr. Thomas Fisher	Florida Department of Education
Dr. John Fremer	Educational Testing Service
Dr. James Gleason	West Milford N.J. Public Schools
Dr. Melvin Goldberg	EIC - NW
Frank Green	Santa Rosa County Public Schools, Florida
Harry Handler	Los Angeles Public Schools, Los Angeles, CA.
John Hilderbrand	Tampa Public Schools, Florida
Richard Hines	Dade County Public Schools, Florida
Paul I. Jacobs	Thomas A. Edison College
Dr. Michael Kean	Philadelphia Public Schools
Kathleen Kies	Pennsylvania Department of Education
Dr. Stephen L. Koffler	New Jersey State Department of Education
Grady McGonagill	The National Institute of Education
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Dr. Ruth Nickse	Nickse Associates, Ithaca, New York
Dr. Anthony Polemeni	New York Public Schools
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Maryann Wilmer	New Jersey State Department of Education
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APPENDIX C



A Report to the New Jersey  
State Department of Education

In Support of the Committee on  
High School Graduation Requirements

Tabulation of Survey Data

Fred Streit Associates  
168 Woodbridge Avenue  
Highland Park, NJ 08904

November 30, 1977

### General Methodology

The survey instrument was developed by the contractor after consultation with members of the committee on graduation requirements. The final draft of the instrument was approved by Thomas Corcoran with input from Ed Jackowski (Director, Office of Management Information) and Ron Lewis (Chairman, Committee on High School Graduation Requirements). Staff members of the State Department of Education identified the names of the recipient districts. A mailing to the 267 districts in the state who have high school programs under their jurisdiction was completed on November 7. The packet of materials included a letter from the chairman of the committee, a letter of endorsement of the instrument from the State Office of Management Information, the survey form to be completed, and a stamped enveloped pre-addressed to the contractor. Districts were asked to complete the survey and have it mailed by November 18.

As the responses were received they were reviewed and coded for data processing preparation. The recommendation of the committee was to close out the data collection process by Wednesday morning, November 23. By that time 148 completed surveys had been received representing 55.4 percent of the districts. A further breakdown of these respondents is provided. Data processing was completed by November 26 and the computer reports which were requested were then prepared.

### Report of Findings

Total number of respondents - 148

Total number of high schools accounted for - 193

Categorical Breakdowns:

By Community Type:

1 - 22  
2 - 43  
3 - --  
4 - 31  
5 - 14  
6 - 4  
7 - 4  
8 - 2  
0 - 28

By DFG:

A - 17  
B,C,D - 37  
E,F,G - 42  
H,I,J - 43  
V - 6  
Z - 2

Urban Aid Districts - 16 (57%) out of 28

NOTE: Special break-outs by County, Community Type, DFG, and Urban Aid feature are provided. (See Tables VI, XI, XII, AND XVIX.)

Enrollment

Over 60 percent of the responses were from districts who indicated a 9-12 enrollment of greater than 1,000 students.

(See Table VII.)

## Credits

The requirements of credits/units ranges from 75 to 140 from the districts who reported this data. The median for the state appears to be 100 credits (87 out of 145 - 60%). The actual mean of the reporting districts is 101.76 credits. Three districts report their utilization of Plan B with no specification of specific credits as a requisite for graduation.

## Subject Area Graduation Requirements

English	- 3 years - 1
	4 years - 147
Social Studies	- 2 years - 110
	3 years - 31
	4 years - 7
Math	- 1 year - 83 (56%)
	2 years - 35 (24%)
	3 years - 2 (1.3%)
	4 years - 1 (.7%)
	0 years - 27 (18.4%)
	See Table XIII for further amplification.
Science	- 1 year - 77
	2 years - 18
	3 years - 2
	4 years - 2
	0 years - 49
PE/Health	- 4 years - 148 (100%)

### Other Graduation Requirements

Only nine districts indicated that they used performance standards or an examination in addition to specific courses or credits. The districts who responded "yes" to this question reflect some diversity in terms of reference groupings. Only one is identified as one of the Urban Aid districts. The other distributions are as follows:

Community Type: 1=1 2=3 3=- 4=2 5=1 6=0 7=0 8=0 0=2

DFG: A=1 BCD=2 EFG=3 HIJ=4 V=0 Z=0

Several cross tabulations are provided with this question. For further reference see Tables IV, V, VIII, XV, XVI, and XVII.

The districts who responded "yes" to this question were asked to provide follow-up data as a way of amplifying their response. Each district used a different set of instruments/procedures to confirm their performance standard and these are listed on a separate coding sheet. There are several similarities with respect to time and frequency of testing as well as students who are exempted. The per pupil costs for these procedures ranged from \$1.50 to \$7.20 (only six responses provided).

One special cross-tabulation attempted to determine if there was any correlation between districts who are using a performance standard and those who are involved with a Plan B program. As Table IV reveals, only three districts responded affirmatively to both questions. This can be summarized as follows:

<u>Spec. Grad. Req.</u>	<u>Plan B</u>	<u>Total</u>
Yes	Yes	3
Yes	No	6
No	Yes	51
No	No	86

### Early Graduation

Ninety-nine (71%) of the responding districts indicated a policy in existence which would allow students to be graduated early. The coding sheet on this category provides a listing of the varied conditions which are in effect among 89 districts. Over 55 percent of the answers were given under codes 01 and 05 which simply expect the students to meet all the specified graduation requirements.

An examination of Table IX provides this as a cross tabulation.

### Plan B

Fifty-five (37%) of the districts indicated that they utilized the Plan B option for some of their high school programs. However, the total number of students who seem to be involved in this option approximate only 4,500. Only 10 districts report more than 50 of their students in this option. Many districts indicated that this option was primarily used for classified students.

### Committee Involvement in Graduation Requirements

The majority of the respondents (92 - 62%) indicated no

committee involvement at the present time in the formulation of graduation requirements. However, 88 (59%) of the districts seemed favorably inclined to the designation of a committee to assist in this process. A listing is provided of those districts who showed no responses to the question on committee membership.

Districts who had no response to 45-51:

5715	0150	1520	3960	3150	2810	2170
3980	1450	2820	5460	1140	2440	4160
2330	3690	2615	2465	5110	1170	2620
5790	3940	3560	1430	1255	1650	3600
3675	5570	4900	0555	5150	4560	4610
2380	2610	1110	4100	5160	3995	5830
4050	5370	0870	3140	3040	5290	0600
0760	0860	1730	3290	2660	4600	1890
3190	3750	2060	3120	3620	3510	4580
3385	5190	4180	0940	0540	3230	1390
1100	2150	3460	3970	0490	5670	0750
2370	5730	0890	3360	4910	2430	2100
3670	4820	4290	4405	4020	2880	2770
2240						

High School Promotion/Admission

Eighty-eight (60%) of the respondents indicated that they had a policy relating to promotion during the high school years. Of the remaining 60 districts, 13 (22%) indicated that such a policy was under consideration. Fifty districts (35%) specified some type of academic prerequisite for admission to grade 9. In most cases (67%) these proved to be an 8th grade diploma, but other factors do exist in certain districts. They are listed on an enclosed coding sheet.

Cross tabulations covering these questions are provided in Tables X, XV, XVI, XVIII.

#### Post T&E Actions

Responses to the questions relating to actions taken since July, 1976 offers a mixed set of responses.

42 (29%) districts have changed graduation requirements.

76 (53%) districts have changed curriculum requirements.

29 (21%) districts have changed promotion requirements.

51 (36%) districts have changed performance standards.

Cross tabulations which incorporate these questions are provided in Tables VI, XI, XII, and XIX.

#### Opinion on Use of a Minimum Score on an Examination as a Requirement for High School Graduation

The majority of the respondents (84 - 58%) indicated a positive response to this question. Of those who responded "yes", most were inclined to favor a locally-prepared test but there was a solid base of support for a State prepared and State mandated examination. Because of the import of this question, an analysis has been provided on these questions by CT and DFG.

Cross tabulations relating to this question appear in Tables VI, VII, XVII, XVIII, XIX.

Break-out of Responses to Questions on Use of a Minimum Score  
on an Examination as a Basis for High School Graduation

Community Type	Total Responses	Use a Minimum Score		State Prep/ State Mand.	State Prep/ Local Option	Locally Selected	Locally Prepared	Other
		Yes	No					
1	22	16	5	4	3	3	7	1
2	43	19	22	6	4	3	4	2
3	--	--	--	-	-	-	-	-
4	31	14	15	4	2	2	6	3
5	14	9	5	3	2	1	3	-
6	4	4	-	2	-	-	2	-
7	4	3	1	3	1	-	-	-
8	2	1	1	-	-	1	1	-
0	28	18	10	4	2	8	7	1

C-9

By DFG	Total Responses	Use a Minimum Score		State Prep/ State Mand.	State Prep/ Local Option	Locally Selected	Locally Prepared	Other
		Yes	No					
A	17	11	5	4	2	2	4	1
B,C,D	37	25	12	6	7	6	9	-
E,F,G	42	26	15	7	3	6	6	4
H,I,J	43	18	23	7	2	3	8	2
V	6	3	2	1	-	1	3	-
Z	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-

Listing of responses (coded by district number) to opinion question regarding use of a minimum score on an examination for one requirement for high school graduation.

\* I fear for the students who have limited natural ability--low IQ; classified students, etc. What alternatives will be open to them when they are unable to attain a minimum score? Will we turn toward the system used in some European countries and totally divorce the less gifted students from our academic programs? Will we substitute certificates for diplomas? Or will we move toward homogeneous schools? Too many questions need to be answered before an examination becomes one of the requirements for graduation--statewide.

\* Minimum standards are not local.

\* Not too many years ago "tracking" of students was discouraged because of new mandates in regard to discrimination. I hope you are aware that we are going in that direction again.

I would suggest that if we are to have test results play an important role in promotion and graduation requirements then we should have a variety of diplomas:

1. State diploma: met all state requirements.
2. Local diploma: completed local requirements but not all state requirements.
3. Certificate of attendance: did not meet state or local requirements but attended school regularly for 12 or more years.

\* The State should prepare a test run that would not effect seniors for the first year, because the students should not be penalized for any errors of omission or commission in the first edition.

\* A common State-wide test should be used as a standard of quality in all districts. A test score should be just one of the several criteria established to determine minimum qualifications for graduation.

Diplomas or certificates of competency should be developed by the State for common standards of quality. These would permit students to "finish" school with an honest evaluation of what they actually accomplished through their schooling.

Schools should opt to use State developed tests. However, if they do not use such tests, they should be mandated to indicate how they arrived at their local minimum qualifications for graduation.

\* Test must be valid for all -- bilingual, etc. Contingencies for repeaters, classified, non-English proficient, and slow learners.

\* High school graduation requirements should be state mandated for courses, but locally mandated to establish the level of achievement to gain the diploma. No state wide test will do the job of certifying high school graduation. There are too many intangibles that must be used to certify the student right to graduate.

- \* I have a concern with a state-mandated test because of the diversity of students' abilities. A state test with a minimum score might be too easy for some and too difficult for others. I also have a concern for the content of such a test. There is the option to test life skills needed after graduation or to test school skills acquired before graduation. Whatever procedure is finally adopted should be more than just a minimum score measurement. Hopefully, the student ought to be expected to perform in relation to his/her ability.
- \* It is my opinion that the State of N.J. should set standards that are common for all high schools in the state. Reading and math along with English, Math, Science, and Social Studies should be included as standard courses. All graduates should show on transcript the above courses. A selection of courses should be required in addition to "Basics" to give students a variety of experiences before graduation. This is a must to be instituted that each graduate should have competencies in Reading and Math. Those that do not meet set standards but complete all requirements should be considered for another certificate.
- \* Graduation should be based on the achievement of some pre-determined level of performance. Students unable to attain the pre-determined level of performance after receiving appropriate remedial education would be issued certificates of high school attendance.
- \* The phrasing of the question makes it a difficult one to answer because of its open-endedness. That is, the phrase "one of the requirements" is subject to interpretation as one of two, one of five, one of ten, etc.

Given an adequate number of other specific requirements for graduation, I would probably have no difficulty in responding affirmatively to question #19. However, given only a few requirements which are unknown to me at the present, I am concerned about the relative weight/importance which might be ascribed to such a test by the Legislature, the public, and the educational community-at-large.

Although I profess to be a disciple-of-sorts of the accountability and back-to-basics movement, I firmly believe that educators have a greater responsibility to retain the human element to whatever degree possible in today's de-personalized, computerized society.

- \* As a guidance counselor and school psychologist, I am concerned regarding the poor proficiency in the basic skills. I would not, however, like to see an over-reaction to this problem by setting up "State Boards" types of examinations. The main objective of school should be to provide an education and not 12 years of study to pass a "Regents Exam."

- \* Minimum standards should not only be established for high school graduation, but also at specified steps through elementary school. If these standards cannot be met, then alternative situations should be established.

The concept of fiscal caps should be continued and perhaps expanded to cover a larger segment of governmental expenditures. More money is not the only answer the better services and education.

- \* Any state mandated requirement should be fully developed in cooperation with the local school districts so that local considerations and/or limitations can be recognized and dealt with. The purpose of having the state mandate the requirements would allow for uniformity throughout the state and it would relieve school districts of some of the political pressures that could be exerted in this direction to water down standards (for example, if students do not achieve a satisfactory level of achievement the state could mandate a certificate of attendance as opposed to a diploma-- the state could also provide centers where students who have gone 4 years to high school, but who have not completed the minimum standards could be given remediation toward achieving that standard). Part of the problem with minimums is that there could be quite a few students retained thus overburdening the school districts in terms of student population--this has always been a major cause of social promotion.
- \* The student should be required to demonstrate certain performance skills. (Fill out applications, consumer knowledge, and selection processes, simple contracts, and basic math.) He should demonstrate under job conditions supervised by Department Chairpersons or Guidance personnel or administrators. Failure to achieve would require reteaching and another demonstration under a different supervisor until the person has achieved the performance skills or withdraws from the program.
- \* Tests should be administered in grade 9 and 11 before first test in grade 12. It should be part of total requirements.
- \* We are willing to consider a state prepared test. However, conditions differ and standards for students probably should also differ. Perhaps a state prepared test, with local option on minimum score would be acceptable. Such minimum scores would need to be equal to or more demanding than a state determined minimum. There should be a state determined minimum, with some procedure for exception, or alternate work in unusual cases.
- \* I am a committee member.

- \* I feel that the best instrument available today, is the Basic Skills Assessment Program, developed by the Educational Testing Service. I would suggest, however, that standards for the test be set by ETS. I do not feel the local district should have total autonomy in setting standards.

I also suggest that the committee should not lose sight of the fact that a testing program used to determine who will graduate must be restricted to minimum basic skills. And, that these basic skills must be life oriented.

- \* Said tests to be in accordance with minimum standards established via T&E process utilized in development of course goals and standards of proficiency.
- \* Criterion-Referenced test administered at completion of each grade, definitely not during senior year only!
- \* LEA's, however, should have the option to make minimum standards higher than those at the state. LEA's should have input to State tests.
- \* I am against requiring a standardized test being administered by the state, however, I believe that each school district should develop standards thru a test or some other vehicle that will meet the specific needs of that particular school. I also believe that there should be a minimum test developed by each district to determine the type of diploma being issued. Academic, Business, General, vocational, etc. I would also encourage the issuing of an attendance certificate.
- \* Not unless that minimum score is tempered by an individual history of the performance of the student throughout the grades and accompanied by specifics indicating learning assistance provided to the students throughout the grades.
- \* Locally validated second option to provide input in those situations where the State test results are suspect. Graduation review board at the end of the junior year to identify specific areas needing emphasis and a program of study developed over the summer and the senior year geared to alleviating the deficiencies in the basic requirements for graduation.
- \* Basic skill testing should be done at the end of grade 10 to allow time for intense remediation in these skill areas. Options should exist within the local district under careful guidelines to circumvent the graduate test requirements for individuals when circumstances warrant.
- \* I feel it is important to deal with this problem much the same way the EAP is run. Give the district a chance to determine relevancy and then proceed from there.

- \* In order to implement minimum standard requirements for graduation, several factors should be considered.
  1. The test should be taken by students early in high school (perhaps sophomore or junior year) in order that remedial instruction may be supplied to eventually enable the child to pass.
  2. Perhaps, a resource room approach for both classified and non-classified students would be helpful.
  3. Realistic standards, probably no higher than 8.5 grade level, should be considered for math and/or reading.
  4. Exemptions should be permitted for handicapped students or students unable to succeed for various reasons.
  5. I indicated the test should be State mandated and prepared for uniformity sake; however, there must be local input prior to the final establishment of such a test.
  
- \* I would favor giving more than one type of diploma in order to indicate something about the student's achievement. Minimum score would apply only to lowest level type diploma.
  
- \* It is a known psychological fact, that there are a number of pupils (as well as adults) who emotionally are unable to take examinations. Therefore, we do not feel that there should be a blanket requirement that would encompass all pupils.
  
- \* If you adopt state requirements -- I suggest:
  1. A board policy on retention, promotion, grading, grouping, homework, and graduation.
  2. Accredited remedial summer programs at no cost to student.
  3. A state testing program.
  4. A minimum level of achievement.
  5. Ability grading and achievement grading.
  6. Requirements in areas such as fine arts, industrial arts, home ec. and music, or a combination of two out of four.
  
- \* Our philosophy is one which suggests that each student should develop to his potential--socially, physically, and mentally; and, we hope he will become a contributive member of society. His potential and his performance are dependent upon many variables. Those are not controlled by the school. Objectives and goals in the affective domain are very difficult to assess. I do not believe any examination can adequately assess these objectives, nor do I believe the school should or can be held responsible for the education of a youngster, unless the "school" is given the authority to accept, reject, develop alternate programs, etc.

- \* I. The focus of question #19 concerns only students at the 12th grade level. My preliminary response is to the assumption that you speak of minimum score on examinations to mean "minimum competency" exams on basic skills. If this is the framework, I recommend the following ideas for consideration.
1. If we are going to require that every high school graduate meet minimum standards for reading and arithmetic, insist that they meet these requirements before leaving elementary or middle school where these skills are best taught. Generally speaking, it is rather late to begin fundamentals at a level where very few teachers are especially trained to teach the basics of reading and arithmetic. In other words, if there is going to be a high school graduation requisite there should also be a pre-high school prerequisite.
  2. Apropos of this, a maximum standard for class size, grades 1-5 should be required of school districts in classes where the basic skills are being taught - English, reading, arithmetic.
  3. Minimum standards of preparation along with appropriate remuneration and incentives should also be instituted for all those engaged in teaching the basic skills, especially in the first three grades. Teachers should be required to have (and be rewarded commensurately) a broad content area in reading and mathematics. Special licensing, masters programs, etc., should be considered. The elementary certification requirements are inadequate in New Jersey as they relate to reading and math courses.
  4. Basic courses during the day or evening should be offered to parents of students in the first three grades.
- II. My second interpretation of the term minimum score on an examination is of broader scope. Obviously, mastery of the basic skills is very much less than one should rightfully expect of a graduating senior. I suggest the following ideas:
1. Establish a State Examination system whereby a motivated student can earn a special diploma similar to that which is or was offered in New York State - the Regents Diploma. These tests would be optional.
  2. For students who do not want to take the whole sequence suggested above, offer a citation on a high school diploma for any subject for which he or she passes the State Examination.
  3. Require that everyone, except those classified students in our schools, pass a moderately challenging State Examination based on:
    - a. two years of high school English
    - b. one year of American History
    - c. one year of high school math (general mathematics)
    - d. one year of high school science (life or physical science option)
  4. Require teachers to complete a masters degree program in their teaching specialty before they are offered tenure.
  5. Establish a licensing renewal program after tenure is earned by way of a State Examination.
  6. Require Boards of Education to remunerate teachers, time wise and money wise for having achieved license renewals periodically.

Generally, I am leary of any requirements that do not impinge on all segments of the educational community. It is grossly unfair to establish minimum standards for students only. The State, the school boards, parents, students, teachers and administrators should all be required to meet minimum standards. The entire system must be held accountable, not just the products (victims) of the system.

\* I am opposed to a minimum score on an examination as a requirement for high school graduation for the following reasons:

- (1) There will always be some students who will never be able to pass a written examination for various reasons, i.e. limited ability psychologically, physically, etc., yet these same students may have demonstrated a mastery in all areas required of them.
- (2) The lack of a high school diploma could be extremely detrimental in earning a living and is too important to be left to the results of one test.
- (3) Local district testing in basic areas of Math and Reading given to students at various grade levels from 2 to 11 should be sufficient to alert everyone to shortcomings in time to be corrected (if possible).
- (4) We award one standard diploma to graduating seniors including Special Education students. How can we justify denying a diploma to a regular student who failed an examination and yet issue one to a Special Education student who is not expected to meet the same minimum requirements? We believe awarding a separate diploma would be undemocratic, counter-productive, and in violation of our efforts toward mainstreaming all students.
- (5) It is believed that education will be better promoted with less State and Federal controls; guidelines, yes, but limited to that. The erosion of home rule will curtail the better districts from moving ahead and poorer districts from having a goal to aim toward. The results will be a common denominator of mediocrity.

- \* In the second semester of his junior year each 11th grade student is given a basic math and a basic English test. If he fails the math test, he is assigned to a special practical math course for one semester of his senior year. The students must pass this practical math course to graduate.

If the student fails the basic English test, he is assigned to a special 12th grade remedial English class.

In the 9th grade all students who are reading below the 8th grade level are assigned to a special reading class for one semester of their freshman year.

- \* I feel that if a standard state prepared examination is used to determine whether or not a student has met the requirements for graduation, the diploma awarded to that student will then assume validity.

At the present time, because of the flexibility and variation of grades and grading from one high school as opposed to another, the high school diploma is practically meaningless.

- \* It is important that we do not establish regents type exams without first indicating that they are geared for high level college prep only. To know local problems in each district is to help us set minimum graduation standards that might include more than one type of diploma (academic/attendance). We can also have the State Board of Education review minimum courses for graduation. For academic type diplomas, require increased number of units in science, math, and foreign languages. Also, terminal pupils might use course concentration to develop major areas of study (auto, shop, lab assistant, art, home economics, nursing, data processing, business) to help them seek jobs without having to pay for additional training after high school graduation or go to vocational-technical instead of a comprehensive high school.
- \* Locally prepared, educationally valid requirements should be prepared and monitored by some agency such as Middle States Evaluation.
- \* Only as one of the requirements. Basic skills should be tested. The standard for each individual student must be tailored to his or her ability.
- \* A test should be administered; a suggested minimum score should be established in order that classified students can also graduate. Such a test should be State prepared, but with a local portion for that test. The "local portion" should be locally developed and administered.

- \* Some method of testing perhaps could and/or should be adopted or developed in the Basic Skill Areas. Also skills necessary for "life" should be incorporated into the curriculum. Such skills could include measuring, figuring interest, checking accounts, social security form, etc. The above should be done at the local level.
- \* Teachers are the professionals and know what their standards are for each course. The social promotion for those limited in ability is an area that is changing and programs are being instituted for those who need help at the lower levels.
- \* Since we are held accountable for the published EAP results as well as the demands of T&E, we feel that statewide standards should be applicable for graduation.
- \* We agree that a standardized device would be of value in determining student competency for awarding a high school diploma that has universal recognition. However, the urban city high school needs a transition period to catch up with suburban schools that have historically spent more money per pupil over the last two decades. The City of Paterson expended \$985 per pupil in the elementary grades and \$1,225 per pupil in the secondary school during the school year 1976-77. We are aware that these figures are one of the lowest in the State of New Jersey. In any event, the standardized instrument should be locally selected by the district so that the results would be most valid.
- \* Students must be able to perform in the world of work. Therefore, I feel that we have short changed students if they do not have a good basic academic foundation. Each entry into the world of work requires a test. Why not prepare students with this exposure to test taking.
- \* If a competency test on performance standard is used, it should be administered early in a student's program. This would allow sufficient time for remediation. A suggestion would be for testing at grades 3, 5, 7, and 9. Testing should not be at the conclusion of the student's years in school. A student's measure of achievement must be on an individual basis in accordance with the individual's ability.
- \* Starting high school graduation requirements at the end of 12 years of schooling is the incorrect approach. If the state wishes to mandate requirements, then the logical way would be to initiate requirements at various stages of development, K, 3, 6, 9, and 12. To have requirements at the end only is educationally unsound and will be most frustrating for both parent and student.
- \* We at New Brunswick will be changing graduation requirements over the next 4 years to include competencies in Language Arts, Reading, and Computational Skills. We will also administer a required competency test which must be passed prior to graduation.

\* The logic of a set standard for all pupils escapes me. On the one hand we are asked to use Plan B, on the other we are being directed through EAP to use tests. I find it difficult to go both ways simultaneously. While tests do provide motivation of some sort, they fall far short of the ideal which is to get pupils to do their best at all times. I also believe as do many others in school that we need to work on human relationships as well as the three R's.

\* Present requirements generally considered shallow (English, Phys, Ed./Health, and American History provide more than half the credit requirements for graduation).

Would like to see results of trial group or other district using minimum score. Districts should represent cross section of New Jersey schools.

Greatest difficulty lies in setting minimum score that is most reasonable. The theory here is superior to the practice. Also, if such a test were to become a requirement, it should be locally prepared and should include the cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor domains. It might well include demonstrated ability and some level in conceptualization and synthesis as well as rate-knowledge and problem solving.

\* Minimum proficiency levels in basic skills for all required subject areas should be established as one of the requirements for high school graduation. I would prefer a locally-designed performance evaluation system which would use more than one means of measuring a student's performance.

\* In developing a minimum score, the status of all students must be considered--this is especially important in dealing with classified students as opposed to the rest of the student population. I also feel if testing is going to be a part of the graduation requirement, the local district should have the prerogative to set the date when the test will be administered, so it can coincide with the local school closing. Also, the scoring of the test is another area that must be considered--who will do the scoring, how will reporting be handled, etc. These areas listed may not be of importance to state officials but they are of real concern for the school administrator. Lastly, consideration for establishing the minimum score is important. It might be advisable to consider setting the minimum score, but with the option for local districts to set a higher minimum score for their district.

\* Some general aspects should be prepared by the State, with questions also from the local community.

\* Individual's basic abilities must be a criteria--a single score for all is not in the best interests of all students.

- \* For whatever reason, high schools have seniors who can not succeed with a "paper & pencil" test. These same students very often do rather well in special programs--D.E. & work study, Satellite, etc.

Let's be honest--we could probably predict the outcome for each student before they take the test. Those who do well, will always do well. We have succeeded in keeping students in school longer than ever before. This was the goal of having so many alternatives to a standard curriculum. If we allowed these students to drop out in their sophomore year we would be doing them a disservice--as would a "test" for graduation.

Local boards should have the option of developing their own graduation requirements--meeting the required number of courses, credits, curriculum, etc. and/or test.

- \* A state prepared examination should be considered. From the test results, statistics could be generated that would show how well our school district is accomplishing the educational objectives set forth by the state. We would also be able to study the programs from schools of similar composition and see if we could improve ours.
- \* It is our feeling that a single test score should serve as only one criteria to determine high school graduation. It would be informative to us to know how our students rank within the state. However, we would like to retain the option locally to determine our own cut-off score for graduation.
- \* Recognition of the importance of individual differences is fundamental to guidance theory and education. There are so many variables to be considered. Differences are found not only in physical characteristics but also in personality traits, mental abilities, and interests. Therefore, I deem it unfair to use a single testing instrument to determine whether or not a student will graduate from high school.
- \* The T&E process contemplates setting local goals, with local standards, using broad based local involvement. To maintain the integrity of local control and to remain internally consistent with the other steps in the T&E process wherein local involvement is encouraged, the local District should have options regarding examinations as a requirement for graduation.

In response to question #13, the District's Department Head Council had a study committee preparing a report for Curriculum Council consideration. However, the committee has postponed its efforts until the committee appointed by the State Board of Education provides the recommendations.

- \* I would endorse the concept of a minimum score or some approved performance criterion as one of the requirements for high school graduation. I would also encourage that the reverse side of the diploma include information about the individual, i.e., courses completed, standardized test performance, attendance, etc. The single-word description diploma such as academic, business, general, vocational, etc. serves to lessen the value of the once precious diploma and will reduce the unwarranted criticism of the public schools.

The criterion referred to in the foregoing should be developed through the cooperation of the Department of Education and local districts with technical input from commercial and professional test developers.

- \* To graduate from Lawrence High School, a student during grades 9-12 shall be required to successfully complete at least 20 different courses which meet for a minimum of 7,200 minutes yearly. Courses meeting for a portion of a year shall be prorated and credit given towards a year course.

Courses meeting two or three periods per day for a full school year shall count as two or three of those required for graduation. All courses shall receive uniform weight based on class hours.

The requirements listed above are minimum standards for graduation set by the Board of Education. A student who graduates after having met these standards may or may not meet the requirements set by an institution of higher vocation. A student should work closely with the Guidance Department to develop an individualized education plan that included all the necessary requirements for entrance in his chosen vocation or school.

In making plans, a student should be aware that colleges and universities frequently require a minimum of sixteen units of work from among the following areas: English, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Foreign Languages.

#### Professional Observation:

Traditionally high schools awarded diplomas to students based on satisfactory attendance and course completion. There needs to be new requirements based on demonstrated performance, or "competencies." Students need to be prepared to meet the demands of society. A renewed emphasis needs to be placed on attendance requirements, competencies, skills, and sequence of course offerings.

- \* Localities should be asked to demonstrate proficiency in various areas determined by state, e.g., local plan developed within state guidelines and approved by state. The local plan might or might not include a test for graduation. Other means of demonstrating proficiency might be used for some or all students.

- \* I do not feel we could effectively measure that which is most important. Specifically, has the student attained his maximum potential. Considering individual differences in learning ability, I feel it would be very difficult to measure or create a single measuring instrument that would serve our purpose.

The differences among students is such that the minimum scores would, of necessity, have to be set rather low. Minimum scores along with different types of diplomas might be a possibility.

- \* This question is too general to answer "yes" - What examination?, Who develops the test?, Who sets the passing grade?
- \* Properly constructed examinations can measure skills, knowledge, and understandings at a particular time. They are meant to be retrospective measures of formal school outcomes and should be evaluated in terms of formal course content and basic skills. Therefore, I believe there is a valid rationale for requiring a minimum score on locally prepared tests as a prerequisite for high school graduation.
- \* With the advent of competency based testing appearing in our high schools today (either mandated or voluntary), it is our belief that high school graduates should be able to demonstrate the fact that they have achieved the desired outcome goals necessary for receipt of a high school diploma.

The testing program used, however, we feel should be open-ended enough to provide the best possible, and most dependable, instrument(s) to meet the needs of the district in which it is being used.

- \* We give mid-term and final exams. A student passing these should demonstrate proficiency in the subject.
- \* Graduation requirements have just been recently changed. Beginning with next year's freshmen class (1978-79) the credit requirements will go from 100 to 120 for high school graduation. Also, the basic requirements for math and science will be expanded to 10 credits where previously they were five credits each.

The committee comprised of administrators, teachers, and board members has also recommended a modified tracking program (Academic, Vocational-General, Business Education) that will be implemented beginning with next year's freshmen class. The committee intends to work on performance standards for each of these tracks and general performance standards for all graduates in conjunction with the T&E process and mandates.

- \* We are planning to increase credits for graduation from 92 to 102. Also we are planning to request our Board of Education to require two years of math for graduation.

- \* Experience indicates (through EAP) that the local district is better able to select the testing instrument which fits its students and its curriculum. Utilizing national standardized tests, especially in the basic skill areas, gives better assurance of the validity of the test.

Provision should be made for a "diploma" for those students who, even with remediation, do not reach the required proficiency level.

- \* I am concerned that a test, as a mandated prerequisite, would allow some students to graduate who have failed other requirements--and at the same time prevent others from graduation who have special needs.
- \* Administered at end of 9th grade. Remediation and retesting each year. Diplomas only to those passing test. Certificates of course completion to others.
- \* I believe that a state prepared and state mandated examination should be used as one of the requirements for high school graduates. However, local school districts should have input into the type of educational experiences to be tested and the criteria for evaluating the results of the test.
- \* I feel that the emphasis should be placed on the demonstration of "life-role" competencies rather than a specific test score. The time period within which a student is to demonstrate these competencies should be sufficiently extensive to allow for remediation.
- \* In my opinion, the establishment of graduation requirements should be left to the jurisdiction of the local district.
- \* If minimum standards are to be established, then differentiated diplomas should be given upon satisfactory completion and meeting the minimum standards of a specific program. Academic, Vocational, Special Needs, and General would be possible differentiated diplomas.
- \* Graduation requirements at the State level should be minimal. Each Board of Education should be required to have a written policy that can be monitored under "T&E". Specificity at the State level should be avoided. Graduation by examination does not insure standards!
- \* It is the schools' obligation to provide supplementary instruction to the students below the minimum.
- \* Provision must be made for the obviously inadequate student.

- \* I feel that it's about time that someone takes a look at minimum requirements for graduation from New Jersey high schools. This could be accomplished by a state mandated test. However, I quickly add that local districts must then be given more money to help with the remedial work which will be necessary if the test is one with any decent standard.

Another option which can be considered is that of awarding different kinds of diplomas if decent minimum standards are not adopted. Why should everyone receive something which, in effect, says that all graduates have met somewhat the same level of achievement. If a student has been in a very "general" kind of ("Micky Mouse") program of studies, as opposed to a more rigorous, challenging one, I see nothing wrong with his/her diploma showing that difference. It is a more honest and realistic approach to the real world the student faces after graduation.

- \* The minimum score on an examination should be used not as a requirement for graduation but as a means of identifying what type of diploma should be issued to a student.
- \* This is not in keeping with the district's goals which refer to meeting the individual needs of all of our students.
- \* This is a very complex issue and we are certainly exploring it. My preference would be for establishing minimum competencies in subjects taken at the high school level. If a student meets the minimum requirements of the course as per the established school test then he has mastered it. Hopefully the knowledge and skills represented in the course will contribute to his strengths as a student and an individual. The question is what minimum skills from among the various disciplines does a student need to function as an effective citizen and contributing member of society? The other great concern is that will an 18 year old youngster that doesn't meet these and is given other than the regular high school diploma be stigmatized? Especially those students who experience difficulty even after a great deal of effort on their part. The subject deserves a great deal of evaluation. The pressures for immediate solutions to all kinds of problems is unremitting. I think we must avoid being steamrolled into courses of action that we do not fully believe in or that, in the long run, may not work in the best interest of our students.
- \* A minimum score on an examination should be used as one of the requirements for receiving a high school diploma. A certificate should be awarded to other students failing to meet the diploma requirements. There could be three or more types of diplomas or certificates depending on the selected program.

\* Graduation is one of the more significant ceremonies in American society. The diploma, as a symbol, carries cultural as well as economic values. It provides the evidence of society's commitment to the individual student. This trend is presently being modified by some in seeking a simplistic approach to guarantee competence with minimum standards (Will the minimum be so high to be restrictive or too low to be meaningless?) because of a shrinking base to individual districts. The graduate should be competent in basic skills at a level to be able to learn job specifications, and to pursue requirements of post secondary education (vocational and academic). Competency in one skill may offset deficiency in another skill. The present testing program required of high schools by the State Department of Education (N.J. State Assessment Program and the Compensatory Education Program) should be sufficient to assist schools to have the graduate able to enter society as an active participant.

\* I am strongly opposed to State mandated requirements for educational practices. Such requirements frequently fail to satisfy local needs; they tend to be inflexible, and do not keep pace with changing times and changing needs.

With the assistance of professionally trained and experienced test makers, I believe local districts should try to develop their own series of tests. At this time, I would limit such tests to items dealing with skills only.

\* It seems we have approached the time in education whereby we recognize the individual differences among the students. For this and other reasons, the local districts must be able to continue the practice of establishing their own standards for performance. Each community is different. This difference will not change if we should go to state mandated graduation requirements through testing. By going in this direction, we will be fostering the idea that you must pass a test to graduate, not to learn those things important to the learner.

State monitoring testing is fine, but it should never be utilized to determine who graduates and who does not. State monitoring and the sharing of the results with the schools throughout the state can provide sufficient incentive for the lower scoring districts to review their present programming.

\* Minimum objective scores imply each individual should reflect some arbitrary standard of achievement. This does not take into consideration individual aptitude, abilities and background and, therefore, would tend to penalize some segments of our population because of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

\* The high school diploma has lost much of its meaning as a certificate of accomplishment. With minimum competency requirements in English skills, mathematics, reading and government, schools could certify that, at the time of graduation, a student was able to perform at least at a given level. With such specific meaning affixed to the diploma, the legal question of whether a district has fulfilled its obligations would abate since no student who did not have the stated competencies could be graduated.

\* Departmental minimum proficiency tests are administered in the major disciplines. These tests are developed from the major areas of the school's courses of study. Students are required to pass the minimum proficiency test in order to successfully complete the course.

\* With the great variety of subjects being taught in high schools today, it would be extremely difficult to test on anything but a broad spectrum of general content. The student in special or vocational skills areas would be better served by an assessment of performance-based achievement.

Competency is related to ability. With the wide range of student abilities, it becomes next to impossible to have a set competency. We identify students with basic skill deficiencies and provide remediation as part of Board Policy.

We believe in evaluation of pupil learning, but do not feel that an examination is the answer.

\* It is difficult to respond to this question since we do not, at this point in time, delve deeply enough into this whole area of graduation requirements. The above represents possible alternatives and would require much more study before any final opinion could be made.

It is my sincere hope that much "In-Service" would be scheduled so as to insure a meaningful program. Let's not develop procedures and standards in haste. The lives and future of our youth require and demand much more of us toward this result.

\* A single examination would be too limiting. I feel a series of competency tests from grades seven through eleven that can be used to identify problems requiring remediation is much sounder educationally.

If we simply give a senior an examination and he fails, we have abrogated our responsibility to educate that student. There should be a whole series of checkpoints rather than a single "do or die" examination.

\* We believe, should either recommend or mandate graduation requirements with respect to the areas of: (1) Attendance; (2) Loss of credit for class cutting.

\* In the main, examinations designed to screen for "high school ejection" are Mickey Mouse. As a sap to the Bestors and the Book Burners, they are and become political Murine for educators at all eschelons and, they become expensive! A state required examination in New Jersey would beget a blatant racial atmosphere that would preclude any serious attempt to bring to equity the imbalance that now exists between city districts and their suburban periphery. I also object vehemently to the premise that a state test will tend to rectify the ills of society by making the schools pay for the callous indifference of legislators, landlords and laymen--schools will pay because those institutions not achieving a sufficient number of students meeting or exceeding minimum standards will be held up to ridicule for failing to do a thousand tasks for which they were never designed or ordained to do.

\* In my opinion, requiring students to meet a minimum score on a set examination, whether it be prepared by the state or by the school, would be totally unfair and unrealistic. I think we should keep in mind that our educational system in New Jersey is based on the concept that there are indeed differences between students and, therefore, they have different levels of ability that they can achieve. I see nothing wrong with a student who has limited ability and who works very hard being permitted to graduate, even though he may not ever be able to meet a minimum grade level of e.g. 8.5 on a given test.

If it is mandated that we do this, what test would we use? What test could possibly be fair enough to test all students in all academic areas? Certainly the state test is not adequate to measure this type of skill. It has been a waste of time since it was first given and, to my knowledge, has proved to be totally inadequate.

I have been in the business of testing and personnel services for twenty-five years and I have never seen one test that I felt was adequate to measure this type of minimum standards. All tests have limitations and the people who give these tests are well aware of it. To use a test incorrectly, which I think is what we would be doing if we used it for setting minimum standards, would be defeating the whole idea of education for all.

Another problem you would have (and there is no way you can get away from this) is that you would end up having teachers doing nothing but teaching the test over and over again until a student was able to pass it. This would accomplish nothing except that the student would be able to say that they eventually passed the test. This happened in New York when they had the state regents. There were many schools in New York where the teachers taught nothing all year but answers to the regency tests. These students were certainly not educated. They were taught to pass a given test and that's all. Is this really what you want to do in New Jersey? New Jersey schools for years, have had the reputation, right or wrong, of being No. 1 in the United States. I happen to think this reputation is well-earned and well-deserved. If we went to this type of program, we would be going back into the stone ages and I find it hard to believe that anybody seriously wants to do that.

Thank you for allowing our school to express its opinion on this very important subject. I hope your committee thinks these problems out very carefully before they come to any decision that might do great harm to our fine educational system in the State of New Jersey.

Special Coding Sheets

Coding Sheet

#4. What instruments are used to measure the performance standard?

Columns 27-28 SGRHOW

- 01 - Performance standards within courses or departments
- 02 - District developed indicators of effectiveness
- 03 - CAT - Senior math test
- 04 - Successful completion of one of the following: community service, independent study, job experience
- 05 - Stanford Achievement Test - state assessment
- 06 - ETS Basic Skills Assessment Program
- 07 - Math - Colorado Basic Skills; English - District Instrument
- 08 - Reading - 8th grade or better on Houghton-Mifflin Test of Academic Progress; Math - Locally designed CRT
- 09 - CTBS

Coding Sheet

#7. Are any categories of students exempted from the special graduation requirement?

Columns 32-33 EXMWHO

01 - Principal/committee can waive requirements

02 - Classified students

03 - Classified/Bilingual students

## Coding Sheet

#9. What are the conditions for early graduation?

Columns 38-39 EGRC DN

- 01 - Three years - must meet all other requirements with parent, counselor, and principal approvals
- 02 - Three years - summer school and acceleration
- 03 - Parental agreement only
- 04 - Early college acceptance
- 05 - Meets all requirements
- 06 - Meets all requirements, approvals, grade point average, competence in basic skills
- 07 - Early application plus all requirements
- 08 - Special contact with principal
- 09 - Pass a screening committee
- 10 - All requirements but not before January of senior year
- 11 - Board of Education approval
- 12 - Request by parent, received by guidance counselor, approval by principal, superintendent, and Board of Education
- 13 - Early application (1 year in advance). Conference with counselor, parent, and student. Approval by Director of Guidance, Assistant Principal, and Principal.
- 14 - Meets all requirements with clear need or hardship
- 15 - Ages 19, 20, 21 eligible to complete in three years
- 16 - Special program under Plan B
- 17 - Early college acceptance; 92 credits earned, diploma deferred pending 8 additional credits from college
- 18 - Above average in grades, maturity, and career plans

## Coding Sheet

#17. Identify specific standards for admission to high school.

Columns 59-60 HSLIST

- 01 - 8th grade diploma
- 02 - 9th grade diploma
- 03 - Must pass English in grade 8
- 04 - Must pass 4 out of 6 subjects in grade 8
- 05 - Must pass 2 out of 4 subjects in grade 8
- 06 - Must pass all major subjects
- 07 - Must pass P.E., English, Social Studies, and 1 other major
- 08 - Cannot fail more than 1 academic subject in grade 8
- 09 - Conditional and social promotion policies
- 10 - Earned 75 credits - pass Math and English
- 11 - Everyone promoted unless retention recommended and approved

APPENDIX D



CODER ONLY

CT \_\_\_\_\_  
DFG \_\_\_\_\_  
U.A. \_\_\_\_\_

### SURVEY ON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Name of District \_\_\_\_\_ District Code # \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_ County Code # \_\_\_\_\_

No. of High Schools in District (circle) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Indicate present 9-12 enrollment: Less than 500 \_\_\_\_\_; 501-1000 \_\_\_\_\_;  
1001-1500 \_\_\_\_\_; 1500+ \_\_\_\_\_

Person completing this form \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: Please feel free to attach any copies of district (school) policies, guidelines, or memoranda which provide a specific reference to the desired information.

1. How many credits or units are now required for high school graduation in your district? \_\_\_\_\_

2. In the chart below please make the appropriate entry under Column A. Circle the appropriate number which coincides with the required years of satisfactory completion for that particular subject area.

	A			
	Units (years) of satisfactory work required for High School Graduation			
English	1	2	3	4
Social Studies	1	2	3	4
Mathematics	1	2	3	4
Science	1	2	3	4
Physical/Safety/Health Education	1	2	3	4
Foreign Language	1	2	3	4
Business Education	1	2	3	4
Industrial Arts	1	2	3	4
Art	1	2	3	4
Music	1	2	3	4
Home Economics	1	2	3	4
Vocational Education	1	2	3	4
Other	1	2	3	4

3. In addition to specific courses or credits, does your district have any other graduation requirements (such as a specific examination or a performance standard)? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If the requirement is a performance standard, please go on to question #4. If not, go directly to #9.

4. What instrument(s) is (are) used to measure the performance standard?

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5. When is it administered?

Grade: 7 \_\_\_\_\_; 8 \_\_\_\_\_; 9 \_\_\_\_\_; 10 \_\_\_\_\_; 11 \_\_\_\_\_; 12 \_\_\_\_\_

6. How many times can students take the "test"? (Circle the appropriate number)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 X (unlimited)

7. Are any categories of students officially exempted from this requirement? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If so, please identify them: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. What is the per pupil expenditure for this process? \_\_\_\_\_

9. If students complete the requirements prior to June of their senior year, can they graduate early? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what are the conditions for such a situation?

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10. Does your district utilize the Plan B option for any of your high school programs? (Plan B enables districts to award course credit based upon the completion of performance objectives--irrespective of time factors) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

11. If Plan B is utilized, please provide an estimate of how many pupils are involved in this option. \_\_\_\_\_

12. Which of the following types of diplomas are offered to students?

Academic \_\_\_\_\_

Vocational \_\_\_\_\_

General \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

13. If a graduation requirements committee is now functioning (or will be operating shortly) in your district, please indicate which of the following are included in the membership of the committee. (Check as many responses as apply)

- Parents
- Students
- Community Agency Representatives
- Business/Industry Representatives
- Administrators
- Teachers
- Other

14. There are no state mandates that require any local committee structure to work on graduation requirements. However, several districts have chosen to move in that direction. Please define the status of a committee in the establishment of high school graduation requirements in your district. Please check the appropriate answer(s).

- Present requirements are a product of a committee's work
- A committee is now functioning to recommend graduation requirements
- A committee will be appointed to consider graduation requirements
- No committee work is anticipated

15. Does your district now have in effect a policy which mandates promotion requirements during the high school years (grades 9-12)? Yes  No

16. If none are in effect at this time, are they under consideration for adoption? Yes  No

17. In order to be admitted into the high school, do students have to meet defined minimum academic standards at the conclusion of the 8th grade? Yes  No  If yes, please identify them:

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18. Since the implementation of T&E (July, 1976) have any of the following changed in your district (for grades 9-12)?

- Graduation Requirements? Yes  No
- Curriculum Requirements? Yes  No
- Promotion Requirements? Yes  No
- Performance Standards? Yes  No



APPENDIX E



Appendix E: Summary of Activity  
in the 50 States

MINIMAL COMPETENCY TESTING

Prepared by:  
Chris Pipho, Associate Director  
Department of Research and Information  
Education Commission of the States  
Denver, Colorado

STATE	ACTION TAKEN	SETTING OF STANDARDS	GRADE LEVELS ASSESSED	SKILL AREAS ASSESSED	USE OF STANDARDS AND TEST	COMMENTS
Arizona	State Dept. of Education Ruling	Set by the State Dept. of Educ. Assessment by Local District No statewide test prescribed	8th Grade 12th Grade	Reading, Writing, Computation	For Graduation from 8th and 12th grades	Effective January 1, 1976, students must be able to read, write and compute at the 6th grade level to receive the standard 8th grade certificate and at the 9th grade level for high school graduation.
California E-1	(early exit test) SB 1112-1972 SB 1243-1975 SB 1502-1976	Test and cut-off standards set by the California Department of Education	Age 16 to adult	Process areas of reading and computation content areas: consumer economics and mathematics	Award high school diploma and leave school with parent permission	Title of program: California High School Proficiency Test  Test administration and security handled under contract with private testing corporation.
California	AB 3408-Ch. 856 1976	State Board to supply performance indicators and examples of minimum standards Local districts to set graduation standards.	Test once between 7-9 and twice between grades 10-11	Reading, Writing, Computation	For high school graduation	The act also prescribes course of study requirements.  In effect for the graduation class of 1980.
Colorado	SB 180-1975 C.R.S. 22-32-109.5	Local Boards	9 - 12 - test twice a year	Local District Option	Local District Option for high school graduation	If a local board of education imposes a proficiency test for high school graduation, it must follow the stipulations of this act.

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STATE	ACTION TAKEN	SETTING OF STANDARDS	GRADE LEVELS ASSESSED	SKILL AREAS ASSESSED	USE OF STANDARDS AND TEST	COMMENTS
Delaware	State Board of Education Resolution 1976	State Department of Education After baseline test is given	Baseline instrument grade 11 1978	Level II Competencies i.e.: the application reading; writing & mathematics	For high school graduation	The development of the baseline testing instrument has been awarded to a private test contractor
Florida	CSSB 340-1975 F.S. 229.814  CSSB 107-1976 F.S. Ch.76. 226	State and local boards	Grades 3, 5, 8 and 11.	Basic Skill areas  Functional Literacy	For high school graduation - Grade promotion and early exit from high school	Titled: The Educational Accountability Act.  Places ban on social promotion
Georgia	State Board of Education Action	State Board and State Department	Grade 4, 8, & 11.	Grades 4 & 8 Reading, math, social studies and science. H.S. Test under development	The state board of education has not taken final action on the use of the tests	The student assessment program is part of a long-range plan to fund local school districts through a program of comprehensive planning.
Iaho	State Board of Education Resolution	State Board of Education	Grades 9 - 12	Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Spelling	For high school graduation at the option of local districts	Students passing the proficiency program will receive a diploma with the state board seal. In districts not participating, students will receive district diploma.
Kentucky	1977 State Board of Education adopted 4-vr.	State Department with Task Force Assistance	Grades 3, 5, 8, & 11.	Criterion referenced test in reading, writing	For high school graduation and grade promotion	

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Louisiana	HB 810, Act 709 1976	State	Grades 4, 8, and 11.	Basic communication and computational skill areas with criterion referenced test	No mention of graduation or grade promotion	Requirements a part of the accountability and assessment law.
Maine E-3	Enacted amended LD 1810 Ch. 78 of the Private Special Laws	State Department of Education	Grade 11	(See Comments)	For high school graduation	The law specifies that the Commissioner of Education is to be assisted in the development of the assessment instrument and the areas to be tested by a state wide committee. The law names the organizations to be represented.
Maryland	HB 1433, M.A.S.C., Art. 77 Sec. 980 1976 and HB 1462, Ch. 559 - 1977	State Board of Education	Grades 2 - 12 Grades 3, 7, 9 & 11	Reading	For grade promotion and high school graduation	Students not meeting minimum requirements may be retained in some grade or enrolled in remedial program
Michigan	State Department of Education	State Department of Education	Grades 4, 7, 10	Reading and Math	For local district use	12th grade minimal competency test, covering life role skills under study

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MINIMAL COMPETENCY TESTING

STATE	ACTION TAKEN	SETTING OF STANDARDS	GRADE LEVELS ASSESSED	SKILL AREAS ASSESSED	USE OF STANDARDS AND TEST	COMMENTS
Missouri	State Board of Education	State Department of Education	Grade 8	The application of reading, mathematics and government/economics skills	No mandate for graduation or grade promotion	The Basic Education Skills test, developed by the Department of Education, has been field tested in grades 8, 10 and 12
Nebraska	State Department of Education	Local School Districts	Begins in Grade 5 and continues until mastery is achieved by each student in each skill area	Reading, writing and mathematics	State developed test <u>is not</u> to be used for grade retention or promotion	Local school districts may use the Nebraska Assessment Battery of Essential Learning Skills (N-ABELS) or develop their own test.
Nevada	AB 400-1972	State Board of Education	Grades 6, 9 & 12	Reading, writing and mathematics	For high school graduation	Students may be promoted to the next grade if examination is failed but remedial work is to be provided
New Hampshire	State Department of Education	State Department of Education	Grade 4 Grade 8 & 12 under development	Communications and Mathematics	Grade promotion and high school graduation <u>not mentioned</u>	Program is to serve as guidelines for local school districts
New Jersey	A.1736, Ch.97 1976	State		Reading and mathematics	Student diagnosis and remedial identification	Local districts are to provide remedial assistance in order for students to meet state standards
New Jersey	State Department of Education	State Department of Education	3, 6, 9 & 11	Reading and mathematics Life skills under study	Identification of students needing instructional assistance	Development of testing instrument is under contract to a private test development company

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STATE	ACTION TAKEN	SETTING OF STANDARDS	GRADE LEVELS ASSESSED	SKILL AREAS ASSESSED	USE OF STANDARDS AND TEST	COMMENTS
New Mexico	State Board of Education	State	Elementary level, grade choice up to local district and grade 10	Elementary: Local option Secondary: Proficiency battery based on adult performance level (APL) and a writing sample	Proficiency endorsement on high school diploma if test is passed	The state department of education is working on a series of basic skill area curriculum guides
New York E-5	State Board of Regents	State Board of Regents	Grades 9 - 12	Reading and mathematics with a criterion referenced test; also, civics and citizenship practical science, health & drug education and writing and language skills	For high school graduation	The New York Department of Education also administers the Regents Diploma Program and the pupil evaluation plan (PEP) both related to measuring student performance in the basic skill areas.
North Carolina	Enacted HB 204	By Competency Test Commission created by law	Grade 11 beginning in 1978 - 79	To be determined by the Competency Test Commission. See Comments.	For high school graduation	The test is to measure "those skills and that knowledge thought necessary to enable an individual to function independently and successfully in assuming the responsibilities of citizenship."

(North Carolina continued next page.)

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STATE	ACTION TAKEN	SETTING OF STANDARDS	GRADE LEVELS ASSESSED	SKILL AREAS ASSESSED	USE OF STANDARDS AND TEST	COMMENTS
North Carolina (Continued)	Enacted HB 205	By Competency Test Commission (separate from HB 204)	Grades 1 & 2 criterion referenced test  Grades 3, 6 & 9 "Norm" referenced test	To be deter- mined by the Competency Test Commission	To be determined by the Competency Test Commission.	
Oregon  E-6	State Board of Education 1972	Local Districts	District Option	Reading, writing and computation. Local option for personal devel- opment, social responsibility and career development.	For high school graduation	Graduation requirements are based on course credit, atten- dance and required competencies in personal, social and career areas.
Oklahoma	State Board of Education	Decision will follow baseline data test	Grades 3, 6, 9, ----- Grade 12	Reading ----- Survival Skills	Decision will follow baseline data test	The baseline test instrument will be given to 15,000 students in the fall of 1977

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Rhode Island	State Department of Education		Grades 4, 8 and age 17 used in pilot test	Comprehension Analysis and Evaluation known as the "life skills"	For local district and state department use. Competency base high school diploma under study	The Rhode Island master plan for evaluation and the state-wide assessment program have jointly contributed to the pilot testing in the life skills areas
Vermont	State Board of Education	State Board of Education	Continuous	Reading, writing, speaking, listening, and mathematics. Area of reasoning is under study	For high school graduation	Mastery of the basic competencies is to be one requirement for graduation unless student has a limiting handicap.
E-7						
Virginia	HB 256-1976	State Board of Education in cooperation with local districts	All grades yearly with first emphasis in grades 1-3 and 4-6	Reading, communications and mathematics	To measure progress of individual students	Act known as The Standard of Quality Act.
Washington	SB 3026 HB 1345-1976	Local Districts	4th & 8th	Standardized achievement test in reading, mathematics and language arts	For school district and parent use	School districts are encouraged to develop a separate test for second grade for the early identification of pupils needing assistance in language and computational skills.





