



Budget Briefs

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PUPIL ASSESSMENT IN GRADES 4-12

The budget adjustment act (1997 Wisconsin Act 237), passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Tommy Thompson on June 2, 1998, prohibits the automatic promotion of 4th and 8th grade pupils. Beginning July 1, 2002, in order to be promoted, students must pass a test, approved by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction or the local school board, that measures their attainment in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies.

Previously, the 1997 budget act (1997 Wisconsin Act 27) mandated high school students graduating after September 1, 2002, must pass a high school graduation examination, measuring pupil achievement in mathematics, science, reading, writing, geography and history.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Currently, the state superintendent must adopt or approve locally developed examinations to measure pupil attainment of knowledge and concepts in the 4th, 8th and 10th grades. (Act 27 sunsets the 10th grade requirement after the 2000-2001 school year.) Each school district has to administer the state-approved tests at those grade levels every year, but until July 1, 2002, there are no consequences for failure to pass the 4th and 8th grade examinations.

High School Graduation Examination. Beginning September 1, 2002, a pupil will have to pass the required graduation examination to receive a high school diploma, but each pupil must have been given at least four opportunities to take the examination.

The graduation examination will be based on academic standards the district board is required to adopt by August 1, 1998, and it must be administered twice a year at a grade level selected by the local board. If the district chooses to adopt its own graduation examination in place of the examination developed by the state, it must notify the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). (Act 27 also authorized the governor to adopt statewide graduation standards by executive order, in which case DPI will develop an examination reflecting those standards and local districts may elect to use it.)

Promotional Examinations. Beginning July 1, 2002, a district board will not be allowed to promote 4th or 8th grade pupils unless they score a passing grade on the required examination. The board has the option of developing or adopting its own promotional examinations. A pupil has two opportunities to pass a promotional examination.

Exceptions. A district board may decide not to administer the promotional or graduation examinations to a pupil enrolled in a special education program or to limited-English speaking pupils, or it may modify the format and administration procedures for examining such pupils. The law also provides that, upon request of a pupil's parent or guardian, the school board must excuse the pupil from taking the required examination. In any of these cases, the board must develop alternative criteria for promoting pupils who do not take the standard examination.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For copies of statutory provisions relating to required examinations, contact the Legislative Reference Bureau at (608) 266-0342. For more detailed information about examination re-

quirements, contact the Department of Public Instruction, Office of Educational Accountability, at (608) 267-9111.