



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATOR GRETCHEN GUESS

Sponsor Statement

Sponsor Substitute SB 248:

"An Act relating to secondary school competency examinations, graduation requirements, and diplomas; and providing for an effective date."

The purpose of the Sponsor Substitute of SB 248 (SS SB248) is two-fold: ensure we have a high stakes exam minimizing the "false negatives" and clarify the legislative intent regarding severe cognitively disabled students.

SS SB 248 requires severe cognitively disabled students (as defined by the state) to be waived from the HSQE; district will set forth these students' graduation requirements.

SS SB 248 puts in place two methods for students (from here on to mean all students without severe cognitive disabilities) to demonstrate they know the material set forth in state standards before they are eligible for a high school diploma.

1. Students pass the Alaska HSQE. Students may retake portions of the test they have failed in perpetuity, even after leaving the public school system.
2. Students demonstrate they know the material through a portfolio process in their senior year. This process will be the same for all students, and is only for sections of the HSQE failed by the student. A student must provide to their principal a portfolio of material demonstrating the following.
 - A 95 percent attendance rate (as defined by the local district and excludes excused absences).
 - A 2.0 GPA in all courses required for graduation.
 - Proof the student will meet the applicable state and district requirements for graduation.
 - Proof the student has attempted and failed the exam in the portfolio area(s).
 - Proof the student completed available remediation in the failed subject area(s).
 - Letter(s) from the student's teacher(s) of record in the subject area(s) failed stating the student knows the material required by the exam.
 - Supporting documentation regarding student's competency in the area(s) failed (e.g., other test results, papers, et al).

The student's school principal reviews the portfolio and signs off certifying the information is valid to their knowledge, and the principal has found the student meets the competency standards on the HSQE.

The principal sends the superintendent the portfolio, and the superintendent signs off certifying the information is valid to their knowledge, and the superintendent believes the documentation proves the student knows the material.

The superintendent sends the portfolio to a state panel of three members (Commissioner, Board Member, at-large member) for their review and final approval.

The only modifications allowed to the portfolio by an Individual Education Plan (IEP) team are those regarding attendance (because of chronically ill students).

Given this year's deadline, a phase-in for the legislation is necessary allowing students in the class of 2004 to have one year to submit their portfolio, and students in the class of 2005 to have up to six months after graduation to submit their portfolio. Starting in 2006, a student must submit their portfolio during their senior year.

This sponsor substitute attempts to improve, but keep the intent, of the current HSQE system. The appeals systems in this bill follows a similar system in the state of Indiana; their system has been very successful in ensuring an alternative means by which students can demonstrate proficiency.

Thank you for your consideration.