

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1686

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Higher Education, March 26, 2013

**Title:** An act relating to high school equivalency certificates.

**Brief Description:** Concerning high school equivalency certificates.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Seaquist, Haler, Roberts, Zeiger, Reykdal, Springer, Pettigrew, Pollet, Dahlquist, McCoy, Maxwell, Fagan, Morrell and Ryu; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/08/13, 98-0.

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education: 3/21/13, 3/26/13 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chair; Becker, Vice Chair; Kohl-Welles, Ranking Member; Baumgartner, Frockt, McAuliffe and Tom.

**Staff:** Katherine Taylor (786-7434)

**Background:** General Educational Development (GED) Test. The GED test is a high school equivalency test recognized in all 50 states, and some Canadian provinces and territories. The GED was developed in the 1940s to help military personnel and veterans earn a high school credential and enter the workforce.

The GED Testing Service (Service) is a joint venture between Pearson and the American Council on Education. The Service reports that nearly 800,000 GED tests are taken each year, and in 2010 more than 470,000 individuals were awarded their high school credential through the GED testing program.

The current GED test provided by the Service is the 2002 Series GED Test. The test is designed to cover academic areas of a high school education in five subjects, including language arts – reading, language arts – writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. This test is offered in both paper and computer formats. A new assessment will be released on January 2, 2014, to replace the 2002 Series GED Test.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

GED in Washington State. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) is authorized to adopt rules governing the certificate of educational competence, subject to rules adopted by the State Board of Education. This certificate of educational competency is issued by both SBCTC and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) when an individual scores at or above the minimum proficiency level set by SBCTC. This minimum proficiency level is defined as that set by the Service. Currently, the minimum proficiency level is a standard score of at least 410 on each of the five portions on each of the five subject area tests and an average score of at least 450 on the entire test.

GED Alternatives. Wisconsin awards students a High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED). This is a combination of the GED and other tests and methods for demonstrating an individual's high school equivalent skills. Individuals can earn their HSED by taking the GED test as well as health, civic literacy, employability skills, and career awareness subject area tests. There are also four other options for earning an HSED, including taking certain postsecondary credits, obtaining a foreign high school or postsecondary diploma, or completing a competency program offered by a technical college or community-based group that is approved by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as a high school completion program.

California offers the California High School Proficiency Examination to verify high school level skills. Those who pass the test receive a Certificate of Proficiency from the State Board of Education, which is recognized as the equivalent to a diploma. The test consists of two sections: a language arts section and a mathematics section.

**Summary of Bill:** This bill removes the GED test from statute and replaces it with the term high school equivalency certificate. A high school equivalency certificate is issued jointly by SBCTC and OSPI. This certificate indicates that the holder attained standard scores at or above the minimum proficiency level described by SBCTC on a high school equivalency test. SBCTC must identify and accept a high school equivalency test that is comparable in rigor to the GED, and must include testing in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies.

The terms GED, general equivalency degree, general educational development, general education development exam, general equivalency diploma, general educational development test, certificate of educational competence, official report of the equivalent acceptable scores of the general educational development test, and GED certificate, are replaced with the term high school equivalency certificate. These terms are replaced in 31 sections of law including licensure qualification requirements for optometrists, components of dropout reengagement programs, scholarship eligibility, and the definition of adult basic education, among others.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The bill amends all the statutes that use the term GED. There are two other test makers that make comparable tests. We want Washington citizens to be able to use the best test. The GED is now for-profit.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Jacquie Armstrong, SBCTC.