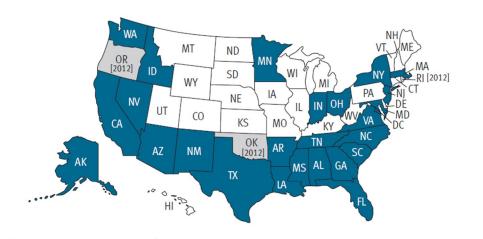


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State High School Exit Exams and Students with Disabilities: How Are They Doing?

The <u>Center on Education Policy (CEP)</u> released its 9th annual report on high school exit exams, *State High School Tests: Exit Exams and Other Assessments*, in December 2010. For purposes of its report, CEP identifies "states with high school exit exams" as:

- States that require students to pass, not just take, state exit exams to receive a high school diploma, even if the students have completed the necessary coursework with satisfactory grades.
- States in which the exit exams are a state mandate rather than a local option, in other words, states that require students in all school districts to pass exit exams, rather than allowing districts to decide for themselves whether to make the exams a condition of graduation.



States with mandatory exit exit exams in 2010:

AL, AK, AR, AZ, CA, FL, GA, ID, IN, LA, MA, MD, MN, MS, NC, 1 NJ, NV, NM, NY, OH, SC, TN, 2 TX, VA, WA

States phasing in exit exams by 2018 but not yet withholding diplomas [year withholding diplomas]:

OK [2012], OR [2012], RI [2012]

States with no mandatory exit exam:

CO, CT, DE, DC, HI, IL, IA, KS, KY, ME, MI, MO, MT, NE, NH, ND, PA, SD, UT, VT, WV, WI, WY

The 2010 CEP report finds that 28 states (see map at left) required high school exit exams in the 2009-10 school year (up from 26 in 2009). The percentage of public school students enrolled in states administering exit exams has now reached 74%. Meanwhile, tightening education budgets at both the state and local levels are impacted funding for programs related to high school exit exams, such as remediation services.

Source: Center on Education Policy, State High School Tests: Exit Exams and Other Assessments, December 2010.

The performance of students with disabilities across the states with exit exams varies greatly and, since each state administers a unique exam or series of exams, results are not comparable across states. However, a look at the pass rates of students with disabilities compared to all students within states provides a glimpse of the impact these exams are having on a significant portion of the nation's 5.8 million school-age students with disabilities, 72% of whom are educated in states with exit exams currently in place. See the *State-by-State Performance At a Glance* section for more information.

The consequences of these high stakes exit exams for students with disabilities are neither well researched nor well understood. However, in a 2005 Information Brief, the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition laid out the following consequences of requiring students with disabilities to pass state exit exams to receive a standard high school diploma:

Intended consequences:

- More students with disabilities will participate in the general education curriculum and achieve results.
- Higher academic expectations will improve students' access to postsecondary education and employment.
- The differences between general education and special education students are reduced—all students are held to the same standards, are required to pass the same exams, and receive the same diploma.
- Exit exams signify a minimum standard for all students to achieve—holding all students to these standards gives clearer meaning and value to diplomas earned.
- Educators will use differentiated instructional strategies, including the use of accommodations, to assist students in meeting higher academic standards and passing exit exams.

Unintended consequences:

- Some students with disabilities will fail to receive standard diplomas.
- Higher dropout rates may result as students' frustrations rise amid difficulties in passing exit exams.
- Student self-esteem is lowered by repeated failures on exit exams.
- Dissatisfaction and conflicts with parents may sometimes result; possibilities for lawsuits may also
- Some students may need to remain in school longer to meet the requirements of standard diplomas.
- States and LEAs may be forced to create alternative diplomas and pathways to ensure that students exit with some form of high school exit credential.

Advice to Advocates & Parents

Advocates and parents should become involved in the policies developed by states regarding exit exams to ensure that such policies are fair and equitable for students with disabilities. While the right of states to impose high stakes exams has been well established through several court cases, it is imperative that it be done so in a nondiscriminatory manner. <u>Do No Harm</u>, a 2001 report examining the needs and rights of students with learning disabilities with regard to high-stakes standardized tests, identified essential elements of a fair and nondiscriminatory assessment system for students with learning and other disabilities that can be used as a checklist by advocates and parents.

Essential Elements of a Fair and Nondiscriminatory Assessment System

- **Lead Time:** Sufficient advance time (4-6 years) so that students with learning disabilities will not be negatively impacted by an assessment system.
- **Validity:** An assessment system which actually tests what it was designed to measure and only for purposes and categories of students that have been validated.
- **Testing What Was Taught:** Guarantees that students are actually tested on material that they have learned in the classroom.
- Accommodations: Allowable accommodations that include any accommodation previously used and is listed in a student's IEP or Section 504 Plan.
- **Parent Involvement:** Decision making about a student's participation in the assessment system by IEP and Section 504 teams.
- **Test Ability, Not Disability:** Examinations that do not test a student's learning disability (e.g., tests that are required to be handwritten or that heavily emphasize spelling).
- **Limit on High Stakes Test Use:** Rarely, if ever, should standardized tests be given high-stakes consequences for students with disabilities.
- Alternate Assessments: Alternate assessments that allow learning disabled students to demonstrate their knowledge, rather than the effects of their disabilities.
- **Appeal Procedures:** Procedural safeguards to ensure that students are able to contest decisions about accommodations, alternate assessments, and scores on assessments.
- **Information:** Provision to students and parents of clear and accurate information about the assessment system, accommodations, alternate assessments, and appeals.
- No One Measure: Multiple measures of student performance utilized in the assessment system

STATE-BY-STATE PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE

The snapshots below are drawn from the state profiles produced by CEP as part of its December 2010 report, *State High School Tests: Exit Exams and Other Assessments.* The CEP state profiles provide a wealth of detailed information about each state's exit exam(s). Readers are encouraged to download the full state profile (available in WORD format) for additional information.

	Percer	ntage of Stud	dents Pa	ade*				
ALABAMA		200	9-2010		Does State			
	*see sta	te profile foi	Science	and Social	Studies pas	s rates	Offer	
(Educates 1.3% of all	Α.	II Students		Student	s with Disab	ilities	Alternate	Download
students	Reading	Language	Math	Reading	Language	Math	Paths to	full CEP
with		Arts Arts						state profile
disabilities)	94%	91%	95%	53%	50%	60%	Yes	<u>Alabama</u>

ALASKA	Percent	age of Stude	Does State Offer					
4	-	All Students	Alternate	Download				
(Educates	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Paths to	full CEP
0.3% of all students							Graduation?	state profile
with	84%	74%	77%	45%	29%	35%	Yes	<u>Alaska</u>
disabilities)							

	Percei	ntage of Stu 200	Does State					
	Al	All Students Students with Disabilities						Download
ARIZONA	Reading/	Writing	Math	Reading/	Writing	Math	Alternate	full CEP
	Language			Language			Paths to	state
	Arts			Arts	Arts			profile
(Educates	92%	92%	87%	51%	53%	34%	Yes; Students	<u>Arizona</u>
1.9% of all							with	
students							disabilities	
with							may also be	
disabilities)							exempted.	

		ts Passing on First Attempt .0 School Year		
	All Students	Students with Disabilities		Download
ARKANSAS	Algebra I	Algebra I	Does State Offer	full CEP
			Alternate Paths	state
			to Graduation?	profile
(Educates	92%	72%	Students with	<u>Arkansas</u>
0.9% of all students with			disabilities may	
disabilities)			graduate based	
aisasiities)			on their IEP.	

	Perce	ntage of Stu 200	Does State					
	Al	ll Students	Students	with Disabi	lities	Offer	Download	
CALIFORNIA	Reading/	Math	Both	Reading/	Math	Both	Alternate	full CEP
	Language			Language			Paths to	state
	Arts			Arts			Graduation?	profile
(Educates 10.5% of all	95.8%	95.4%	93.4%	68.8%	65.5%	N/A	Yes; See full CEP state	<u>California</u>
students with disabilities)							profile for details.	

	Percentage of	Students Passing 2009-2010 Sc				
	All Stu	ıdents	Students wit	h Disabilities	Does State Offer	Download
FLORIDA	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Alternate Paths	full CEP
					to Graduation?	state
						profile
(Educates	60%	84%	24%	50%	Yes; in addition,	<u>Florida</u>
5.9% of all					students with	
students					disabilities are	
with					identified as	
disabilities)					eligible for a	
					waiver through	
					the IEP process.	

		nge of Stude 200 te profile for	8-2009		Download			
	Α	II Students		Student	s with Disab	ilities	Does State Offer	full CEP
GEORGIA	Writing	Language	Math	Alternate Paths	state			
		Arts			Arts		to Graduation?	profile
(Educates	91%	92%	95%	59%	60%	66%	No; but students	Georgia
2.8% of all				with disabilities				
students with					can apply for			
disabilities)							waiver.	

	Percent	age of Stude 200	nts Pass 9-2010					
	A	II Students		Student	s with Disab	ilities		Download
	Reading	Language	Math	Reading	Language	Math	Does State Offer	full CEP
IDAHO		Arts			Arts		Alternate Paths to	state
							Graduation?	profile
(Educates	86%	72%	77%	43%	22%	27%	No; but students	<u>Idaho</u>
0.4% of all students							with disabilities	
with							may appeal for an	
disabilities)							alternate measure	
							to reach	
							graduation.	

	Percentag	ge of 10 th Grade 2008-2009 S				
	All Stud	lents	Students with I	Disabilities		
INDIANA	English	Math	Does State Offer	Download		
	Language Arts		Alternate Paths	full CEP		
(Educates					to Graduation?	state profile
2.7% of all students	67%	65%	23%	27%	Yes; See full CEP	Indiana
with					state profile for	
disabilities)					details.	

		2009-2010	ng on First Try in 1 School Year <i>and Social Studies</i>			
LOUISIANA	All Stud	ents	Students with	Disabilities		Download
	English	Math	Does State Offer	full CEP		
(Educates	Language Arts		Language Arts		Alternate Paths	state
1.3% of all students with					to Graduation?	profile
disabilities)	88%	87%	54%	62%	Yes; See full CEP	<u>Louisiana</u>
			state profile for			
					details.	

	Percentag *see state		08-2009		Download			
	All	Students		Students	with Disab	ilities	Does State Offer	full CEP
MARYLAND	English 2	Algebra	ALL*	ALL*	Alternate Paths	state		
							to Graduation?	profile
(Educates	86.6%	88.8%	92.5%	55.6%	60.6%	68.8%	No; but students	<u>Maryland</u>
1.6% of all students with							with disabilities	
disabilities)							have alternate	
and the meres,							assessment	
							options.	

	tec	Grade* *see sta	2008-20 te profil enginee	Passing by the passin	lear and ass rates		Does State Offer		
MASSACHUSETTS	English Language Arts	Math	вотн	English Language Arts	Math	вотн	Alternate Paths to Graduation?	Download full CEP state profile	
(Educates 2.6% of all students with disabilities)	97%	97%	96%	85%	83%	82%	Yes; See full CEP state profile for details.	Massachusetts	

			f Studen)9-2010		Does State Offer Alternate			
	Α	II Students		Student	s with Disab	ilities	Paths to	Download
	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Graduation?	full CEP state
MINNESOTA								profile
(Educates 1.9% of all students with disabilities)	78%	90%	58%	39%	62%	15%	Yes; See full CEP state profile for details.	<u>Minnesota</u>

		tage of Stud 2 tate profile f	Does State	Download				
	Α	All Students Students with Disabilities						full CEP
MISSISSIPPI	English II	Algebra I	ALL*	English	Algebra I	ALL*	Alternate	state
				II			Paths to	profile
(Educates							Graduation?	
0.9% of all students with	87.7%	88.4%	89.8%	30.1%	35.7%	35.9%	No; See full CEP	Mississippi
disabilities)							state profile for	
alsasinties)							details.	

	Percen	tage of Stu 2						
	All Students Students with Disabilities						Does State	Download
NEVADA	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	Offer Alternate Paths to Graduation?	full CEP state profile
(Educates 0.7% of all students with disabilities)	70.23%	78.41%	55.32%	37.41%	38.10%	19.13%	No; See full CEP state profile for details.	<u>Nevada</u>

	Percentage of	Students Passing		
NEW	All Students	Students with		
JERSEY		Disabilities	Does State Offer	Download full
			Alternate Paths to	CEP state profile
			Graduation?	
(Educates	At this time New Jersey i	s unable to verify or report	Yes, and some students	New Jersey
3.7% of all	initial or cumu	lative pass rates.	with disabilities are	
students with disabilities)		•	exempt from passing.	

NEW MEXICO		ntage of Stud 200 ate profile fo	9-2010	Does State				
4- 4	Δ	II Students		Student	s with Disab	ilities	Offer Alternate	Download full
(Educates 0.7% of all	Reading	Language	Math	Reading	Language	Math	Paths to	CEP state
students		Arts			Arts		Graduation?	profile
with	96.8%	95.0%	95.1%	83.6%	77.3%	76.3%	Yes	New Mexico
disabilities)								

NEW YORK	Percentago	e of Students Passing		
	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Does State	
			Offer Alternate	Download full
(Educates	At this time New York is	unable to verify or report initial or	Paths to	CEP state
6.9% of all	cumu	ative pass rates.	Graduation?	profile
students with disabilities)		·	Yes	New York

NORTH CAROLINA		of 12 2009-201 e profile for Bi	ents Passing by th Grade* O School Year ology, Civics/Ed ory pass rates	Does State Offer	Download full	
(Educates	All St English I	udents Algebra I	Students wi	ith Disabilities Algebra I	Alternate Paths to Graduation?	CEP state profile
2.9% of all students with disabilities)	82%	78%	50%	61%	Yes; See full CEP state profile for details.	North Carolina

		ercentage o 200 te profile fo	08-2009	Does State Offer	Download full			
ОНЮ	Α	II Students	idents Students with Disabilities			Alternate Paths	CEP state	
/= / ·	Reading	Writing	Math	Reading	Writing	Math	to Graduation?	profile
(Educates 4.2% of all	95%	95%	92%	70%	72%	62%	No; See full CEP	<u>Ohio</u>
students with disabilities)							state profile for details.	

		centage of S 200 tate profile j Biology a	Does State Offer	Download				
OKLAHOMA	All Students Studer				ts with Disab	with Disabilities Alternate		
	English II	Algebra I	ALL*	English II	Algebra I	ALL*	Paths to	state
(Educates 1.5%							Graduation?	profile
of all students with	81%	75%	74%	60%	66%	49%	Yes; See full	<u>Oklahoma</u>
disabilities)							CEP state profile	
alsabilitiesj							for details.	

	Percentage	of Students Passing		
OREGON	All Students	Students with Disabilities		Download
			Does State Offer	full CEP
(Educates 1.2%	Because Oregon's polic	es are new, there are no student	Alternate Paths to	state
of all students with	performance da	ata to report at this time.	Graduation?	profile
disabilities)			Yes, same as for all	<u>Oregon</u>
a.o.a.o.mereoj			students	

	Percentago	e of Students Passing		
RHODE	All Students	Students with Disabilities		Download
ISLAND		•	Does State Offer	full CEP
	Because Rhode Island	l's policies are new, there are no	Alternate Paths to	state
(Educates 0.4%	student performan	ce data to report at this time.	Graduation?	profile
of all students with			To be determined.	<u>Rhode</u>
disabilities)				<u>Island</u>

	Percentage of	f Students Pa: 2008-2009	10 th Grade			
SOUTH	All Students Students with Disabilities					
CAROLINA	English	Math	English	Math	_	Download
	Language		Language Arts		Does State Offer	full CEP
(Educates 1.6% of all students	Arts				Alternate Paths to	state
with					Graduation?	profile
disabilities)	85%	80%	43%	36%	No	<u>South</u>
						<u>Carolina</u>

	Perce	entage of Stu						
	,	All Students		Studen	ts with Disab	Does State		
	English II	Algebra I	Biology	English II	Algebra I	Biology	Offer	Download
TENNESSEE							Alternate	full CEP
							Paths to	state
(Educates							Graduation?	profile
1.8% of all	95.0%	74.6%	95.3%	78.3%	48%	81.3%	No; See full	<u>Tennessee</u>
students with disabilities)							CEP state	
uisubilitiesj							profile for	
							details.	

		itage of Stud 200 te profile for	Does State					
	All Students Students with Disabilities					ilities	Offer	Download
TEXAS	English	Math	ALL*	English	Math	ALL*	Alternate	full CEP
	Language			Language			Paths to	state
(Educates 7.0%	Arts			Arts			Graduation?	profile
of all students with	97%	92%	90%	75%	52%	49%	Yes; See full	<u>Texas</u>
disabilities)							CEP state profile	
, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,							for details.	

VIRGINIA	*see stat	Percentage e profile fo mistry, Wo	Does State Offer	Download				
		All Students Students with Disabilities						full CEP
(Educates 2.6% of all	English/ Reading	English/ Writing	Algebra I	English/ Reading	English/ Writing	Algebra I	Paths to Graduation?	state profile
students with disabilities)	94%	92%	94%	75%	67%	81%	Yes; See full CEP state profile for details.	<u>Virginia</u>

	Percenta	ge of Students P 2008-2009	Does State			
	All St	udents	Students w	ith Disabilities	Offer	
	Reading	Reading,	Reading Reading,		Alternate	Download
WASHINGTON	and Writing	Writing and	and Writing	Writing and	Paths to	full CEP
		Math		Math	Graduation?	state profile
(Educates 1.9% of	93.5%	72.0%	84.7%	58.1%	Yes; See full	Washington
all students with disabilities)					CEP state	
uisubilitiesj					profile for	
					details.	