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SFA



BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 159 (Substitute S-1 as reported)
Senate Bill 160 (Substitute S-1 as reported)
Senate Bill 263 (as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Senator Mike Rogers (Senate Bills 159 and 160)
Sponsor: Senator Leon Stille (Senate Bill 263)
Committee: Education

Date Completed: 3-11-97

RATIONALE

The Revised School Code requires the board of a school district or public school academy to award a State-endorsed high school diploma to students scheduled to graduate in 1997 who achieve the academic objectives required by the State Board of Education in at least one of the subject areas of communication skills, mathematics, and science. Additionally, the State School Aid Act requires school districts to meet these requirements in order to receive school aid. To receive an endorsement on a diploma, a student must achieve scores, as established by the State Board, that demonstrate proficiency in the specified subject areas. If a student's test scores do not meet levels of proficiency, they are ranked as "novice" or "not-yet-novice" under the State Board scoring ranges; the student's diploma is not endorsed (although his or her transcript must indicate that a novice level score was achieved in a subject area, if that applies). Because the designation of "proficient" on an endorsed diploma does not differentiate between the skill levels of students in the various subject areas that are tested, some people believe that the actual scores that a student achieves in each subject area should be reported instead.

CONTENT

Senate Bill 159 (S-1) would amend the Revised School Code to delete the current requirements concerning the awarding of a State-endorsed high school diploma and to require, instead, that a State endorsement appear on a graduate's high school diploma and transcript upon completion of specified assessment instruments. The actual test score achieved by the graduate on each of the assessment instruments would have to be printed on the

State endorsement.

Senate Bill 160 (S-1) would amend the State School Aid Act to delete current provisions that require school districts (including public school academies) to award a State-endorsed diploma in order to receive school aid. The bill would require, instead, that districts include a State endorsement on a graduate's high school transcript upon completion of specified assessment instruments, in order to receive school aid. The actual test score achieved by the graduate on each of the assessment instruments would have to be printed on the State endorsement.

Senate Bill 263 would amend the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act to redefine "eligible student". The bill is tie-barred to Senate Bills 159 and 160.

A more detailed description of the bills follows.

Senate Bill 159 (S-1)

Under the bill, the board of a school district or public school academy would have to include a State endorsement on a graduate's high school transcript for each high school graduate of a school district or public school academy who had completed each of the assessment instruments specified in the Revised School Code in the subject areas of communication skills, mathematics, science, and, beginning with pupils scheduled to graduate in 2000, social studies. If a graduate had repeated an assessment instrument for a subject area, the highest test score achieved by the graduate on an assessment instrument for that

subject area would be the score printed on the State endorsement for that subject area.

The Revised School Code permits any person, upon payment of a reasonable fee, to take the State-endorsed diploma test and, upon achieving the initial mastery level in a subject area, have his or her high school diploma State-endorsed for that subject area. Under the bill, any person could take one or more State endorsement assessments, upon payment of a reasonable fee. Upon completion of all available assessments, the person could have his or her high school transcript State-endorsed with his or her test scores for each subject area.

The Code requires the State Board of Education to develop or select and approve assessment instruments to determine pupil proficiency in communication skills, mathematics, social studies, and science. The assessment instruments must be based on the State Board model core academic content and standards objectives. All assessment instruments developed or selected and approved by the State under any statute or rule for a purpose related to K-12 education must be objective-oriented and consistent with the State Board model core academic "curriculum". The bill would refer, instead, to State Board model core academic "content standards objectives".

The bill also would delete current provisions that do the following:

- Establish endorsement requirements for students who were scheduled to graduate from high school in 1994, 1995, 1996, including achieving a passing score on at least one of the following: a locally adopted and State-approved basic proficiency test, the general education test, or the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test as specified in the Revised School Code.
- Require a State endorsement for pupils scheduled to graduate from high school in 1997 and 1998 who achieve the academic objectives required by the State Board, as measured by an assessment instrument developed by or selected and approved by the State Board.
- Require the State Board to establish a novice level score for each State-endorsed diploma assessment.
- Provide for the reevaluation of a pupil who does not achieve the scores specified in the Code.
- Require that a special education student

scheduled to graduate in 1994, 1995, or 1996, who passed an alternative form of assessment permitted under the State School Aid Act, receive the applicable endorsement.

Senate Bill 160 (S-1)

Under the bill, a school district would have to include a State endorsement on a graduate's high school transcript for each high school graduate of the district who had completed each of the assessment instruments specified in the State School Aid Act in the subject areas of communication skills, mathematics, science, and, beginning with pupils scheduled to graduate in 2000, social studies. If a graduate had repeated an assessment instrument for a subject area, the highest test score achieved by the graduate on an assessment instrument for that subject area would be the score printed on the State endorsement for that subject area.

The Act permits any person, after graduation from high school, upon payment of a reasonable fee, to retake the State-endorsed diploma test and, upon achieving the initial mastery level in a subject area, have his or her high school diploma State-endorsed for that subject area. Under the bill, any person after graduation could take one or more State endorsement diploma assessments, upon payment of a reasonable fee. Upon completion of all available assessments, a person could have his or her high school transcript State-endorsed with his or her test scores for each subject area.

The bill also would delete current provisions that do the following:

- Establish endorsement requirements for students who were scheduled to graduate from high school in 1994, 1995, 1996, including achieving a passing score on at least one of the following: a locally adopted and State-approved basic proficiency test, the general education test, or the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test as specified in the Act.
- Require a State endorsement for pupils scheduled to graduate from high school in 1997 and 1998 who achieve the academic objectives required by the State Board, as measured by an assessment instrument developed by or selected and approved by the State Board.
- Provide for the reevaluation of a pupil who does not achieve the scores specified in the

Act.

- Require that a special education student scheduled to graduate in 1994, 1995, or 1996, who passed an alternative form of assessment permitted under the State School Aid Act, receive the applicable endorsement.

Senate Bill 263

Currently, the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act defines an eligible student as a student who successfully completed the requirements for a State endorsement on a high school diploma. The bill would define “eligible student” as a student who achieved a score of at least proficient, as established by the Department of Education on assessments used under the Revised School Code.

In addition, provisions in the definition of “eligible course” state, in part, that for an eligible student who has not successfully completed the requirements for a State endorsement on a high school diploma in all subject areas, an eligible course is limited to a course in a subject area for which the student has successfully completed the requirements for a State endorsement (or a course in computer science, foreign language, or fine arts). The bill specifies, instead, that for an eligible student who had not achieved a score of at least proficient, as established by the Department of Education, in all subject areas on the assessments used under the Revised School Code, an eligible course would be limited to a course in a subject area for which he or she had achieved a score of at least proficient (or a computer science, foreign language, or fine arts course).

MCL 380.1279 (Senate Bill 159)
388.1704a (Senate Bill 160)
388.513 & 388.519 (Senate Bill 263)

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

Under the Revised School Code, when students achieve scores designated by the State Board as “proficient” on certain subject tests, they receive endorsements for these subject areas on their diplomas. If a student does not achieve a level of proficiency, but is designated as novice or not-yet-novice, his or her diploma does not receive an endorsement from the State. There is no differentiation within the possible scoring ranges, however. Thus, if a student achieves on a particular subject test a score of 70, for example, and another achieves a score of 55, but the “cut score” is 50, both students will achieve an identical endorsement in that subject area. Instead of requiring a written designation of proficiency, Senate Bills 159 (S-1) and 160 (S-1) would require that the raw scores achieved in each subject area be recorded. Also, the scores would have to be reported on a student’s transcript, instead of on a diploma. A transcript is a record of a student’s grade and educational history at a school and is used, instead of a diploma, by institutions of higher education and employers to obtain information about a student’s educational background. In addition, under Senate Bill 263, a student would have to achieve a score of at least proficient, as established by the State Department of Education, to participate in postsecondary enrollment options. Thus, the Department could establish “benchmarks” under this bill to determine the proficiency of these high school students. Reportedly, many students across the State, including more than half of the high school juniors in the Birmingham school district who were to take the high school proficiency test in January, opt out of the test because they and their parents see no benefit in taking the 11-hour exam. Furthermore, it looks like few employers and colleges request to review a student’s diploma to determine if it was endorsed by the State and if the student was proficient in certain subject areas. By requiring the reporting of a student’s actual scores on the State’s proficiency tests, the bills would try to make the tests more meaningful to students, their parents, and persons seeking information about a student’s education.

Opposing Argument

Under Senate Bills 159 (S-1) and 160 (S-1), for each high school graduate of a school district or

public school academy who “completed” the specified assessment instruments, a school district or academy would have to include an endorsement on the graduate’s high school transcript. Thus, any graduating student who merely sat for the high school proficiency test would receive an endorsement on his or her transcript, regardless of whether he or she achieved proficiency in a subject area. Furthermore, there would be no explanation on the transcript of the significance of the test scores. Although the bills would not prohibit the State Board of Education from setting “cut scores” and establishing benchmarks by which to gauge a student’s achievement, the bills would not specifically require the State Board to do this. Opponents of the current endorsement process contend that the term “proficient” is ambiguous and does not give employers or college admissions officers definite information about a student’s actual performance. It is uncertain whether employers and colleges would better be able to interpret the significance of a student’s raw test scores. The bills would render meaningless the proficiency exams that many consider to be the cornerstone of the State’s efforts to ensure that high school diplomas awarded by Michigan school districts and public school academies have genuine value.

Response: With raw test scores, anyone could review a transcript to determine whether a student scored higher in mathematics than in communications, for example. Thus, an employer could decide the significance of a student’s scores in meeting the skill levels for a particular job.

Legislative Analyst: L. Arasim

FISCAL IMPACT

Senate Bills 159 (S-1) and 160 (S-1)

The fiscal impact of the bills on State and local government would depend on the date on which they took effect. The bills contain no effective date. If they were enacted and given immediate effect prior to the end of the 1996-97 school year, the Department of Education and local school districts would incur additional costs in changing endorsement procedures for this year’s graduates. The amount of additional cost is unknown. If the bills took effect early next school year, endorsement procedures for 1998 graduates could be adjusted with minimal additional cost to State or local government.

Senate Bill 263

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or

local government.

Fiscal Analyst: E. Pratt

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.