



# Members Only

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## Ohio Graduation Tests

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### **Diploma requirement**

Beginning with the graduating Class of 1994, Ohio has required high school students enrolled in school districts to pass state tests in order to receive their diplomas.<sup>1</sup> Students of public community schools (commonly called “charter schools”) have been required to pass the state tests to qualify for their diplomas since the law authorizing those schools was enacted in 1997.<sup>2</sup> Beginning with the graduating Class of 1999, students enrolled in private schools that have received a charter from the State Board of Education likewise have had to pass state tests to receive their diplomas.<sup>3</sup>

The General Assembly’s stated purpose for the state’s regimen of elementary and high school testing is “to ensure that students who receive a high school diploma demonstrate at least high school levels of achievement in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Ninth-grade proficiency tests**

Through the Class of 2006, the required tests were the ninth-grade proficiency tests in math, reading, writing, citizenship, and (beginning with the Class of 2001) science. If a student had completed the curriculum requirement for a diploma but failed to attain the necessary score on one or more of the required proficiency tests before the end of 12th grade, the student could request to repeat the tests in the future. If the student passed the tests at a later date, the student then could receive a diploma from the school at which the student completed the curriculum. But there is a deadline of September 15, 2008, for students through the Class of 2006 to pass the ninth-grade tests to qualify for a diploma. Students who have yet to pass one or more of the ninth-grade tests by that date must pass the new Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) in the same subject to receive a diploma.<sup>5</sup>

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*Ohio high school students enrolled in school districts, public community schools, and chartered nonpublic schools must pass state tests in order to receive their diplomas.*

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*Students through the Class of 2006 must pass the ninth-grade tests by September 15, 2008, to qualify for a diploma. Students who do not pass one or more ninth-grade tests by that date must pass the new Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) in the same subject to receive a diploma.*



## **The change to tenth-grade OGTs**

In 1997, the 122nd General Assembly included in legislation that implemented numerous academic measures a requirement that the ninth-grade proficiency tests be replaced by tenth-grade tests, beginning with the Class of 2005.<sup>6</sup> But in 2001, Am. Sub. S.B. 1 of the 124th General Assembly canceled that change and instead required the State Board of Education to develop and implement the Ohio Graduation Tests (OGTs) for students in tenth grade to replace the ninth-grade proficiency tests as the graduation requirement, beginning with the Class of 2007. (The diploma requirement for the Classes of 2005 and 2006 reverted to the ninth-grade tests.) S.B. 1 enacted numerous educational measures, in response to recommendations from Governor Taft's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Financing Student Success, to establish an aligned system of academic content standards, assessments, and academic accountability for Ohio schools. The new OGTs in math, reading, writing, science, and social studies (instead of citizenship) were to be aligned with statewide standards and model curricula to be adopted by the State Board of Education.<sup>7</sup>

## **Fulfillment of federal requirements**

In addition to fulfilling Ohio's diploma requirements, three of the five OGTs also fulfill a requirement of federal law that mandates testing of high school students. Specifically, Title I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to test all students in reading, math, and (by the 2007-2008 school year) science at least once in grades 10 through 12.<sup>8</sup> The science-testing requirement was added by the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Title I is the central program of the ESEA and provides funds for the educational needs of low-income and other at-risk students. States that do not comply with Title I requirements risk losing federal Title I funding.

The federal requirement to test high school students in reading and math predated the switch to the OGTs as Ohio's diploma standard. To comply with the federal requirement, S.B. 1 required that tenth-grade proficiency tests in reading and math be administered in the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years (to the Classes of 2005 and 2006), but not as a diploma requirement.<sup>9</sup> The OGTs were first officially administered as a state diploma requirement, replacing the ninth-grade proficiency tests, in the spring of 2005, while the Class of 2007 was in tenth grade.

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*In 2001, the General Assembly required the State Board of Education to replace the ninth-grade proficiency tests with the Ohio Graduation Tests (OGTs) for students in tenth grade as the graduation requirement, beginning with the Class of 2007.*

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*Title I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires states to test all students in reading, math, and science at least once in grades 10 through 12.*



## **Administration**

The OGTs are administered in March of each year to tenth-graders and in at least March and October to 11th- and 12th-graders who have not passed all five tests. School districts also may administer the tests in July.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, students have at least five, and up to seven, opportunities to take the tests before the end of 12th grade. Students in the Class of 2007, for instance, could take the tests in March, July, and October of 2005 and 2006 and in March of 2007. Students who finished 12th grade in the spring of 2007 without passing all of the tests could retest as soon as July 2007.

The ninth-grade proficiency tests are administered on a similar schedule for members of the Classes of 2006 and earlier who still need to pass those tests. But the ninth-grade tests will not be offered after July 2008.

## **Alternative conditions to receive a diploma**

A student who passes all but one of the OGTs may still receive a diploma, if the student meets all of the following conditions:

- (1) Failed the one test by ten points or less;
- (2) Completed the state minimum high school curriculum;
- (3) Earned a grade-point average of at least 2.5 out of 4.0 in the subject area of the failed test;

(4) Has a 97% school attendance rate in each of the last four years (excluding excused absences);

(5) Has not been expelled from school in any of the last four school years;

(6) Participated in any intervention programs provided by the school in the subject area of the failed test with a 97% attendance rate or received comparable services from a private source; and

(7) Obtains a letter, from each of the student's high school teachers in the subject area of the failed test and the high school principal, recommending graduation.<sup>11</sup>

## **Exemptions from testing**

There are two other exceptions to the law that students pass the five OGTs to receive their diplomas. First, a student who is not a U.S. citizen, usually a foreign exchange student, may be excused from passing the social studies OGT if the student is not a permanent resident of the U.S. and indicates no intention to reside in the U.S. after completing high school.<sup>12</sup> However, a foreign exchange student cannot qualify for a diploma under the alternative diploma conditions unless the student passes the social studies test. That is, if a foreign exchange student fails one of the other subject area tests, the student must pass the social studies test to receive a diploma under the alternative conditions.<sup>13</sup>

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*Students have at least five, and up to seven, opportunities to take the OGTs before the end of 12th grade.*

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*There are various exceptions to the testing requirements for students who pass all but one test, foreign exchange students, and students with disabilities.*



Second, a student with a disability may be excused from having to pass one or more of the tests if the student’s individualized education program (IEP) developed under the Special Education Law excuses the student from the test and specifies an alternative method of assessing

the student that is approved by the Department of Education. Ohio law states that “to the extent possible,” an IEP “shall not excuse the student from taking a test unless no reasonable accommodation can be made to enable the student to take the test.”<sup>14</sup>



### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> R.C. 3313.61, as amended by Sub. H.B. 231 of the 117th General Assembly, effective October 5, 1987.
- <sup>2</sup> R.C. 3314.03(A)(11)(d) and (f), enacted by Am. Sub. H.B. 215 of the 122nd General Assembly, effective June 30, 1997.
- <sup>3</sup> R.C. 3313.612, enacted by Am. Sub. H.B. 152 of the 120th General Assembly, effective July 1, 1993.
- <sup>4</sup> R.C. 3301.0710.
- <sup>5</sup> R.C. 3313.614(B)(2).
- <sup>6</sup> Am. Sub. S.B. 55 of the 122nd General Assembly.
- <sup>7</sup> R.C. 3301.079.
- <sup>8</sup> 34 Code of Federal Regulations § 200.5.
- <sup>9</sup> Section 7 of Am. Sub. S.B. 1 of the 124th General Assembly.
- <sup>10</sup> R.C. 3301.0711(C)(3) and Ohio Administrative Code 3301-13-02.
- <sup>11</sup> R.C. 3313.615.
- <sup>12</sup> R.C. 3313.61(H) and 3313.612(B)(2).
- <sup>13</sup> R.C. 3313.615(C), as amended by Am. Sub. H.B. 119 of the 127th General Assembly, effective June 30, 2007.
- <sup>14</sup> R.C. 3301.0711(C)(1), 3313.61(L), and 3313.612(B)(1). Students with disabilities may be excused from state elementary achievement tests, as well as the OGTs.

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