

California Department of Education

Executive Office

SBE-003 (REV. 11/2017)

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# California State Board of EducationMarch 2020 Year AgendaItem #08

## Subject

Golden State Seal Merit Diploma: Approval of Updated Eligibility Criteria.

## Type of Action

Action, Information.

## Summary of the Issue(s)

In January 2016, the California State Board of Education (SBE) approved the Golden State Seal Merit Diploma (GSSMD) eligibility requirements, which currently include the use of a combination of course grades, test results from assessments produced by private providers or local educational agencies (LEAs), and/or qualifying Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment or California Standards Test (CST) scores for English language arts/literacy (ELA), mathematics, and science. The SBE approved eligibility requirements can be found on the SBE Current and Past Agendas web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr16/documents/jan16item06.doc>.

In 2018–19, the California Science Test (CAST) was administered operationally for the first time. This item provides recommendations for revised GSSMD eligibility criteria to include the use of specified test results from the CAST.

## Recommendation

The California Department of Education (CDE) recommends that the SBE approve the GSSMD eligibility criteria specified in Attachment 1, which updates the criteria for students to demonstrate mastery of science curriculum using the CAST results to award the GSSMD for graduating students, effective March 2020.

## Brief History of Key Issues

Per California *Education Code* (*EC*) sections 51450–55, each LEA that confers high school diplomas are required to maintain appropriate records in order to annually identify graduating seniors who have earned a GSSMD and to affix the GSSMD insignia (seal) to the diploma and transcript of each qualifying student.

The table below displays a timeline of the transition from the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) using California Standards Tests (CSTs) to the California Assessment for Student Performance and Progress System, which includes the Smarter Balanced assessments for ELA and mathematics and the CAST.

**Assessment Transition Timeline**

| **School Year** | **Assessment** |
| --- | --- |
| 2012–13 | * STAR—CST for ELA and mathematics administered for the last time.
* STAR—CST for Science administered.
 |
| 2013–14 | * Smarter Balanced field test—census administration or ELA and mathematics.
* STAR—CST for Science administered.
 |
| 2014–15 | * Smarter Balanced first operational administration for ELA and mathematics.
* STAR—CST for Science administered.
 |
| 2015–16 | * STAR—CST for Science the last administration.
 |
| 2016–17 | * CAST census pilot test administered to all students in grades 5 and 8; high schools were assigned a grade to administer pilot test to students.
 |
| 2017–18 | * CAST census field test administered to all students in grades 5, 8, and 12. LEAs could administer the CAST to students in grade 10 or 11 to meet the testing requirement.
 |
| 2018–19 | * CAST first operational administration to all students in grades 5 and 8 and students in grade 12 who did not take the field test in grade 11. LEAs could administer the CAST to students in grades 10 or 11 to meet testing the requirement.
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The SBE determines and adopts, on the basis of the recommendations of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI), the means by which students may demonstrate mastery of the high school curriculum in at least six subject matter areas (i.e., the GSSMD eligibility requirements) in order to be awarded the GSSMD. The GSSMD is awarded jointly by the SBE and the SSPI.

When the GSSMD eligibility requirements were last modified and approved by the SBE in 2016, the CDE was requested to provide revised recommendations to the SBE as the implementation of the new assessment system progressed. In 2018–19, the statewide CAST was administered operationally for the first time. Students graduating in 2020 may have taken the CAST during the 2018–19 school year while enrolled in grade eleven.

Using the California Next Generation Science Standards, the CAST measures what students know and can do. All high school students in grade ten, eleven, or twelve take the CAST unless a student’s individualized education program designates the California Alternate Assessment for Science. High schools have the option to test any or all students in grade ten or eleven as long as all students have been tested by grade twelve.

### Proposed Revisions to the Golden State Seal Merit Diploma Eligibility Criteria

The revised eligibility criteria reflect the current availability of statewide assessment results and include the following changes:

1. Add the use of the 2018–19 CAST and subsequent years’ results earned in grade ten or eleven for the category of science. Although some students may not take the CAST until grade twelve, they have reasonable access to meet the science criteria using the course grade option.
2. Delete all references to the use of the now-obsolete CST scores. The class of 2016 was the last graduating class of students who were administered the specific CSTs for ELA, mathematics, or science approved for use in determining GSSMD eligibility. The class of 2016 would have taken the GSSMD-specific CSTs in grade nine only.
3. Delete the use of a qualifying score that demonstrates mastery of the subject as determined by the LEA for an examination produced by a private provider of the LEA from the category of science. This deletion is replaced by the addition of the use of CAST results.

In the process of developing this recommendation for the SBE, the CDE identified the following set of goals for GSSMD eligibility criteria:

* Adequate student accessibility—reasonable access for all high school students to any examinations or courses used in the criteria; reasonable number of opportunities provided to a student to meet the eligibility requirements for each subject area.
* Appropriate target levels—any result level or grade used is an appropriate target for each individual subject area.
* Timeliness of information—LEAs have grade and/or assessment result information prior to graduation to identify eligible students in a timely and efficient manner in order to request and affix insignias prior to the earliest graduation date scheduled for the high school(s) in the LEA.

*Note:* The CDE does not recommend the use of grades for assessments or courses taken in grade twelve because they delay the time at which LEAs can finalize their request for insignias; requests must be made in a timely manner in order for staff to affix insignias prior to the first graduation in the LEA.

## Summary of Previous State Board of Education Discussion and Action

In January 2016, the SBE approved the use of a combination of course grades, results from assessments produced by private providers or LEAs, and qualifying Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment or CST scores to award the GSSMD to graduating students, effective January 2016 (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr16/documents/jan16item06.doc>).

In November 2014, the SBE approved the use of a combination of qualifying CST scores, course grades, and/or results from assessments produced by private providers or LEAs to award the GSSMD to students graduating in 2015 (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr14/documents/nov14item06.doc>).

In January 2004, the SBE approved regulations to allow the use of specified CST scaled scores, previously earned Golden State Examination (GSE) results, or a combination of the two to qualify for the GSSMD. Those regulations became effective in April 2004 and remain in effect (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/documents/agenda0104.pdf>).

In November 2003, the SBE approved the use of a combination of GSE results and CST scaled scores of 370 or above on designated CSTs as the means of demonstrating mastery of the high school curriculum and directed staff to draft regulations (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/documents/agenda1103.pdf>).

In April 2003, the SBE approved a “senior waiver” for seniors graduating in 2003 who were prevented from meeting GSSMD requirements because of the reduction of GSE examinations administered annually. The waiver allowed seniors to use a CST scaled score of 350 or above to meet the subject area requirements (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/documents/agenda0403.pdf>).

**Fiscal Analysis (as appropriate)**

Neither the CDE nor LEAs receive funding to support the GSSMD. *EC* Section 51455 stipulates that it is the intent of the Legislature that no fee or other cost be charged to any student for the GSSMD itself. However, notwithstanding any other provision of law, a school district receiving Economic Impact Aid funding may expend any portion of those funds to pay for all or part of the costs of one or more examinations utilized for the GSSMD that are charged to socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

The CDE absorbs all costs incurred for the work in providing assistance to LEAs and the processing and filling of requests for insignias. The LEAs absorb all costs to identify graduating seniors who have earned a GSSMD and to affix the GSSMD insignia (seal) to the diploma and transcript of each qualifying student.

The CDE’s recommendation will have no impact on the ongoing costs of implementing the GSSMD at the state or local level.

**Attachment(s)**

* Attachment 1: Eligibility Requirements for the Golden State Seal Merit Diploma Effective March 2020 Until Replaced (1 Page)

**Attachment 1: Eligibility Requirements for the Golden State Seal Merit Diploma
Effective March 2020 Until Replaced**

Local educational agencies (LEAs) are responsible for maintaining appropriate records in order to identify graduating seniors who meet the eligibility requirements for the Golden State Seal Merit Diploma (GSSMD) (California *Education Code* Section 51454). To be eligible for the GSSMD, students must be eligible to receive a high school diploma and have demonstrated mastery of the curriculum in at least six of the following subject areas:

1. English language arts/literacy (ELA)—students must have earned one of the following:
	1. An achievement level of “Standard Met” or above for the high school Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment taken in grade eleven
	2. A grade of B+ (or numeric equivalent) or above in a single ELA course (each semester) completed in grade nine, ten, or eleven
2. Mathematics—students must have earned one of the following:
	1. An achievement level of “Standard Met” or above for the high school Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment taken in grade eleven
	2. A grade of B+ (or numeric equivalent) or above in a single mathematics course (each semester) completed in grade nine, ten, or eleven
3. Science—students must have earned one of the following:
	1. An achievement level of “Standard Met” or above for the high school California Science Test taken in grade ten or eleven
	2. A grade of B+ (or numeric equivalent) or above in a science course completed in grade nine, ten, or eleven
4. U.S. history—students must have earned one of the following:
	1. A grade of B (or numerical equivalent) or above upon completion of the required U.S. history course (each semester)
	2. A qualifying score that demonstrates mastery of the subject as determined by the LEA for an examination produced by a private provider or LEA
5. Two additional subject areas—students may choose from any of the following:
	1. Any additional qualifying grade or score listed above, earned for the subject of ELA, mathematics, science, or U.S. History; and not already used to meet eligibility
	2. A grade of B (or numerical equivalent) or above upon the completion of high school courses in other subjects
	3. A qualifying score that demonstrates mastery of other high school subjects, as determined by the LEA, for an examination produced by a private provider or LEA