

CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**SBE President Reed Hastings Issues Statement
On Independent Evaluation of California High School Exit Exam**

SACRAMENTO – Reed Hastings, president of the State Board of Education, issued the following statement on today’s release of an independent evaluation of the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE).

The study, by Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO), concluded that the exit exam is valid and meets all nationally recognized test standards for use as a graduation requirement. It also said the exam has motivated schools and students to focus on academic achievement and mastery of rigorous state academic content standards. High standards in California were adopted in 1998 and have been integrated into curriculum and textbooks over the last four years.

The independent evaluation was mandated by AB 1609 (2001). Under AB 1609, the State Board has the authority to delay the exit exam as a graduation requirement for the class of 2004 after reviewing the findings of the independent evaluation, which was due today.

“The HumRRO study makes clear that the exit exam is a major factor in driving schools to develop programs for students who have yet to master California’s rigorous academic content standards,” Hastings said. “That is clear evidence of the growing, positive impact the exit exam has had, and continues to have, on our high schools.

“On the other hand,” Hastings added, “the study raises the question as to whether all students in the class of 2004 had a reasonable opportunity to learn what they need to know to pass the exit exam. The State Board will give careful consideration to opportunity-to-learn issues presented in the study as it considers a decision to delay the consequences of the exit exam for the class of 2004. Any decision to delay would need to be balanced against the importance of staying the course on the positive reforms now taking root in many high schools across the state.”

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Hastings noted that it is crucial that students continue to take the exit exam because it is a key element in California's plan to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The State Board has adopted the exit exam as the core knowledge test for English-language arts and math for grades 10-12 for purposes of compliance with NCLB. Results from the annual Grade 10 administration of the exit exam will be used to determine "adequate yearly progress" for all high schools. Under NCLB's adequate yearly progress provisions, California must have a 95 percent student participation rate on the CAHSEE or risk being found out of compliance with NCLB. The second round of exit exam testing for 2003 is scheduled for May 13-15.

AB 1609 mandates that any decision to delay the consequences of the exit exam for the class of 2004 must be made by August 1, 2003. The State Board will receive a briefing on the external study at its May 7, 2003 meeting in Sacramento. Any decision on the date by which the exam will be a graduation requirement would be made at either the State Board's June or July monthly meeting.

The HumRRO study can be found online at:
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/cahsee/eval/eval.html>

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