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## Higher Education Committee

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### HB 1686

**Brief Description:** Concerning high school equivalency certificates.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Seaquist, Haler, Roberts, Zeiger, Reykdal, Springer, Pettigrew, Pollet, Dahlquist, McCoy, Maxwell, Fagan, Morrell and Ryu; by request of State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a high school equivalency certificate as a certificate issued jointly by the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction that indicates that the holder attained scores at or above the minimum proficiency level on a high school equivalency test.
- Replaces the term General Educational Development (GED) test throughout statute with the term high school equivalency certificate.

**Hearing Date:** 2/12/13

**Staff:** Luke Wickham (786-7146).

#### **Background:**

##### General Educational Development (GED) test

The GED test is a high school equivalency test recognized in all 50 states, and some Canadian provinces and territories. The GED was developed in the 1940s to help military personnel and veterans earn a high school credential and enter the workforce.

The GED Testing Service (Service) is a joint venture between Pearson and the American Council on Education. The Service reports that nearly 800,000 GED tests are taken each year, and in 2010, more than 470,000 individuals were awarded their high school credential through the GED testing program.

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The current GED test provided by the Service is the 2002 Series GED Test. The test is designed to cover academic areas of a high school education in five subjects, including language arts (reading), language arts (writing), mathematics, science, and social studies. This test is offered in both paper and computer formats.

A new assessment will be released on January 2, 2014 to replace the 2002 Series GED Test.

#### GED in Washington State

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) is authorized to adopt rules governing the certificate of educational competence, subject to rules adopted by the State Board of Education. This certificate of educational competence is issued by both the SBCTC and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) when an individual scores at or above the minimum proficiency level set by the SBCTC. This minimum proficiency level is defined as that set by the GED Testing Service. Currently, the minimum proficiency level is a standard score of at least 410 on each of the five portions on each of the five subject area tests and an average score of at least 450 on the entire test.

#### GED Alternatives:

Wisconsin awards students a High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED). This is a combination of the GED and other tests and methods for demonstrating an individual's high school equivalent skills. Individuals can earn their HSED by taking the GED test as well as health, civic literacy, employability skills, and career awareness subject area tests. There are also four other options for earning a HSED, including taking certain post-secondary credits, obtaining a foreign high school or post-secondary diploma, or completing a competency program offered by a technical college or community based group that is approved by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as a high school completion program.

California offers the California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE) to verify high school level skills. Those who pass the test receive a Certificate of Proficiency from the State Board of Education, which is recognized as the equivalent to a diploma. The test consists of two sections: a language arts section and a mathematics section.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

This bill removes the GED test from statute and replaces it with the term high school equivalency certificate. A high school equivalency certificate is issued jointly by the SBCTC and the OSPI. This certificate indicates that the holder has attained standard scores at or above the minimum proficiency level described by the SBCTC on a high school equivalency test.

The terms GED, general equivalency degree, general educational development, general education development exam, general equivalency diploma, general educational development test, certificate of educational competence, official report of the equivalent acceptable scores of the general educational development test, and general educational development (GED) certificate, are replaced with the term high school equivalency certificate. These terms are replaced in 31 sections of law including licensure qualification requirements for ocularists, components of dropout reengagement programs, scholarship eligibility, and the definition of adult basic education, among others.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.