



BILL AND AMENDMENT SUMMARY

High School Equivalency Diploma and Test (HSED and HiSET) HF 473/SF 350

Status of Bills: On House and Senate Floor
Committee: Education (23-0)
Lead Democrat: Representative Ras Smith
Floor Manager: Representative Gassman
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Background and Current Law

As of January of 2014, Iowa began using the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) developed by Education Testing Service (ETS). The HiSET gives students who left high school before graduating an opportunity to earn a High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED).

Under current law, the Department of Education (DE) is required to make available a high school equivalency diploma if a student satisfactory completion of tests covering all of the following: reading, language arts, literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies. Currently the applicant must make an application to a testing center to take the test.

By rule, no one under 16 can take the test except if they are a resident in a juvenile institution. The applicant cannot receive a diploma until the applicant has reached 18 years of age and the applicant's class from ninth grade has graduated. Applicants have to pay a fee to cover the cost of the test, and upon completion of the HiSET, DE is required to prepare a HSED for the applicant which costs \$10 currently.

HF 473, and its companion SF 350, is mainly being advocated for by the United Way, but they are DE bills. The United Way works with Iowa's community colleges to offer adult diploma program that offer the ability to bundle prior high school course work with secondary or postsecondary education courses. This pathway for a HSED is currently not recognized by the state. There are 209,740 Iowans over 18 currently without a high school diploma. In 2015, only 1,890 HSED's were awarded in Iowa. Of the Iowans who have dropped out of high school, 40% were less than one course away from attaining their high school diploma. These people could benefit from an alternative adult diploma program instead of HiSET classes and test on all subjects, including ones that they have already received credit for.

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No Fees or age requirements are changed in the bill. Under the assessment for competence section of the bill, instead of being the limited to requirement of satisfactory competence required test, the bill changes the requirement to "demonstrated competence" in all the **core areas** of reading **language arts**, literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies.

The current limitation on applicants only applying to a testing center for the test is expanded to include a high school equivalency center. In Iowa, this would be a community college. There are on-line programs, but they do not meet accreditation standards in Iowa, and people that have gotten a "diploma" from an on-line school have ran into issues when they try to register for classes at a community college or university.

The bill also adds that evidence that an applicant has “demonstrated competence” is required to be made available by the high school equivalency program for verification. Conforming language on “demonstrated competence” in **core areas** is also added to the notice and fee section of the bill for when DE issues a diploma.

Rules and Duties

Under the bill, the State Board of Education is required to adopt rules that include and are not limited to, establishing standards for content and measures by which “competence” in **core areas** is to be demonstrated and assessed. Such measures are also to include a test battery, credit-based measures, and attainment of other academic credentials of equivalent or greater rigor.

By changing the requirements to demonstrated competency, including credit-based measures, this will open up the alternative pathways sought by the United Way. In addition the language allows for previous obtained high school credit and the ability to get credit towards a HSED for the attainment of community college courses that are of greater rigor than which the person completed in high school.

The bill is effective upon enactment.

AMENDMENT SUMMARY

H-1226 by Winckler: Elimination of Redundant Language Arts within the Assessment

The assessment language includes reading and literacy. To require also language arts is redundant (See bold **language arts**, and full text of that sentence in the bill summary).

H-1241 by Gassman: Elimination of the “Core” Reference in One of the Three Areas of the Bill

The amendment would reword the rules and duties section of the bill to strip off the reference to be aligned with the Iowa Core which conservative Republicans take issue with. It would apply to only this section, and rules relating to “demonstrations of competence.” Other “core areas” of the bill under the assessment and the “demonstrated competence” in the notice and fee section of the bill for when DE issues a diploma, remain intact.

The amendment states, “Any rules adopted to demonstrations of competence shall require such demonstrations to be equivalent to or greater rigor than those required for high school graduation, and such demonstrations shall include, but are not be limited to, a test battery, credit-based measures, and attainment of other academic credentials.” Note: in the bill summary the areas of the bill that require “core areas” are **bolded**.