

MINIMUM COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAMS

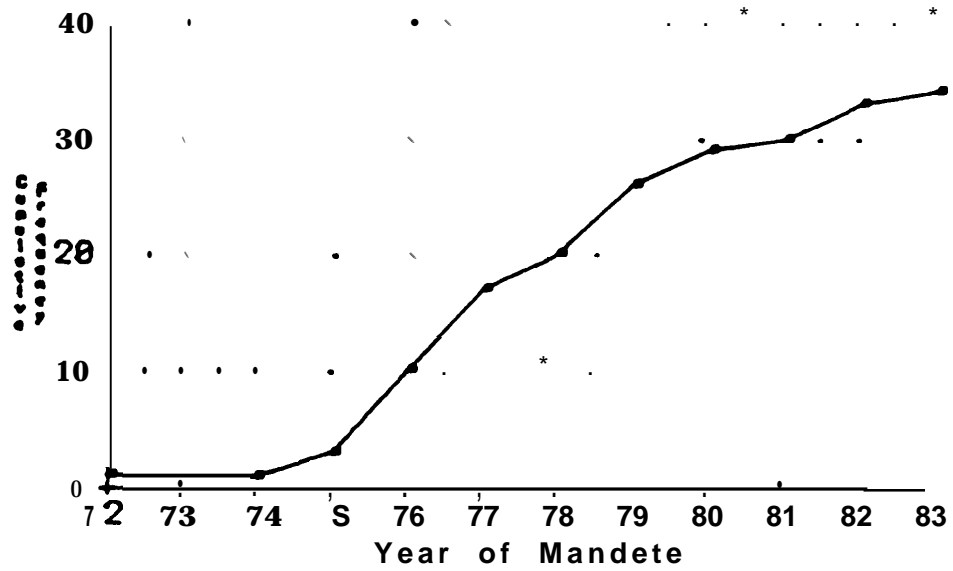
Introduction

The peak growth period for statewide competency testing was 1975-77. As Figure 1 shows, this growth leveled off *in* 1982. Although a few states will be phasing out competency testing, most states are maintaining their current programs with some of these states making changes. Typical changes are adding new skills to be tested or adjusting the cutoff score that students must exceed.

Currently 11 states require high school students to pass competency tests in order to get a diploma. Four additional states have plans to add a competency test requirement for high school graduation. Figure 2 shows the different purposes of competency testing.

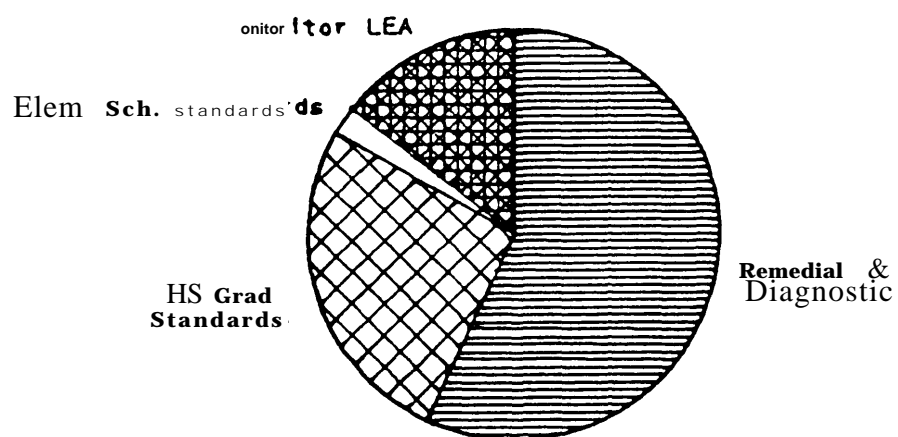
As is the case with assessment testing, minimum competency testing programs vary widely from state to state. Nine states reported their minimum competency programs were tied to the state assessment programs. Sixteen states reported responsibility for administering the minimum competency program rests with the state agency. Eighteen states said the program is mandated by the state, but administered by the local districts, often with the local school district defining both the competencies to be measured and the standards to be met. The diversity of these programs is evident by the data in Table 1, a summary of which follows.

FIGURE 1
**Number of States
Mandating Competency
Testing**



SOURCE : OTA.

FIGURE 2
PURPOSES OF STATE MANDATED
COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAMS



SOURCE : OTA .

Table I

Characteristics of Programs

Responsibility for administering the minimum competency programs was found to be about evenly split between state education agencies and local education agencies. Broad areas of competence to be measured normally are defined by state education agencies, but responsibility for the specific definition of competencies is about evenly split between the two agencies.

The purposes states give for the competency testing are: remedial/diagnostic (27 states), standards for high school graduation (16 states, plus 4 more to be added in future years), monitoring of local education agencies educational programs (11), elementary graduation standards(1).

More states reported using state-produced tests for their minimum competency program than any other type of test. Seventeen reported using state-approved or prescribed tests, 9 reported that local education agencies were given the option of producing their own tests, and 6 reported that local education agencies were to produce their own tests by state mandate.

Most minimum competency testing is confined to the areas of reading, math, language arts, and writing. The even spread of number of states reporting use of minimum competency tests at each grade level above grade 2 reveals that minimum competency programs have been designed to track student progress over a period of years so that any need for remediation can be identified at intervals along the way. Typically, the tests are administered periodically as in grades 3, 6, 9 and 11 or some similar configuration. In a number of states, tests are administered in every grade within given ranges, and in 2 states, Kentucky and Vermont, they are administered in every grade, K-12.

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

State	Responsibility for Administering		Combined with S.A.	Definition of Competencies		Purposes and Implementation Dates				Standards		Measurement Instruments Used					Subjects and Grade			Other/Notes			
	SEA	IEA		SEA	Specific		Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	Standards Set	Tests	State Prescribed	State Produced	Other Produced (Mand.)	Other Produced (Optional)	Other	Reading	Math		Science	Language Arts	Social Studies
					SEA	IEA																	
Alabama	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	3,6,9,11	3,6,9,11	3,6,9,11	3,6,9,11	Grade 11 added in 1983 for graduation purposes. First affected class, Spring 1985.	
Alaska - No state program																							
Arizona	N	Y	NA	N	Y	Y	AZ1	Y	Y	AZ1	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Rule 8,12 Law K-12	Rule 8,12 Law K-12	Rule 8,12 Law K-12	Rule 8,12 Law K-12		
Arkansas	N	Y	Y	N	N	1978-79	N	1979	N	Y ²	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	3,6,8	3,6,8	3,6,8	6,8	Teachers involved in development of objectives; they made rec's to SEA & rec's were pretty much followed	

SOURCE: Data compiled for the Office of Technology Assessment by Matthew J. Regional Educational Laboratory, 1985.

State Board Rule and Regulation, 1975
In order to be promoted from the 8th grade, students must be able to read, write and compute at a 6th grade level; prior to graduation from high school, students must be able to read at a 9th grade level; LEA's determine what is meant by a 9th grade level.

Law, 1975:
All school districts must develop a continuous, uniform evaluation system for K-12; LEA's had to come up with objectives for reading, writing and math and a means for measuring them (e.g., C.R.T. or N.R.T.); record keeping systems to show whether students have mastered objectives, a parent reporting system, and develop alternative learning plans for students who had not mastered objectives.

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

	Responsibility for Administration SEA	Combined with S.A.		Purposes and Implementation Dates					Standards Set By		Measurement Instruments Used						Subjects and Grades				Other/Notes
				Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./ Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	SEA	LEA	State Prescribed	State Produced	LEA Produced (Mand.)	LEA Produced (Optional)	Other	Reading	Math	Language Arts	Writing			
Arkansas (Continued)																			2 By Board of Education with rec. by local school district personnel 3 Grades 6,8-social studies and science		
California	Y	Z		Z	1979	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	In 1977 added grades 4-6 7-9 10-11		
Colorado	Y	Z		Z	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	9-12	9-12	9-12	9-12	9-12	9-12 if applicable		
Connecticut	Y	Z		Z	N	Remedial only	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	9	9	9	9	9			

Minimum Competency

Charters, C, H, Programs

State	Responsibility for Administering			Combined with S.A.	Definition of Competencies			po			Standards			Measurement Instru				Subjects and		ts Used	Grades	Other/Notes		
	SEA	LEA	Y		SEA	LEA	Specific	Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./ Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	Set By SEA	Set By LEA	State Prescribed	State Produced	LEA Produced (Mand.)	LEA Produced	Language Arts	Math					
Delaware	N	Y	NA	N	Y	DEL	DEL	DEL	DEL	DEL	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y*	Y*	Reading	Language Arts	Math	Writing	Optional, local decision, State Board pre-scribed reading language and math in broad, general terms.
District of Columbia	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Life skills test at 10th grade. If failed, student takes course which she/he must pass.
Florida	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	FL1	FL1	FL1	FL1	FL1	SSAT/SSAT1	Y	Y	N	N	N	3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12	3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12	1, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12	1, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12	1, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12	Also, grades 3, 5, 8 & 10 economic understanding; writing production. Reading and writing combined and called communication.	

DEL: In 1979, the State Board wanted to get rid of social promotion and base promotion on specific criteria. LEA's put together their own promotion policies and procedures. The decision was made for LEA's to develop promotion/retention policies.

SSAT1: basic skills in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10; a C.R.T.. LEA provides remedial and determines if student has mastered objectives and is ready to go on. The standards are set by SEA, ultimate decision by LEA.

application of basic skills; grade 10 only; required for graduation on by State. LEA cannot override decision.

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

State	Responsibility for Administering		Combined with S.A.	Definition of Competencies		Purposes and Implementation				Standards Set By		Measurement Instruments Used						Subjects and Grades				Other/Notes
	SEA	LEA		SEA	Specific LEA	Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./ Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	EA	LEA	State Prescribed	State Prescribed	Other Produced	Other Produced	Other Produced	Other Produced	Reading	Math	Language Arts	Writing	
Georgia	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y ¹	Y ¹	Y ¹	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y: If LEA's choose	N	1, 10 For sch. yr. 1985-86 there will be a mandatory C.R.T.	1, 10 3, 10			Piloted this yr. will go into effect sch. yr. 1987-88 As well, test will be admin at grd 3; students do not pass cannot go on to grd 4, piloted this yr. & will go into effect spring 1986.
Hawaii	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	3, 9 12	3, 9 12	3, 9, 2	3	Grade 9 required to take; take until they pass

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

State	Responsibility for Administering		Combined with S.A.	Definition of Competencies Specific		Purposes and Implementation			Measurement Instruments Used						Subjects and Grades		Other/Notes				
	SEA	LEA		SEA	LEA	Gr. 8 Prom.	. 12 ad.	Rem./ Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	Standards Set By SEA	LEA	Grade Described	Produced	Produced (Mand.)	Produced (Optional)	Other		Reading	Language Arts	Grading	
Idaho	NA	NA	Y: For reporting purposes; Admin. independently	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y: In collab. with LEA's		Y	Y	N	N	N	N	8	8	8	Also spelling grade 8 1 If LEA going to participate then only on NS
Illinois - Not applicable although LEA's can implement MC program; major changes expected after July 1 after General Assembly meets, moving toward a state and school accountability program.																					
Indiana - No program																					
Iowa - No program																					
Kansas	Y	N	Are one and the same	Y	N	N	N	Possibly	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	2, 4, 2, 4, 5, 8, 6, 8, 10			

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

State	Responsibility for Administering		Combined with S.A.	Definition of Competencies		Purposes and Implementation				Standards		Measurement Instruments Used						Subjects and Grades				Other/Notes	
	SEA	LEA		SEA	LEA	Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./ Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	Set By	SEA	LEA	State Prescribed	State Produced	LEA Produced (Mand.)	LEA Produced (Optional)	Other	Reading	Math	Language Arts	Writing		
Kentucky	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	1986- Legislation expected	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	K-12	K-12	K-12	K-12	For many districts, this is their state assessment program	
Louisiana	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	1981	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	2-5	2-5	2-5	N	Used for promotion in grades 2-5; Language arts includes reading and writing
Maine - No program																							
Maryland	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	7-9	7,9*	7,9*	7,9*	Validated by 12,000 citizens. *Since 1982 in reading; 1989 in math & writing; 1988 in citizenship	

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

State	Responsibility for Admin		Combined with S.A.	Definition of Competencies Specific		Purposes and Implementation			Assessment Instruments Used					Subjects and Grades				Other/Notes	
	SEA	LEA		SEA	LEA	Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Mo LE	Standards Set By SEA	Standards Set By LEA	Test Prescribed	Test Produced (Mand.)	Test Produced (Optional)	Other	Reading	Language Arts	Grades		
Massachusetts	N	Y	N	At secondary level	At elementary level	N	N		N	Y	MAI M	MAI	MAI		Y ¹	N	Y ¹	1 LEA chooses grade(s) to be tested at each of 3 levels: elem., intermediate, secondary. Also test listening.	
Michigan - No program																			
Minnesota - No program																			
Mississippi	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	1989		Y	N	N	N	N	N	3,5,8,11	3,5,8,11	11	Grade 11 functional literacy and math	

At Secondary Level
Districts have three options:
1. State developed tests,
2. Commercial test approved by State, and
3. Test developed by self and approved by State

At Elementary Level
Districts may use any test

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

State	Responsibility for Administering		Combined with S.A.	Definition of Competencies		Purposes and Implementation Dates				Measurement Instruments Used						Subj. Cts. and Grades				Other/Notes		
	SEA	LEA		SEA	LEA	Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./ Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	Standards Set By SEA	Standards Set By LEA	State Prescribed	State Produced	Local Produced (Mand.)	Local Produced (Optional)	Other	Reading	Math	Language Arts		Writing	
MS.iri	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	As of 1986	Y	N	Y	Y ²	N	Y	N	N	N	N	R	R			Grade 8-other 1 As of 1986, will withhold grades of 9th graders until passed. 2 Also locally scored by objective
Montana - No program																						
Nebraska	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	1976	N	Y	N	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	N	3,6,9,11	5	NE1, NE2, NE3, NE4	
Nevada	At Secondary	At Elem.	N	Y	N	N	1982 class	Primarily at high school	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	3,6,9,11	3,6,9,11	9,11	9,11	Test must be administered 4 times before end of 12th grade. State administers test at high schools & coordinates testing at elementary. Results sent by districts to state.	

N Accreditation is contingent on presence of test in program. Actual results do not affect accreditation.

N s are required to not use test results for promotion or retention.

NE3: Choice of instruments is up to LEA. State Department of Education developed a test which is used in about 80 percent of districts.

NE4: Testing is required in reading, math and writing. Other subject areas are at local discretion. Testing begins in fifth grade and continues until passing or graduation. A student has no limit on how many times

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

State	Responsibility for Administering LEA		Definition of Competencies Specific SEA LEA		Purposes and Implementation Dates				Measurement Instruments Used						Subjects and Grades			Other/Notes	
					Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	Standards Set By SEA LEA	State Prescribed	LEA Produced (Mand.)	LEA Produced (Optional)	Other	Reading	Math	Language Arts			
New Hampshire No program																			
New Jersey	N	Y	Y	N	N	1976	1976	1976	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	9	9	N	N	Writing
New Mexico	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	1978	1978	Y	N	Y	Y: Write only	N	N	10	10	10	10	NM3, NM4, NM5, NM6, NM7
New York*	Y	N	Y	N	N	NY1	NY1	NY1	Y	N	Y	NA	NA	N	3, 6, 8 or 9 or 12**	3, 6, 8 or 9 or 12**	N	5, 8 or 9, 11 or 12**	There are 3 major progs: 1. Pupil Eval. Prog.-fits into competencies & identifies who needs remediation 2. IIS Regents Exams-2 are used in competency testing 3. Regents Comp. Test-preliminary comp. tests. **Can repeat as often as need to taken initially in grade 11.

NM3: Minimum competency test is called a Proficiency Exam. It was developed to fit in with the "New Mexico Basic Skills Plan," adopted in 1977. The "plan" refers to exit competencies required for graduation. Though this test measures basic skill it does not directly measure the exit competencies.

NM4: High school graduation is not contingent on passing the Proficiency Exam. Students passing the exam get a gold seal on their diploma.

NY1: Regents Comp. Testing Program
Reg's for this program, adopted in 1979, 2 kinds:
1. Tests to identify students who need remediation in lower grades, and
2. Tests for high school diploma

NY2: Grade 9 may be taken at any grade in high school after completing course in general math and repeated as often as needed.

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

State	Responsibility for		Combined with S.A.	Definition of Competencies Specific		Purposes and Implementation Dates				Standards Set By		Measurement Instruments Used					Subjects and Language Arts			Other/Notes	
	SEA	IE		SEA	LEA	Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./ Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	SEA	LEA	State Prescribed	State Produced	Local Produced	Local Produced (Optional)	Other	Reading	Math	Language Arts		
North Carolina			N	Y	N	N	N	Y ¹	Done at school level	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	11 ²	11 ²		X	1 At student level; students not passing exam receive reassess. 2 Next year, grade 10.
North Dakota No program																					
Ohio			N	N	Y	N	N	1983	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	OH4	OH4	OH4		OH5, OH6, OH7
Oklahoma - No program																					
Oregon			Y	N	Y	N	N	1978	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Grade level selected by district

Competency Based Education Program requires continuous monitoring of student progress K-12 which can be construed as a state testing program. In addition each district is required to give the three test described in OH4.

OH4: Grade level promotion based on test results is a local option.

OH4: Testing is in reading, math and writing. Three tests are required between 1st and 12th grades--one in grades 1-4, one in grades 5-8, and one in grades 9-12. Other subjects are optional.

OH5: State program is included in "Minimum Standards for Elementary and Secondary Schools." Pupil performance objectives were developed. Testing is to assess these objectives. Specific objectives and their assessment are a local choice. Performance objectives do give a degree of

OH6: Implementation of the 2 year old Competency Based Education Program being done by grade and subject. Not all grades or subjects are yet included. Full implementation will be in 1989.

OH7: Results of tests are not provided to the State (including pass/fail rates) on an annual basis. SEA evaluates 1/5 of all districts each year for accreditation. (All districts every 5 years.) Part of evaluation is to check to see that minimum standards of competency are in compliance. This evaluation includes examining test results. Program is too new for any useful data from accreditation reviews.

Minimum Competency

Table 1
Characteristics of Programs

State	Responsibility for Administering		Combined with S.A.	Purposes and Implementation					Standard ^B		Measurement Instruments Used					Subjects		Language Arts	Math	Other/Notes
	SEA	IEA		Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./ Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	Set By SEA	Set By LEA	State Prescribed	State Produced	IEA Produced (Mand.)	IEA Produced (Optional)	Other	Reading	Math				
Pennsylvania	Y	N	N	N	N	Y ²	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	3, 5, 8	3, 5, 8	Writing	Objectives at grades 3, 5, 8 established by committees across the State. They determine the objectives and the test built around objective 2. Early warning system to find students having difficulties in reading and/or math and providing remed. program for those students		

the le Island
Ne program

the Island
No program

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

	Responsibility for Administering		Combined with S.A.	Definition of Competencies		Purposes and Implementation				Measurement Instruments Used						Subjects and Grades				Other/Notes	
	SEA	LEA		SEA	LEA	Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./ Diag.	Monitor LEA Program	Standards Set By SEA	Standards Set By LEA	State Prescribed	State Produced	State Produced (Mand.)	State Produced (Optional)	Other	Reading	Math	Language Arts		Writing
South Dakota No program	Y	N	N ¹	Y	Y	N	N	1988 for 10th grade graduation	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	1,2, 1,2, 3,6, 3,6, 8,11,8,11	6,8, 11			1 Organizational combined with state asmt. but separate testing times. 2 Beginning in 1986, 10th grd. test will apply to 1989-90 graduation; sciences in spring 1988 for grades 3,6,8.
Tennessee	not available		rint view																		
Texas	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y		Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	3,5, 3,5, 9	3,5, 3,5, 9		3,5,9 TX1	

Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS) started in 1980 under legislative mandate, testing grades 5 and 9. Grade 3 was added in 1981. Retests are available in grades 10, 11 and 12. Retesting was first available in 1982. It was not mandatory until 1984.

Minimum Competency

Table I
Characteristics of Programs

State	Responsibility for administering		Combined with S.A.	Definition of Competencies		Purposes and Implementation Dates				Measurement Instruments Used						Subjects and Grades					Other/Notes
	SEA	LEA		SEA	LEA	Gr. 8 Prom.	Gr. 12 Grad.	Rem./Diag.	M	LE	State Prescribed	State Produced	LEA Produced	LEA Produced (Mand.)	LEA Produced (Optional)	Other	Reading	Math	Language Arts	Writing	
Utah	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	1977	1977			N	N	N	N	Y	N	8	8	8	8	
Vermont	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	1977	N			Y	N	N	N	Y	N	K-	K-12	K-12	K-12	VT
Virginia	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y			Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6	10 (social studies & Ed./Empl. skill)
Washington No program																					
West Virginia No program yet see Table VII																					
Wisconsin Not available for interview																					
Wyoming No program, direct required to assess																					

VT1: Students can take test at any time that LEA wishes between Kindergarten and graduation. Test and standards are totally at local discretion.