

## Senate Bill 109

**WHAT: Removal of the requirement to pass the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) in order to receive a diploma: Cost: \$0**

- **In 1997, the Alaska legislature passed a law that requires students to pass the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) in order to receive a diploma**
  - ✓ Students began taking the test in 2000, but implementation of this law was postponed until 2004
  - ✓ As a result of a lawsuit, students with disabilities were not required to pass until 2005
  - ✓ In 2007, the HSGQE was changed to make the writing portion more challenging and the reading portion less challenging
- **Students must take the HSGQE for the first time in the Spring of their 10<sup>th</sup> grade year**
  - ✓ The HSGQE takes 3 days to complete
  - ✓ Students who do not pass must take the exam each fall and spring. Students miss 6 days of instruction each year
  - ✓ The cost of these retests is \$1.3 million per year

### **WHY:**

- **Passing the HSGQE is not required by federal law**
  - ✓ NCLB requires an examination of high school students but does not require students to pass in order to get a diploma. Alaska tests students in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - ✓ The HSGQE is not a nationally recognized exam and is not used in determining University admission.
  - ✓ The HSGQE is a minimum competency exam and is not designed to test college readiness or work related skills.
- **The graduation rates in Alaska have not dramatically increased since 2004**
  - ✓ The graduation rate has remained around 62% from 2003 to 2008
  - ✓ The gap in graduation rates for minority subgroups (students with disabilities, Alaska Native, low income and limited English) have not substantially improved
- **Dropout rates increased after the implementation of the HSGQE and have not reached pre-HSGQE levels**
  - ✓ The 2003 dropout rate was 4.9%, it increased to 6% in 2004 and was 5.2% in 2008
  - ✓ The dropout rate for students with disabilities has increased from 4.9% in 2004 to 6.4% in 2008
- **EED has been successful in working with low performing schools in rural Alaska using data driven instruction to bring up student academic skills up to grade level.**
  - ✓ EED should expand this program and insist schools focus on earlier intervention instead of requiring the HSGQE