

Public Comments
End of Course Rules

End of Course Exhibit 1

Date Submitted: 10-16-2015
Cindy Kroon, high school teacher

Comment: Regarding Article 24:43 (end of course exams) I support the rule change eliminating the end-of-course exam for Algebra 1. Having taught Algebra 1 for 30+ years, I feel that I am qualified to judge whether any student (regardless of grade level) has mastered the content of the course without a need for a high-stakes separate end-of-course exam. There has always been a double standard applied when 8th grade students take Algebra 1. High school students in 9-12th grade can receive algebra 1 credit by passing the course (taught by a highly qualified teacher.) To receive the same credit, 8th grade students have to pass the course, and also pass a high stakes end-of-course exam. This is an unfair double standard for 8th grade students. As long as the class is taught by a Highly Qualified Teacher, certified for HS math, there should be no need for a separate EOC exam. As I understand it, one of the original reasons for implementing the EOC exam was that some 8th math classes (even algebra) might be taught by an elementary teacher with a K-8 certification. Because of that possibility, there was a perceived need to insure that appropriate material was covered at an appropriate depth. Maybe that should still be a requirement if the class is not taught by a highly qualified math teacher. Cindy Kroon
Mathematics Instructor Montrose High School

End of Course Exhibit 2

Date Submitted: 10-16-2015
Cindee Evenson, high school teacher

Comment: I am in favor of ending the requirement for end of course exam for Algebra I. I teach 8th graders in a class with 9th graders. If the 9th graders get credit for the course, why shouldn't the 8th graders? They are being taught the EXACT same material. The test puts an extreme amount of stress on children that are 13 years old. Also, the amount of class time we give up for all the different required tests is ridiculous. It is also stressful for me as a teacher. I need to make sure the technology is all in place, the test is scheduled, and if they don't pass I need to come in and test them after school is out. We trust all teachers for all other classes to have the integrity to teach the material required for the class, but no other class is required to take an end of course exam. Finally, we are "punishing" the students that are bright enough to excel in math. Some don't even want to take the class because they have heard about the test.

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End of Course Exhibit 3

Date Submitted: 10-19-2015

Robert Schmitz, parent / high school teacher

Comment: These comments are in regards to Section 24:43 (end of course exams and summer credits) I have tried to submit these comments before, but when I tried to submit them it said that I had a "web error". Therefore, if you get my comments twice, I apologize. My two kids attended a small school (Scotland High School). Our school only has one section of Algebra I. That section has both Freshmen and Eighth Graders in it. My children took Algebra I as Eighth Graders. Therefore, my kids sat in the same classroom as the Freshmen while they took Algebra I. They took the exact same tests that the Freshmen did, they took the same quizzes that the Freshmen did, and did the same assignments as well. They scored higher on those tests and quizzes than most of the Freshmen did. However, when the end of the year rolled around, the Freshmen received high school credit for the class. My kids had to take the End of Course Exam before they could get high school credit for it. They were nervous about the test for at least a week before they took it. It hardly seems fair that the eighth graders have to stress out about the EOC test, when the Freshmen students don't have to. And as I said before, my kids scored higher than those Freshmen did all year long (in the same classroom). It is sort of rewarding the kids who don't take Algebra I as an eighth grader. Even though the kids who take Algebra I as eighth graders are better students. (As I said before: My kids scored higher than most of the Freshmen did on the course work). That's why I feel that the EOC test should be discontinued. Thank you.

End of Course Exhibit 4

Date Submitted: 10-19-2015

Pat Anderson, middle school principal

Comment: My comments are in regards to Article 24:43. As a middle school principal I feel that requiring 8th grade students to take end-of-course exams does not increase rigor in the classroom. We have Algebra I and Spanish I for high school credit and both courses are taught by the high school teachers using the same curriculum, textbooks and pedagogical approaches. Our parents do not understand the extra requirement for their 8th grade students and I feel that in some cases, students are discouraged from attempting a higher level course due to the end-of-course assessment. Thank you.

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End of Course Exhibit 5

Date Submitted: 10-19-2015

Dustin Degen, middle school principal/teacher

Comment: If the school has the conditions in place to offer the same course to 8th graders (with highly qualified staff) as a high school offering, it seems counterproductive to place credit determination on an assessment (with two attempts to earn a score of 80% or higher). Test scores are only a part of the puzzle and no matter the quality of the assessment, you will not be able to determine if a student has experienced and understands the scope and sequence of the content for the entire course. Furthermore, more time is lost with our students preparing and taking exams than what we care to acknowledge (e.g. Dakota-STEP, Smarter Balanced, NAEP (if we are selected), SLO work, etc.). Districts are more than capable for selecting the requirements and determinations as to what it takes to earn credit. If Districts abuse the system, deal with them individually. Policy should be made for the majority and oversight groups should deal with the exceptions. Currently, our kids are experiencing the death of creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit through standardized, mandated, and excessive testing. I still have not found an instance where my current position requires me to select an answer or formulate a response based on a contrived set of conditions. It is my recommendation to rescind the EOC requirement. We have also worked with the DOE to develop our own assessments (e.g. we were rewriting our assessments during the 2014-2015 school year). We submitted our items prior to the deadline and started to receive feedback (after I worked to send messages asking for it) in April. Then, we were told that we would not be able to get the process done prior to May testing because the department is understaffed and not equipped to handle the workload. Not only did this change the format and experience we were successful in, but also the work we did was essentially for naught because of an overworked and understaffed DOE department. Too much turnover creates inconsistency that makes it difficult for the DOE to meet its own deadlines.

End of Course Exhibit 6

Date Submitted: 10-19-2015

Becky Jensen, high school teacher

Comment: I disagree with 8th graders having to take the exit exam and pass to receive HS credit. Why should it be any different for them. If 8th graders have to pass the test why don't all of our students have to pass exit exam to get HS credit. But I do agree the teachers must be highly qualified to assure they are being taught the correct material. Becky Jensen

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End of Course Exhibit 7

Date Submitted: 10-19-2015
Michael Ricke, middle school teacher

Comment: As an 8th grade teacher who teaches Algebra I for a high school credit, I have always struggled with the fact that my students were required to take a high stakes test at the end of the school year to show competency. I am a highly qualified teacher - just like the high school algebra teachers who are literally 100 feet away from my classroom. Because of this, I feel that it is unnecessary, and even a little unfair, that the 8th graders are required to take this test when the freshman students are not. I am not saying that the EOC test does not serve a purpose, but I have a really bad taste in my mouth from last year when students were required (originally) to pass a test that I'm not sure a lot of sophomores, juniors, and seniors who have taken Algebra II could have passed. The other thing that I struggle with as an 8th grade teacher is the fact that these students are required to take, and hopefully do well, on two high stakes tests in a matter of a few weeks - the Smarter Balanced Test and the EOC Algebra exam. I feel like this puts a lot of unnecessary stress on these students, and teachers as well. We are trying to prepare kids for two high stakes test that are testing them on two separate sets of standards.

End of Course Exhibit 8

Date Submitted: 10-20-2015
Rachelle DeBeer, middle school/ high school teacher

Comment: Article 24:43 I think it is a great idea to give local school districts the ability to give high school credit for Algebra I to 8th graders without the end of course exam especially after the exam last year (2015). Last year's exam was a total disaster with leftover standards that someone decided were Algebra because they didn't fit any where else. The reading level was tricky for an 8th grader as well--I obviously did not see the whole exam, but the vocab was intense. What does the local school district need to do to get a waiver? It needs to be clear what steps a school district needs to complete to obtain a waiver. What timeline will local districts need to adhere to for the waiver process?

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End of Course Exhibit 9

Date Submitted: 10-20-2015

Len Griffith, high school counselor / teacher

Comment: Our courses below the 9th grade use the same bench marks and syllabus as high school; are taught by highly qualified instructors who are teaching or have taught high school classes and promote the same rigor and high expectations for success and proficiency. It is my position that school districts may permit students below the ninth grade to take advanced work. If a high school so permits, it shall award high school credit for successful completion of the advanced work and shall count such advanced work towards the graduation requirements. Successful completion will be determined by a highly qualified teacher in the curriculum area. I believe the advanced work should be taught by a person who possesses a license or certificate issued by the DOE of South Dakota for teaching the high school curriculum. Our experience has been that an EOC exam has not been the best measure of a student's proficiency in the course.

End of Course Exhibit 10

Date Submitted: 10-20-2015

Kim Doherty, middle school / high school teacher

Comment: I feel that 8th grade students that are taking Algebra I should receive high school credit as long as they maintain a 85% average per semester and the course is taught by a highly qualified secondary mathematics teacher.

End of Course Exhibit 11

Date Submitted: 10-20-2015

Wendy Schamber, middle school teacher

Comment: As a former high school math teacher and current middle school math teacher, I do believe there needs to be some sort of accountability at the 8th grade level to ensure schools are not watering down curriculum just to get more kids their Algebra credits. I do like the idea of a competency test, however, I don't believe it needs to be so incredibly difficult that students can't pass it.

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End of Course Exhibit 12

Date Submitted: 10-20-2015
Erin Herr, high school teacher

Comment: I feel that students who are in the 8th Grade Algebra I course should receive credit if the course is taught by a certified secondary math teacher and can maintain an 85% average for each semester.

End of Course Exhibit 13

Date Submitted: 10-26-2015
Kyley Cumbow, middle school principal

Comment: I do not agree with or support eliminating the EOC exam for HS credit in the middle school. The test allows for consistency in 8th graders earning HS credit. With the fiasco of last year's EOC and the waiver for schools to determine who earned the credit and who did not, it created a lot of problems for us at GMMS. Having the EOC allows for all students to be tested against the same criteria vs adding in different approaches to what a student should be able to do and know for HS credit. I do not mind that the EOC may indeed be more difficult than the class, if it were to be taken the 9th grade year, because these are our top kids and they need to perform to go above and beyond the 8th grade curriculum. My Algebra, Spanish, and History teachers do not support eliminating the EOC exams. GMMS offers about 60 students Algebra, 30 Spanish, and 20 History for HS credit.

End of Course Exhibit 14

Date Submitted: 10-26-2015
Philip Schonebaum, middle school/ high school teacher ; high school principal

Comment: This should be the expectation and rule. If a student goes through Algebra 1 as a freshman in high school and receives a D, they get credit for the course. In the past there have been many students as 8th graders take the same course, get B's and C's and not receive credit because they don't meet the requirements of the EOC. Please make this change as it benefits all students.

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End of Course Exhibit 15

Date Submitted: 10-29-2015

Darlyne Johnson, middle school / high school teacher

Comment: Our eighth graders taking Algebra I are enrolled and included in the same class sections as high school students. All students taking Algebra I are held to the same high standards. My experience has been that the eighth graders taking Algebra I are the most successful and have the highest results of those sections. High School students taking Algebra I are not required to pass an end-of-course exam; yet, they receive high school credit. To base the decision for eighth graders to receive their Algebra I high school credit on a single test, even though a second attempt is allowed, brings much stress and provides only a narrow view of what they have learned. Rather, the decision should remain with the school districts, where coursework is monitored throughout the academic year. Therefore, I support the proposal to rescind the End-of-Course Exam requirement for eighth graders taking Algebra I in order to receive high school transcript credit. Thank you.

End of Course Exhibit 16

Date Submitted: 11-10-2015

Lila Moeller, middle school / high school teacher

Comment: I agree that the 8th Grade Algebra 1 EOC exam should be dropped. I teach both 8th Grade Algebra and HS Algebra 1 and use the same textbooks and curriculum for both classes. Some years the Algebra 1 class contains both 8th and 9th grade students. It is not fair that a 9th grade student can get HS School credit with a grade of D- but an 8th grade student must pass a state EOC exam with an 80% even when he/she has an A in the class. The exam discriminates against 8th grade students trying to accelerate their learning. Lila Moeller JH/HS Math Rutland ISD 39-4

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End of Course Exhibit 17

Date Submitted: 11-11-2015
Amy Policky, teacher

Comment: I am asking that you consider removing the EOC Exam for middle school students taking HS math courses for a few reasons. First, I feel this test adds an unnecessary extra stress on these young students. For the most part, these are the students who worry about test scores too much the way it is because they always want to be doing their best. Secondly, I do not think that it is fair that these middle school students have to pass an exam (with an 80% no less) that their peers and classmates who are only one year older do not need to take. In fact, for those students who are enrolled in HS, they are able to "pass" the math course with any grade higher than an F. My third reason that I do not think the EOC exam is necessary is because I, along with most other teachers, am a high school certified teacher who is more than capable of determining whether or not one of my middle school students has mastered the math standards covered in class. I collect both formative and summative assessment data throughout the year to help determine this. Finally, because the new Common Core standards allow HS teachers the liberty to divide the standards out to the various required courses (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II), I do not think that it is fair to be testing a middle school student over a standard that may have been placed into another course. For example, our middle school students who were taking Geometry last year were tested over Common Core standards on the EOC that were not taught to them yet. The reason they were not taught is because the HS teachers decided to place those standards into the Algebra II curriculum instead. These students will see the material in an upcoming course, but have not had the material yet. For all of these reasons, I ask that you please consider allowing the teachers that put in many hours of planning, questioning, and assessing these young students to also be the ones who determine if they have mastered the material in order to receive credit for the course.

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End of Course Exhibit 18

Date Submitted: 11-11-2015

Shannon Renkly, middle school teacher

Comment: I am asking that you consider removing the EOC Exam for middle school students taking HS math courses for a few reasons. First, I feel this test adds an unnecessary extra stress on these young students. For the most part, these are the students who worry about test scores too much the way it is because they always want to be doing their best. Secondly, I do not think that it is fair that these middle school students have to pass an exam (with an 80% no less) that their peers and classmates who are only one year older do not need to take. In fact, for those students who are enrolled in HS, they are able to "pass" the math course with any grade higher than an F. My third reason that I do not think the EOC exam is necessary is because I, along with most other teachers, am a high school certified teacher who is more than capable of determining whether or not one of my middle school students has mastered the math standards covered in class. I collect both formative and summative assessment data throughout the year to help determine this. Finally, because the new Common Core standards allow HS teachers the liberty to divide the standards out to the various required courses (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II), I do not think that it is fair to be testing a middle school student over a standard that may have been placed into another course. For example, our middle school students who were taking Geometry last year were tested over Common Core standards on the EOC that were not taught to them yet. The reason they were not taught is because the HS teachers decided to place those standards into the Algebra II curriculum instead. These students will see the material in an upcoming course, but have not had the material yet. For all of these reasons, I ask that you please consider allowing the teachers that put in many hours of planning, questioning, and assessing these young students to also be the ones who determine if they have mastered the material in order to receive credit for the course.

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End of Course Exhibit 19

Date Submitted: 11-11-2015

Jennifer Ashley, middle school teacher

Comment: My comments are in regards to Article 24:43. As an 8th grade math teacher I feel like requiring the 8th grade students to take an end of the course exam adds unnecessary pressure to the students. The students in Algebra I are extremely worried about the end of the course exam. If you have a freshman student that gets a D in the class and an 8th grade student that gets a B in the class the 8th grade student did not pass the EOC test. The freshman student gets credit for Algebra I and the 8th grade student does not. How is this fair to the 8th grade student? The 8th grade students have to take two high stake tests at the end of the year (with the EOC exam and Smarter Balanced test) and I have a feeling that most students worry more about the EOC test and less about the Smarter Balanced. As an 8th grade teacher, I am qualified to teach Algebra I and use the same materials as the high school Algebra I teacher. I feel like I move faster through the material at times due to the added pressure of the EOC test. I feel like I do not go in as much depth on different topics since there is a wide variety of information. I feel like getting rid of the EOC will not change the way I teach, but will take off the extra pressure.

End of Course Exhibit20

Date Submitted: 11-11-2015

Marge Kindle, high school teacher

Comment: The end of course exam for 8th grade Algebra should be discontinued. It does not make sense to test our brightest students. The prep time for the test takes away from learning standards. The 8th grade Algebra teachers are a better indicator of whether the students should receive credit or not.

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End of Course Exhibit 21

Date Submitted: 11-13-2015

Nicholas Berg, middle school teacher

Comment: Board members, I am currently an 8th grade math teacher in Tea and I am writing concerning the EOC for 8th grade Algebra I. I teach my 8th grade algebra class in conjunction with the two high school teachers that teach the same subject. We plan our schedule together, create our assessments together and discuss the results of these assessments together. However, it is extremely disappointing to watch an 8th grade student go through the same struggles and successes throughout the school year and earn a high grade in the class, only to find out that they could not get past one test and was not given credit for the class. Meanwhile, at the same time, I see some freshman students that go through the same class, barely scraping by with a low (yet passing) grade and receive credit for the class. In a time when students are increasingly feeling like they are not able to be successful in math, making a student retake a class due to not being able to pass one test is only making the matter worse. These are our higher achieving students, yet we aren't allowing them to see the same success as their 9th grade counterpart, simply due to age, not ability. I urge you to consider rescinding the EOC and allow the individual districts create their own determination of which students truly need to retake a class. When a 7-12 certified math teacher is teaching the 8th grade Algebra I, the district should be able to determine which students should move on to the next class. I appreciate you allowing comments to be received and your time on the matter. Sincerely, Nicholas Berg

End of Course Exhibit 22

Date Submitted: 11-13-2015

Lori Bohm, no affiliation listed

Comment: The mandatory final exam for 8th graders taking Algebra I for HS credit should be removed. If the student passes, the student should get credit, if they fail, they fail just as if they took Algebra I as a high school student. This is age discrimination. 9th graders do not take the test for the same class. Sometimes less than 30 days of age dictate if one is an 8th grader or 9th grader. It is a shame is our upper crust students are leaving this state. We have some brilliant young people and they leave! Let's keep them here. Logic says whoever takes a class gets a grade for doing the work for that class. Our students that strive to get ahead should not be punished if they receive less than an 80% on your required test...we need to support them and not punish or restrict them by one test grade. To be clear: remove the mandatory 8th grade Algebra I 80% testing for high school credit. Any questions or if you need clarification on my thoughts, feel free to email or mail me.