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Local

High school exams need more research

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2008-08-14 07:00:00.0

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[Maryland](#) did not have enough research before it decided to begin withholding diplomas from high school seniors who fail exit exams next year, according to a study released Wednesday.

Twenty-six states require students to pass exams to graduate — most enacting the mandate in the past few years — but [Washington](#) was the only state that joined this past year, according to the study by the [Center on Education Policy](#), an independent [Washington D.C.](#)-based think tank.

The Maryland state school board debated the policy for years before settling on it. The policy requires high school seniors to pass exams in English 2, algebra, biology and government to make sure they are prepared for college and the workforce.

But too little information exists on the requirement's effects, according to the study.

"Maryland has had a thoughtful process, but what we're saying is even a state that has been as thoughtful and thorough as Maryland still doesn't have the information to draw on," said [Jack Jennings](#), head of the center.

"For reform that affects so many kids' lives, not enough time is spent thinking through all the implications of this change."

Whether the exit exams cause more high school seniors to drop out is one question that states have not answered, because they do not have the money for the research, Jennings said.

[California](#) is the only state that has studied that possibility, and the work shows that after the test was mandated, more high-schoolers dropped out.

Only 64 percent of Maryland students who took the algebra test last year passed. Students were most successful on the government test, passing at a 74 percent clip.

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